

Recording Psychology

To do our job we need people to feel comfortable telling us stories and information.

The way we physically approach a recording situation has a bearing on what we finally capture in the recording.

- Recording equipment can sometimes act as a barrier:
 - A large microphone close to someone's face can be off-putting. Hold the microphone at chest level, pointing at a 45 degree angle towards the mouth of the interviewee.
 - Headphones can cause a disconnection between the interviewer and interviewee. Wearing small earphones may help.
 - Continually tweaking your equipment can cause a loss of confidence in your interviewee. Have your recorder in easy view. Do a test recording, adjust your levels and then try and limit your tweaking.
- Placement of the interviewee is important:
 - Once you have identified an appropriate recording location:
 - Limit visual distractions for the interviewee. Try to make sure what is behind you (as the interviewer) isn't distracting.
 - In a studio environment never let the interviewee face the control-room where there may be other people discussing the content.
 - On location, don't block the interviewee so they feel there's no escape route.
 - Be aware of your interviewee's personal space, and what they're comfortable with. Mirroring a person's posture and allowing them personal space may help their nerves.
- Some people get very quiet when they see recording equipment or are in a studio environment. This may be quite noticeable when the red (live) studio light goes on.
 - Settle your interviewee. Get them a glass of water, and get them to remove coats or jackets.
 - Sitting at a table may help relax them. Of course, standing may give you a more energized recording
 - Think about using terminology like "chat" rather than "interview" (but be clear that you are recording and it will be broadcast).
 - If the interviewee brings paper notes with them, either get them to do a quick skim read and then put the papers away or get them to lay the paper side-by-side on the table. (listen closely when they consult their notes – it may sound too read)
- In a pre-recorded situation you can warm up your interviewee by asking a general background question first. This allows them to answer something generally before they start getting into the "I ..." answers.. For example:
 - Can you tell me about the history of the organisation...
 - Can you tell me how you got involved...

Adding confidence:

- Clear media identification can help you gain access to situations and interviewees. Never underestimate the strength of wearing an organizational ID (like Radio New Zealand, or BBC etc). Organisations put a lot of weight on their reputation.
- Be clear what you're wanting, why you're recording and what the recording will be used for
- Dress confidently
- Use your equipment confidently

Getting a good recording:

- Keep eye contact with the interviewee. It's very off putting if the interviewer starts looking at notes or people in the background.
- Use "noddies" to encourage the interviewee rather than verbalising. For example try to avoid saying things like "mmm, right, yes, go-on" etc..
- "Play Slow" if you're wanting a clean in and out for a single comment. It's far easier to tighten up a pre-recorded interview later than try to get out of an interview with people talking over each other. One way of doing this is to pretend to react slowly to what someone has said; so you gain a second or two silence.
- You will get different energy in your recordings by having the interviewee sitting or standing or walking etc.