

"To Transcribe" or "Not To Transcribe" Interviews?

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By Catherine Franz

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11 Secrets from an Experienced Interviewer

One of the unwritten rules of writing a book, an article, or any sort of material that requires the writer to interview experts or people "in the know" is to tape record the conversation. Whether the recording occurs via phone or in person is irrelevant. This rule is a good one.

This leads to the following questions:

- * Do you transcribe every tape?
- * Who owns the transcription?

The answer to these questions does have an "it depends" so let me explain. It depends on your state's or countries laws on the tape recording issue. It depends on the how much you're getting paid for the project. It depends on whether you can use the interview notes more than once. It depends whether you are using interviewing as an escape -- a procrastination technique because you enjoy that interview process more than the writing.

Okay, we got the "it depends" listed and out of the way. Let me present a few of my secrets -- the things I have learned as a writer and teacher over the last many years.

Secret 1: Just because you tape recorded the conversation doesn't mean you have to transcribe the tape. The tape is a great safety net for reviews.

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Secret 2: You don't need to transcribe the whole tape. Many times all you need are the important parts.

Secret 3: Tapes are cheap, buy plenty instead of reusing, and keep them for a few years.

Secret 4: Create a tape master finding system. Microsoft Excel is a great way to track with a numbering system. Include the year somewhere in the numbering. Color coding adds visual effectiveness. Large colored dots are available at most office supply stores.

Secret 5: The storage container and where you store the tapes is important as to how long they last. Heat and moisture destroys the quality. Find small, thin, plastic containers with a tight seal with a one-layer depth.

Secret 6: Don't place a magnet anywhere near them. So keep the paperclip magnet and the phone (many have magnets in them) away from the tapes. Palm Pilots too.

Secret 7: Use rubber bands to consolidate tapes for a similar project or topic but be careful not to wrap them vertically over the open part of the tape. Wrap horizontally. After a few years rubber bands dry out and become brittle.

Secret 8: Delegate the task, it always cheaper either in dollars or patience. Place an ad at the local college and offer \$30 to \$45 per tape. I have found several through the Business Centers at high schools and community centers. If the interview is rare or precious, hire a professional service and pay the higher rate. Have at least 10 ways you can get a tape transcribed reasonably and fast at your disposal. Start with the Yellow Pages. Rate them on fastest and quickest. Consider using FedEx to deliver and pick up the tapes, for safety, and to save time. I never recommend sending the tape out of your country to save money.

Secret 9: Don't sign a contract, ever, if they have a clause in it, "All notes, tapes, materials and transcripts must be turned over to the publisher." Cross it out and don't agree to this. If the publisher is paying for the transcription and your time separately for the interview,

they are yours.

Secret 10: Prepare the questions ahead of time and stick to them. Preparation saves time all around. If you are not sure what questions to ask, ask the publisher what questions do they want to have answered when they give you the assignment. It is a good procedure to provide the questions before hand to the interviewee. This helps them prepare. If they read from their typed notes then ask questions differently or drift with one question then return. They will usually stop reading, think, and not return to their notes.

Secret 11: If you are a fast typist you will most likely be able to type and capture 75% of the conversation. Learn to leave out repetitious information and use a keyboard

shorthand. After the call, review the notes immediately and expand the shorthand. If you use a common shortcut, use "find and replace" in your word processor as a time saver. Also explain that you will be typing their response so that the sound of the keyboard doesn't distract from the conversation. If you prefer, you can even ask for permission: "I hope you don't mind, I'm a fast typist so I prefer to type my notes as we talk." It's like asking for permission but not quite.

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Catherine Franz is a writer and author of over 1800 published articles, books, and on various subjects. Formore: <http://www.abundancecenter.com>

Professional Transcription and Your Business

By Kate Smalley

Got stacks of audio tapes that need to be converted to a more user-friendly format? Professional transcription services may be the answer.

Professional transcriptionists can take standard or micro cassette tapes and produce a typed version of the text in a format that's clear, consistent and correct. They can create transcripts of taped meetings, training sessions, seminars and conventions, as well as dictated letters, reports and manuscripts. Once the information is transcribed, you can easily email, fax or post it to a Website.

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Accuracy Is Essential

Transcribing actually covers a variety of services. It can include whatever editing is necessary to make a report or letter 'flow'. It can also include the tweaking sentence syntax, adjusting paragraphs, removing redundancies, and repairing general grammatical errors.

For some professions, a high degree of accuracy in transcripts is crucial. For example, medical transcriptionists must carefully listen to dictated recordings made by physicians and other healthcare professionals and accurately transcribe them into reports, correspondence and other administrative materials that eventually become part of patients' permanent files. Their ability to understand and correctly transcribe patient assessments and treatments reduces the chance of patients receiving ineffective or even harmful treatments and ultimately ensures high quality patient care.

Accuracy in transcripts is equally as important in other fields. In legal matters, it's essential because all testimony must be rendered exactly as it's spoken. Likewise, police detectives require precise transcripts of statements by suspects and witnesses. In the corporate arena, letters, meetings and training sessions must be properly transcribed for the sake of effective education and communication.

Requirements For A Good Transcriptionist

Whether you need medical, legal or general transcribing for your business, accurate transcribing requires a unique set of skills. But if your staff lacks the expertise or time to transcribe materials in house, an outside company can easily fill the void.

Working with an outside vendor offers a variety of cost-saving benefits, including: No cost of special equipment. No hourly employee downtime. You pay only for production. No Social Security, payroll or unemployment taxes. No medical insurance benefits, paid vacations and sick leave

But before you run out and hire the first transcription company available, make sure it has the skills to meet your needs. The outsourcer you choose should be: Well-versed in the English language
Knowledgeable of the rules of grammar Familiar with your industry Easily accessible for questions

For more information about professional transcription services, contact Kate Smalley, Connecticut Secretary, at 203-641-3739 or

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Freelance Secretarial and Transcription Services

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What Is A Transcriber?
13 Steps to Preserve Your Family History

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How to Interview Your Way To Ebook Success

How to Write an E-Book Faster Than It Takes To Read This Article

The Ultimate Guide To Acing ANY Job Interview

Inside The Minds of Winners

The ezebook Guide

Ebook Authors Interviewed

Web Marketing Explained



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