# Talking heads

## Tips for the organiser

Talking head or not talking head? Before creating a talking head, it is always worth considering if you can get your message over in another way. This could be a presentation, quotes, still images or an audio file.

Talking heads are good at transmitting information in an economical and effective way, but they can lack passion and enthusiasm. If you decide that the talking head is the most appropriate way to transmit your message then you will need to consider how you can make it interesting to the viewer. You will also need to decide whether you wish to hire a professional team, for example your own marketing team or an external company, or go it alone and do it yourself. There are a lot of websites that give guidance on how to shoot a talking head yourself (equipment, location, filming and editing techniques), so this brief guide will not stray into this area. This guide is designed to give you some quick pointers on what it is like to film a short interview, so you can decide if this is what you want to do.

### Designing the brief

When planning your talking head consider what you are trying to achieve and the audience. Try and visualise what you would like the end product to be. This will help you plan a good quality talking head. Consider:

1. What is the key message?
2. Have you seen examples of talking heads that you would like to emulate?
3. Who should you interview?
4. Where and how will you use the video
5. Whether it will be a just a person talking (preferably from more than one angle) or whether you wish to have cut ways of the subject doing what they are talking about, or images to support their interview. This can add both interest to what can otherwise be a static performance

### Location

1. Generally try and use a location that:

* Has good quality natural light
* Is not too noisy – try and avoid noisy environments, such as loud air conditioning, traffic noise and co-workers
* Has power sockets

1. Conflicting guidance is given on whether the location should be minimalist, clean and crisp so it does not distract the viewer, or the interviewees own environment, so that the viewer gains a flavour of the person. Think of the key message of the interview and select the location that will help the viewer grasp a better understanding of the message. Your marketing team or the film crew should be able to give you guidance on choosing the location too.

### The interview subject

It is good idea to prepare the interviewee before the interview. Tell them exactly what is going to happen in the interview process:

1. How many people in the crew
2. Who will be asking the questions
3. How long the filming will take
4. Whether you will need to film any cutaways of them doing things that they talk about during the interview
5. Share hints and tips on dress etc. See the Tips for interviewee section.
6. Logistical information: date, time and location

### The Questions

Conflicting guidance is given on whether the interview subject should be given the questions in advance. Some companies recommend that you do not give the interviewee the questions. They suggest you tell the subject the general topics that you will cover and let them know that there won’t be any difficult questions, so that they deliver naturalistic answers. Other companies suggest you do give the interview subject questions in advance so that they have the time to develop considered answers.

Whichever option you go for, aim to capture natural, authentic and conversational response. Ask the interview subject not to rehearse too much before the interview, as if they do they will often come over as wooden. If appropriate encourage the interviewee to give examples of their own experiences that the viewer can relate to.

### During the interview

1. Try and put interview subject at ease.
2. Start with ice breaker / conversational questions. Film these so the interviewee relaxes and does not really notice when the more formal part of the interview starts.
3. Do not be afraid to ask the question again or in a different way
4. Do not be afraid to ask follow up questions that will further enhance what the interview subject is telling the viewer.
5. Consider taking notes so you can seek clarification if you feel follow up questions may be required.

# Tips for interview subjects

### Before the interview

1. Please prepare your thoughts before the interview - think about what you would like to say about the topic – what are your key messages?
2. Using examples of your own experience will be very useful to the viewer, it moves the topic out of the theoretical into the real world.
3. Consider briefly practising your answers out loud before the interview, either looking at an inanimate object or yourself in a mirror. But we would recommend you do not over practice, as we would like you to appear natural and unrehearsed.

### During the interview

1. Speak slowly and clearly and avoid jargon if possible.
2. Keep your answers brief and conversational.
3. Avoid wearing clothes with close repeating or bold patterns as they can play havoc with cameras or items that will be distracting to the viewer, for example, dangling earrings or loud ties.
4. The film crew will put you at your ease and give you guidance. For example:

* They may ask you to look at the interviewer, as they may represent the audience;
* They may expand on the questions slightly or ask you additional questions, depending on how the interview progresses;
* They may ask you to repeat the question in your answer, e.g. The topic is important because...

1. Don't forget it’s a recording, so you can ask to start again.