

**Speaking truth about power  
Introduction to citizen journalism for Quakers**

**Training notes handout**

Northumbria Area Meeting  
Newcastle Meeting House  
Saturday August 2,  
1.30pm – 6pm

**General remarks** - the case for citizen journalism (including *Fraudcast News*  
<http://fraudcastnews.net/>)

*Fraudcast News recounts how Patrick's eyes were opened. Deftly mixing the personal and political, he gives a rare insider view of our media's failures.*

*Far from holding the powerful to account, they present the news in ways that serve narrow elites, promoting their interests and priorities. Though some reporters bark, very few ever bite. Most are more lapdog than watchdog, leaving the public misinformed.*

Purchase a paperback copy (£10) or free PDF download.

Other materials include documentaries *The Power Principle*, *Shock Doctrine*, **manufacturing Consent** – many others. These give a deeper background to why our governments and media are failing us and how that will affect you in your professional and personal life. This is not a question of left and right but more of people, that's us, versus power.

It is important that we all work continually to improve our political intelligence – which includes understanding how we come to have the views we have of the world. Our understanding of journalism, media and propaganda are integral parts of that intelligence.

**Smartphone video interviews**

An example - *Price of Sex* film director - (<http://youtu.be/4q7w4v1rheA>)

*(Documentary film-maker and photojournalist Mimi Chakarova talks about her film, the Price of Sex, which screened in London this week as part of the Human Rights Watch Festival 2012.*

*PC covered the film festival with a fellow journalist as an opportunity to view the films and experiment with the smartphone interviewing technique. The experience helped me as journalist and boosted the film and the festival, spreading the word about what they are doing.)*

Smartphone interviews as a technique to empower civil society from the grassroots upwards. Arguments are explored more widely in the documentaries cited earlier.

Possibility of multiple, unmoderated networks regionally, nationally and across international borders.

Freelance, multimedia journalism.

**Smartphone videos versus the rest**

More conventional approach:

Brian Haw - (<http://youtu.be/6h4va-TaRE4>)

### **Video interview examples**

Screening examples:

Author Penny Young - (<http://youtu.be/2-ANWCdQA0A>)

Camera operator taught the skill in 5 minutes

### **What's the point?**

This technique is inspired by a model developed by the British NGO visionOntv (<http://visionon.tv/>). It involves using smartphone video cameras (ideally with resolution of 640 x 480 or better) to shoot interviews “as live”, with no need for subsequent editing.

Results can be uploaded directly to the internet. You need speakerphone kits to record the audio, or a microphone adapted to your phone, in order to ensure decent sound quality.

Producing a document with decent sound, well-shot pictures and with a coherent story **greatly increases the chances that a video gets made and gets published**. Most citizen or media activist video, misses one or more of these elements, a big turn off for potential viewers and those who might share your work.

The technique requires a **two-person team, one putting the questions and another working the camera**. You can turn this apparent constraint into a positive by **engaging in a bit of media-making capacity building**. Use the people around you to operate the smartphone camera while you do the interviews.

The model for citizen journalism, which is unquestionably a work in progress, is ideally one of collaboration and sharing. Serving civil society, a service that stretches across borders, makes the transfer of skills to others an important part of the process.

### **Brainstorm the alternatives for video reports - what suits best when?**

#### **Identifying a story**

What do you want to talk about?

- own-initiative visits
- set-piece events

#### **Identifying the the audience**

How the audience shapes the story, which shapes the audience

Who do you want to talk to?

How audience choice affects story approach, language, questions, depth of treatment

#### **Story telling**

The elements of all news stories - who? what? why? when? where? (and how?)

Confrontation versus co-creation

Conventional media versus citizen journalism

## Identifying a story

## Identifying the the audience

## Story telling

The elements of all news stories - who? what? why? when? where? (and how?)

Confrontation versus co-creation

Conventional media versus citizen journalism

## A word on shoot quality, visual and audio

Reprise: Producing a document with decent sound, well-shot pictures and with a coherent story **greatly increases the chances that a video gets made and gets published.** Most citizen or media activist video, misses one or more of these elements, a big turn off for potential viewers and those who might share your work.

## Phone camera set up

Individual kit check, sound, battery, flight mode, memory capacity

## Preparations

This technique is for a **two-person production team, comprising the smartphone camera operator and an interviewer.** In the outside world, you can choose to be either the camera operator or interviewer; you will have to “recruit” the second person if you haven’t brought them along with you.

## Preparing as the interviewer

The interviewer drives the process and determines the questions, content and outcome. They will know what audiences they want to reach and what issues to communicate.

You might **shoot a couple of interviews with the same person**, splitting up a story into separate segments or treating different issues one by one. One intended audience may be local, another national and yet another EU or global. The audience choice has implications for both the language used and the technical policy terms employed.

## Tips for the interviewer

Keep in mind:

- what is the interview focus?
- what do you need to get across in this self-contained package (where are you, who are you taking to, what do they do, why is it interesting, where can the viewer go for more information)
- what level of knowledge are you assuming among your audience

1. **What approach to take?** This interview approach is lends itself both to conventional journalistic approaches, which tend to be more removed and even confrontational, and softer styles that involve a co-creational element with the interviewee.

2. **Keep the questions simple** - remember that even technically minded audience members, policy makers and so on, are human.

3. **Help interviewees develop their answers** - your objective is to communicate the essence of the interviewee’s story. Are there useful or relevant facts and figures that nail the story they are telling? Have a picture of your target audience in your mind and encourage your interviewee to do the same.

4. **Buoy up the interviewee** - put them at their ease, make them forget the camera and remind them that they know tonnes about their subject. Do as many takes as you need - don’t be embarrassed and don’t make the interviewee embarrassed.

5. **Plan a visual backdrop to the interview that helps to communicate** what you're talking about.
6. **Switch all mobile phones to flight mode.**
7. Keep in mind the **interview length - the shorter the better** for audience attention span and for file size. Keep the target time in mind during the interview (3 to 5 min), limit yourself to three questions.
- Shoot a second interview if there is another subject** that you want to tackle with the same person rather than shooting one long interview.
8. If you get an OK take - **don't delete from the phone even if you plan to shoot another.**
9. **Ask the interviewee to keep silent for a couple of seconds** at the end of the sign off to allow the piece to conclude.

The interviewer is also responsible for **preparing the interviewee.**

Putting interviewees at their ease and explaining to them the aim and scope of an interview will do wonders for chances of success.

1. Once you've identified who you want to interview, **sit them down to prepare.**
2. **Scope the topic:** ask the interviewee some simple questions about who they are and what they do. If you already know them well, go straight to the more specific, interview-related topics.
3. **Lay out the basic questions you will ask** during the interview to clarify the topic and to be more specific. This will help the interviewee structure their thinking and identify more clearly their key messages.
4. **Seek to better understand:** paraphrase of their answers to get a better understanding of what they are saying. This helps ensure their messages are clear.
5. **Bottom-line their message:** summarise back to the interviewee what you understand as their key message.
6. **Champion the interviewee:** this means helping the interviewee feel more enthusiastic and relaxed about the interview. It involves telling them what you think is great about what they are about to tell you.
7. **Explain what comes next:** outline the interview format, how you will introduce the interview, put your questions and then conclude with a short summary to the camera (see below for the specifics).

### **Tips for the camera operator**

1. **Check sound levels for the interviewer and interviewee** and remind the interviewer to direct the microphone at the speaker.
2. **Check smartphone battery** - is it charged?
3. **Check the visual backdrop** for the interview for visual content. Does the backdrop help illustrate the subject?
4. **Don't shoot straight into the light** but also be careful to avoid the interviewer or interviewee being blinded by strong light.
5. **Choose a video resolution setting of around 640 x 480.**
6. **Switch all mobile phones to flight mode.**
7. Think about interviewer/interviewee clothing - no checked shirts/strong stripes if you can avoid them.
8. **Check the smartphone memory capacity** available for shooting by deleting old files before interviews.

### **Doing the interview**

#### **For the interviewer**

1. Start the interview with a **short introduction** about the place, the person and the subject matter.

Say:

- where you are (geography and nature of the place)
- who you are talking to (name, what they do)
- subject of interview

2. You then turn to **the interview for your questions:**

- Q1 / Answer
- Q2 / Answer
- Q3 / Answer

You have to be flexible and prepared to take things as they come. That might mean **having to adapt your questions as the interview proceeds, interrupting the interviewee or adding another question**, even repeating one already asked.

3. Once the interviewee has answered the last question, the interviewer **concludes with a second piece to camera, this one a short summary and sign off**. The exact format is up to the interviewer but try to incorporate the following elements:

- so that was who and about what
- if you want to learn more, you can go to (website, blog, twitter account)
- keep a couple of seconds silence at the end of the signoff

**4. Once it's done:**

- did the interview work?
- do you need to reshoot it? if yes, do it straight away if you can.

**For the camera operator**

**Get comfortable!** Remember to tuck in your elbows to stop your arms getting tired, keep your fingers away from the smartphone camera aperture and always shoot in “landscape”.

You need to get in **closer to interview subjects than a normal camera** would be. You also need to get the interviewer and interviewee to stand **CLOSE TOGETHER**.

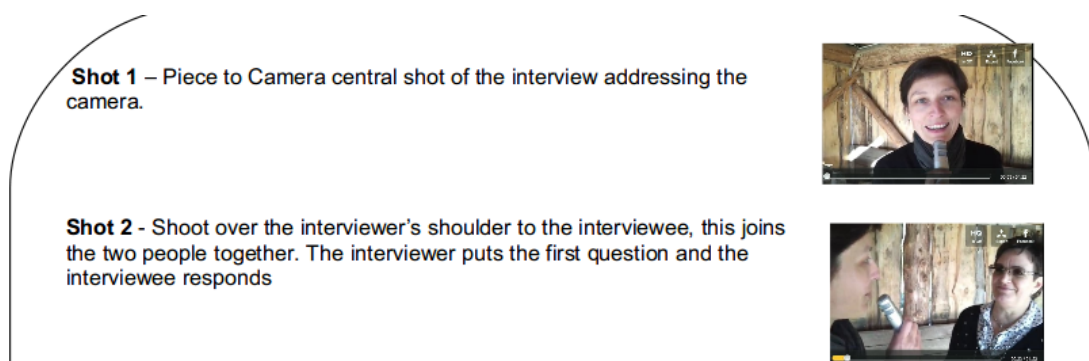
There are **five basic shot types** to use during the course of an interview using this technique. They are interspersed with switching between shots using “rapid pans” - moving the camera from one shot to another in a single and quick transition.

**Shot 1** – Piece to Camera central shot of the interview addressing the camera.

Illustrate

**Shot 2** - Shoot over the interviewer's shoulder to the interviewee, this joins the two people together. The interviewer puts the first question and the interviewee responds.

Illustrate

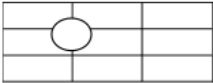


**Shot 3** - Close up of the interviewee. This is a full-face shot so that you can see both eyes in the shot. Think of framing the subject so as to split the screen 2/3rds to 1/3rd (horizontally and vertically) putting the interviewee at the intersection of the lines and looking into the frame. Illustrate

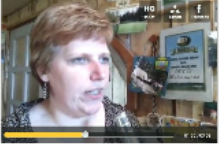
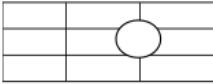
Interviewee/r needs to look this way →  
 Interviewee/r needs to look this way ←

**Shot 4** - Close up of the interviewer. As for Shot 3


**Shot 3** - Close up of the interviewee. This is a full-face shot so that you can see both eyes in the shot. Think of framing the subject so as to split the screen 2/3rds to 1/3rd (horizontally and vertically) putting the interviewee at the intersection of the lines and looking into the frame.



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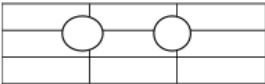



**Shot 4** - Close up of the interviewer. As for Shot 3


**Shot 5** - Two-shot of the interviewer and the interviewee - both in picture. Interviewer/interviewee looking at one another

**Final shot = shot 1** - Remember to **pause for two seconds or so at the end of the interviewer's sign-off** piece to camera - hold steady then hit the stop button. Before moving on - you need to check if the picture OK, is the sound OK and did the camera record the interview.

**Shot 5** - Two-shot of the interviewer and the interviewee - both in picture. Interviewer/interviewee looking at one another → ←

**Final shot = shot 1** - Remember to **pause for two seconds or so at the end of the interviewer's sign-off** piece to camera - hold steady then hit the stop button. Before moving on - you need to check if the picture OK, is the sound OK and did the camera record the interview.



Training participants rotate, twice, between interviewer, interviewee and camera operator, executing the operations they did not perform until they have done all three.

**Viewing assignments**

### **Things to bear in mind**

What works about the videos?  
How was the sound?  
How were the images?  
Intros  
Outros  
Did they make sense?  
Would you share them over social media?

### **Things we don't want to see/hear**

Fingers in shot  
Cables in shot  
Reflections in the windows behind the camera operator  
Mobile phone audio signal interference  
Major shadows  
Camera operator counting in, or out  
Interviewer moving/talking having finished conclusions  
Fade to black  
Captions  
Subjects sitting down

### **Publication - code and upload to the internet**

Transfer video files to a laptop or desktop computer or upload directly to the internet from your smartphone.  
Choice of video upload channel – Youtube and the rest  
Onload multiple option (<http://www.oneload.com>)  
Personal video upload accounts versus communal ones (visionontv)  
Upload via smartphone/3G network or download to laptop

**Give a title** to your interview reports (50 characters)

### **Write short descriptive text** (250-300

characters max.) The challenge is to get across the essence of the interview in a way that will draw a potential viewer to click on the video and watch it.

**Propose appropriate “tags” or keywords** used by internet search engines to locate material. They should include the place the interview highlights, the names of the interviewee, the interviewer, the camera operator and the mosaic keyword or words. Don't forget to include your own name and organisation too, if you wish.

### **A word about video promotion via social media**

What works, what doesn't  
Personal experiences

### **Next steps**

Technical queries – [www.streetreporter.org/forum](http://www.streetreporter.org/forum)  
Video activists handbook – out this autumn  
How could you use this technique?  
When will you use this technique?

When would this technique not work?