



**TIPS FOR
GETTING
BETTER
QUOTES**
SEE PAGE 2

NORTHERN ILLINOIS NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION



Put it before them briefly so they will read it, clearly so they will appreciate it, picturesquely so they will remember it and, above all, accurately so they will be guided by its light.



Joseph Pulitzer

A swap meet for journalists

Conference will let attendees trade problems, solutions

By Sharon Boehlefeld
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

For this fall's annual conference, Oct. 26 at Northern Illinois University, NINA is returning to an old format – multiple small sessions covering several topics. And we're thinking of it as an idea "swap meet."

The conference design grew from feedback we received from people at member papers who said they'd like a chance to meet with their peers from other papers to discuss common problems, share tips, and create their own networks.

To meet that need, we've gathered volunteers from several of our papers who will lead round-table discussions. Everyone who attends the conference will be able to pick two sessions to take part in.

At 9:30 a.m., we'll offer discussions about:

- General assignment reporting
 - Courts and cops reporting
 - Challenges for new editors
- And at 10:45 a.m., we'll have:
- Feature writing
 - Political reporting
 - Challenges on copy and design desks

Session leaders will be armed with some kick-off questions, but each group will be free to veer away from the initial areas. Newcomers and veterans alike will gather to share information in each group. Each group will also get a chance to swap e-mail addresses and, if there is interest, continue their discussion on the NINA Digital Ink blog.

Fall Conference

Friday, Oct. 26, Holmes Student Center, NIU-DeKalb.

9 –9:15 a.m.	Registration / snacks
9:15-9:30	Opening remarks
9:30 – 10:30	Session 1
10:30 – 10:45	Break
10:45 – 11:45	Session 2
Noon	Awards Luncheon

To register

The registration form is included inside, and also on NINA's Web site at www.northernstar.info/nina. Be sure to fill out both sides of the form.

Start the conversation now

You don't have to wait to kick off discussion or suggest questions. You can do so on our Digital Ink blog, at: <http://ninareporter.blogspot.com>

After the second morning groups finish their discussions, we'll have our annual luncheon and presentation of awards by the Northern Illinois University journalism faculty.

We hope you'll plan to join us for what board member Pete Nenni, the Lake County editor at the Daily Herald, described as "the ultimate networking experience."

ONLINE RESOURCES FOR JOURNALISTS

www.northernstar.info/nina

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Route to:

- Publisher
- Managing Ed.
- Newsroom
- Advertising
- Circulation
-
-

Sometimes, secret to getting good quotes is to shut up

By Dirk Johnson

Good quotes give spark and life to any feature story. They are the voice of a narrative, and bring a human touch to story. But getting those great quotes can be tough. In my years as a reporter, one of the most important things I've learned is that, sometimes, the best thing to do is simply to shut up.

When someone is struggling for something to say, and there is an awkward silence, it is human nature to nod that we understand, or finish the quote, or simply move on to the next question. But it's important for a reporter to resist those human impulses. Let silence reign for a while. Chances are, the person being interviewed will ultimately say something worth quoting. And if the quote doesn't quite make it, the reporter can ask them to say it again.

Here are some of the things that I have said that have worked to get better quotes:

- "That's a great insight. Can you go over that again?"
- "In your words, how does this situation look to you?"

- "Please help me out. I want your voice. Think a moment and describe how you see things."

- "Tell me how it made you feel when you saw it happen, when you heard those words."

- "What do you say to people who dispute your view?"

- "What have I not asked you that needs to be in this story?"

With all these questions, it's important to be patient, to look at the person with empathy, to make it plain that you want to hear what they say. If the reporter focuses on the notebook, and hurries them along, they will feel like they are taking a quick pop quiz. And the quotes won't be as full or rich or lively.

So remember, there are times when it's best to say nothing at all — just listen.



Dirk Johnson has spent the past 25 years writing for The New York Times, Newsweek and the Chicago Sun-Times. He is the author of two books, "Biting The Dust" and "Meth." Currently, he's on staff with the NIU Communication Department. Contact him at sycamoredirk@aol.com.

How not to win friends, influence readers

By Jim Killam

In college media, we get the fun issues. Questions like: Should a paper print, as an editorial in 120-point type, "F--- Bush"?

I used dashes here. The student editor at Colorado State University did not. The paper became an Internet sensation for a day or two. CNN did a report on an apparently slow news day. The actual issue at the root of all this — the tasing of a college student in Florida — got completely obliterated.

While I seriously doubt that any NINA newspaper would drop the F-bomb — let alone in a 120-point headline — maybe a better conversation can be had about how we use the First Amendment. Lonny Cain of The Times in Ottawa once wrote about how the First Amendment is best used as a shield rather than a sword.

Surveys routinely show that the public

is dangerously uninformed about the First Amendment. People think the news media have "too much freedom."

And, if journalists brandish that freedom wildly as a sword, we complete their flawed argument. Maybe it's not the literal F word, but maybe it's that attitude on our news and opinion pages, and in how we relate to readers — even as "small," for instance, as being slow to print a correction. Any perception that we're full of ourselves and not advocates for the public will eventually work against us. As an industry, we can't afford that.



Jim Killam is adviser for the Northern Star, the daily student media at Northern Illinois University. He serves as NINA's communications coordinator. Contact him at jkillam@niu.edu, or 815-753-4239.

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Alternative story forms: A primer

(Topic) 101: An introduction or primer on a topic, event, activity or person.

Advice: Expert views on a topic, event, activity. Can include how-to-formats, Q&A, simple copy blocks.

Annotation: Photo or graphic with annotations that breakdown the information contained in the image.

Charticles: Combinations of text, images charts or graphs, in a display presentation that takes the place of a full article.

Chronology: Information organized by a sequence. Can include timelines, charticles, lists.

Comics: Information or short narratives presented in a comic strip form.

Do's & Don'ts: Information in the contrasting form of opposing lists on what the reader should do and should not do regarding a topic, activity or event.

Games: Information presented in board game format.

Glossary: Lists and definitions of key terms on a topic, event, activity or person.

Grids: Information presented in grid or table formats, often to compare and contrast.

Guides: Information, much like a 101, that leads a reader through a place, topic, event or activity. Can include annotated maps, grids, lists, etc.

He Said, She Said: A Q&A or a short quote format that is comprised of two or more people all talking about



This handout material was part of **Cory Powell's** NINA workshop on Sept. 13. Powell, deputy managing editor for visuals at the Minneapolis Star Tribune, spoke about alternative story forms for both print and online news. The material on this page is used with his permission.

To join in the conversation following the workshop, go to NINA's Digital Ink blog at <http://ninareporter.blogspot.com>

the same topic.

How-to: Similar to 101 and guide, but with the emphasis on specific directions to compare a task or activity. Can range from a list of directions to photo or graphic package.

Like info: Information — text and visual — that is clustered around some common denominator, such as the audience, use or quality the items share.

Lists: Lists of items arranged or categorized in meaningful ways. Can include Out/In, checklists, numerical rankings, best of / worst of, Top 10, significant background facts and many more.

Map Art: Annotated maps where the map is the dominate art.

Panel/Roundtable: Comments or discussions from a group of people presented in short quote form. The quotes can be strung along a Q&A

Photo Stories: Information or short narratives presented through photographs and cutlines.

Pro / Con: Similar to Do's and Don'ts, information presented with the compare and contrast of the positive versus the negative qualities of a decision item, topic, place, activity etc.

Profile: Formatted biographical information on a person, place or

organization. The emphasis is on a format that is focused and easy to navigate.

Pullouts: Freestanding ancillary information that is inserted in an overall design.

Q&A: An edited interview presented in question and response format.

Quiz: Information present in a test or quiz format designed to challenge, inform or validate a reader's understanding of a topic, event, activity or person.

Reader Participation: Formatted information derived from readers' input or response to a solicitation from the newspaper.

(Person) On: Short quotes from a person on a specific topic or series of topics. Like a Q&A but usually with just a topic instead of a question for each response.

Tips: Lists of tips designed to help a reader with an activity, event, task or place.

Worksheets: Formatted templates or forms designed to lead readers through information, tasks, activities or processes.

X ways, X Things, X Reasons: A variation on lists, distinguished by the number of items, a number that can be arbitrary or meaningful.

How to crank out story forms

By Nan Williams

ASSISTANT NATION/WORLD EDITOR
MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE

What makes the best candidates?

- Updates/ developments on stories that have been around a while
- Trend stories
- Quick-hit stories: Make three points and you're out
- Top 10-type lists
- Stories full of numbers, which can be digested more easily when broken down
- But really, a good editor can turn just about any news into a story form.

OK, what then?

- Don't try to retain the story original form and just stick small headlines in between every few graphs. That's missing the point.
- Deconstruct the story into four or five key points and reconstruct it into the form. Think of it as taking apart a puzzle and rebuilding it.
- The tighter and sharper the focus of each point, the better. Aim for 10 inches or LESS for most subjects, though some can run longer.

More tips to better story forms

- Put as much thought into the little headlines as you would any headline.
- It reporter/wire service phoned it in, crank up the writing and make it snappy.
- Don't sprinkle quotes throughout the whole thing, just make one section dedicated to quotes, either one sharp one or if issue is controversial, one from each side.
- Don't forget visuals—a piece of art will vastly increase your chances of attracting a reader, set a mood, illustrate a point.
- Try to find a nice sharp ending.

Final comments

- Once you're done, read it one more time and trim 3 more lines out of it. YOU CAN DO IT!
- Are you aware you just finished reading an alternative story form? (Notice the snappy ending?)

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Photographers: Flying Short Course coming to Chicago Oct. 27-28

The National Press Photographers Association brings its annual Flying Short Course to Chicago's Loyola University Oct. 27-28.

For registration information, plus lists of participating national and local faculty, see:

www.flyingshortcourse.org

Stay connected!

E-mail list

Subscribe to our listserv and get information about workshops, conferences and other professional development opportunities. Contact Jim Killam: jkillam@niu.edu

Blog

To join in the conversation about multimedia, training and the future of our newsrooms, visit NINA's "Digital Ink" blog at:

<http://ninareporter.blogspot.com>

Better yet, subscribe to Digital Ink through a service like Google Reader, and get all updates delivered to your desktop.

Web site

Find newsletters, job listings, membership information, board meetings and other information at:

www.northernstar.info/nina

CALENDAR

Thursday, Oct. 25
NINA Board dinner.
Sycamore.

Friday, Oct. 26
NINA Fall Conference and Awards Luncheon, NIU-DeKalb.

Flying Short Course, sponsored by the National Press Photographers Association. Loyola University, Chicago. See details above.

Friday, Dec. 7
NINA Board meeting. 10 a.m. Northern Star, NIU-DeKalb.

Friday, Feb. 22

Illinois College Press Association annual job fair, Chicago City Centre Hotel. Interested in participating as an interviewer? Contact Jim Killam, 815-753-4239, jkillam@niu.edu

Oct. 27-28