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TOP TIPS ON INVESTIGATIVE TELEVISION INTERVIEWS

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- 1) Be prepared, you must know everything possible about the interview subject and what answers they will give you before you sit down to film an interview. Know everything you can about their past and their prior answers to questions in other interviews or if they have ever been under oath for a deposition. Pre-interview them when possible.
- 2) For sensitive interviews about such things as sexual assault or painful experiences, do not shy away from the detailed questions about what happened, but acknowledge that they may find it hard to speak about. Re-ask the question several different ways if they are not answering fully. Be aware (and respectful) that people may change their minds about being on the record about sexual assault allegations (sometimes several times). You must also confront them about any doubts the accused has raised about their story so they can answer that directly.
- 3) When a correspondent is involved, she or he should engage and follow up as often as possible. Do not just sit there and nod. The best tv comes from the interaction between the interviewer and the subject, the back and forth. Have follow up questions ready to make sure you are getting the detail you need about tough subjects and asking what the audience is thinking.
- 4) For confrontational interviews, start off soft and get them comfortable before you hit them with the hardest questions. Make sure you know something that they do not know you know, to catch them off guard, to surprise them. (Example: show them a document they do not know you have – a document that proves their guilt or complicity) Some correspondents really work on throwing the interview subject off guard and keep following up on the hard questions when they do not answer.
- 5) For confrontational interviews – never lie to your subjects to get them to sit down. Tell them honestly that there will be tough questions asked but it's better for them to have the chance to respond.

6) Convincing people to do interviews is the hardest part of the job, but you must put yourself in their shoes to come up with convincing arguments for why it is in their interest to go public or publicly answer the charges against them. They might want to get ahead of an out of control media attack on their reputation, for example. They may want to tell the details in their own words from their perspective, rather than let others speak for them to try to clear their name. They may want someone brought to justice. And they may want their 15 minutes of fame. Whatever their interest is, it takes hard work to convince people to sit down.

7) Biggest mistake young reporters make is to not try to get the opposing view on the record or on camera. Remember that every story is much, much stronger if you have the opposing view on the record. It not only gives balance to the story, but it also gives the story energy because you can ask the tough questions and the audience wants to hear the answer.

8) Biggest mistake I have made is trying to get everything into a short interview. Do not waste time on camera asking questions you will never use in the story (unless you need to get them on the record). Edit and re-edit your questions until they are the shortest possible question and the shortest number of questions. We spend days writing and editing the questions.

Have fun, this is a challenging but rewarding part of the job! ORIANA