

How The Correspondent instructs its writers in interacting with readers and operating as "discussion leader."

By the editors of The Correspondent. Compiled by Jay Rosen, NYU.

Many traditionally educated journalists think of interacting with their readers as "a lot of extra work". The first instruction we give them when they start working for The Correspondent is simple: 'This *is* your work.' We tell them that, on average, around 50% of their working time should be spent on these interactions. To freelancers, we communicate this by earmarking a substantial part of their fee "for talking to readers," instead of just paying per word or per piece. The second instruction we give is: "Keep a public notebook." By this, we mean communicate transparently with readers about your work and your process. We have developed many ways in which this can be done. Most often, we ask correspondents to:

- 1) **Start your beat with a mission statement**, explaining what you intend to research and why you think it is important.
- 2) **Update your "what am I working on now" status regularly**, showing readers what the current status of your research project is.
- 3) **Ask specific research questions**, either in separate updates or below a finished piece.
- 4) **Start writing a personal newsletter**, where experts or highly interested readers can follow your research in more detail.
- 5) **Share new insights separately as you go along** instead of "saving" them for your final piece on a topic.
- 6) **Answer questions of readers that may arise in the contribution section**, or follow up on those questions later in a note or update
- 7) **Make note of frequently asked questions**, and answer them regularly in a listicle.
- 8) **Highlight valuable contributions**, which puts them at the top of the contribution section and sends an automatically generated email thanking the member for sharing his or her knowledge or experience.
- 9) **Ask every interviewee that you talk to during your research to join the discussion in the contribution section**, and – if necessary – provide him/her with a free one-month subscription to do so.
- 10) **Ask high-profile or expert interviewees if they are willing to do a Q&A below a piece when it's published**, and inform readers that they can ask questions directly.
- 11) **Write updates or notes on the basis of those questions**, and publish them separately ("These are the answers of X to your FAQ's").
- 12) **Be a conversation leader offline**, by engaging in public debates, giving talks, organize expert meetings, or inviting readers to visit the office.
- 13) **Ask people you meet during talks to become a member** or follow you via social media and your personal newsletter.
- 14) **Mention readers as sources in your articles** (after getting their permission) to highlight their role in the research process.

