

## INTERVIEWING TIPS

### Future of London Podcast

#FoLAlumniPodcast #LearningFromCrisis



## PODCAST OVERVIEW

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For background, please see the Programme Overview and for specific sessions, you'll receive a Host/Guest brief. The plan is for content to be as peer-driven as alumni and other network members want it to be. FoL will do the planning, hosting, coordination, recording and distribution, but content should also be from YOU: what/who do you want to hear?

Below are some podcast interviewing basics. If you have any questions, drop me a line. Have fun and thanks!

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## BEFORE

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### PLANNING:

- **Have a plan!** Is this part of a series? What/who has gone before? (this is largely FoL but should also involve the Alumni Rep team).
- **Speak up if you want specific topics, speakers or questions.** It will be more 'yours' if you take part in planning, though FoL coordinates the programme, series within it, episodes/interviews within that.
- **Who are you interviewing? Why?** Have they been on other platforms? Often? How do they support diversity of background and content and level? What value do they bring? **How is their speaking voice?** Bluntly, if they are very low-energy speakers who mumble, you could involve them through a blog post or a webinar where they're not on the spot so much.
- **Do some homework** on your topic and interviewee – at minimum, check LinkedIn, company bio, Google mentions and ask the person who suggested them (if it isn't you). \*If you're interviewing someone from a very different discipline, research the topic a bit. It can be GOOD to have lay/general-public interviews since it gets people to communicate outside their bubble; just safeguard your own professional reputation and have some knowledge.

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

- **Have only 7-10 questions for 30 min**, fewer for a 5-/10-/15-minute slot. Your prep chat (below) may indicate how many you'll need to get a good result.
- **Have priority and sacrifice questions** (these may be in order, but if the flow is A>B>C and then F is on another topic but critical, star it and save time for it).
- **Have your questions on a single sheet with a lot of blank space** between/around so you can make notes, and printed big enough to read if you're only glancing (12pt usually).
- **Write clear, jargon free, short questions** in 'spoken' English, e.g. "It seems increasingly clear the plan isn't working very well. What do you think?" over "It appears to be increasingly evident that the operational plan is suboptimal. What's your perspective on this?"
- **Avoid questions that lead to yes/no answers**, e.g. "is it X?" Use "How is, What is, When is...?" or open questions like "How did that go...?"
- **Rehearse** – know your questions so you can LISTEN during the session. Be prepared to follow an interesting lead and dump some questions.

### GUEST PREP/RUN-THROUGH ZOOM:

- **The prep conversation:** Thank them! Outline the programme [share a bit on FoL if they don't know us; see below], say why you wanted to interview them, and either suggest a list of questions or see where the conversation leads (this will depend on how you know them, comfort level etc). Is there anything they want to emphasise?
- **Check their physical/audio setup:** do you and does s/he sound better with or without headset? Test it and go with what's best. Check it again on the day.
- **Share the host/guest brief** which FoL will develop with you.
- **Ask them to avoid jargon and acronyms** – remind them that we may be reaching a much wider audience including from other countries.

## SET-UP:

- Find a **quiet space** where you won't be interrupted.
- **Avoid rooms with hard flooring** or high ceilings, e.g. kitchens. Try to use a room with carpets and/or soft furnishings.
- **Set up your space for easy access to only what you need** – screen, questions, pen/paper, water.
- **Have your questions printed out** and close to hand to work with. Watch for paper noise.
- **If you prefer your questions on another device**, make sure the doc is big enough to see, that it's not too far left or right of your camera eye-line and that your screen doesn't go to sleep!
- **Prevent mic noise:** Don't wear collared shirts or scarves if you have a headset on and avoid touching face or neck and brushing headset mic.
- **Hog the internet for best signal:** Ask folks in your space to stay offline or at least off video if possible.
- **Turn off all audio notifications** on all devices near you.
- **Assume you're on video** – the guest at least will see you! – so appropriate background, dressed etc.

## ON THE DAY

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### BEFORE:

- **FoL will do logistics:** issue the Zoom invitation and host the session; talk with Oli about that each time.
- **Warm yourself up:** 20-30 min prior to signing into Zoom, stop whatever else you're doing. Re-read your questions, walk around, get a glass of water, stretch, check/fix your hair/make-up/visible clothing, whatever will make you feel together and ready to go when you enter the call.
- **Put 'Chat' on and leave it up.** Let your interviewee and Oli know this is how you will contact each other about e.g. audio glitches or other tech issues.
- **Hit RECORD right away** or set up before you even start, just to be sure!
- **Warm your guest up:** Take a few minutes to welcome your guest before starting; thank them again, remind of timings and line of questioning, check any details. Use this as a sound check. Don't be afraid to ask if they can move closer, remove a jacket etc. Try to keep the tone positive, ask how they are, get comfortable. If you're both smiling heading into the interview, it will go that much better.
- **Agree a signal**, e.g. you raise your hand, if you need to interrupt or stop them.

### INTRO:

- **SMILE!** It can be heard on radio/podcasts and actually helps mood and energy. Obvs don't smile if asking about ##s of homeless or other negative topic, but certainly at start and end.
- **Welcome, say your name, intro blurb** (from FoL), take a breath... (you can re-record if need be)
- **Interviewee bio:** keep it short, clear, and relevant to the topic. \*\*You will almost ALWAYS have to edit this, even a 75-word one. Safest is to have the person's official bio on the website companion post and just say their name, role and organisation. Discuss with Oli/FoL before your interview.

### DURING:

- Briefly **pause between answer and next question**; this helps with any editing that may be needed.
- **If you make a mistake, start your question from the top** (your questions are heard in the podcast).
- **Mute yourself while they're speaking or at least avoid affirmative noises** – mm, yup, etc. Noises are not the end of the world, so if you catch yourself doing it, don't re-record unless it's really bad.
- **Do ask them to repeat** if they seem to have broken up or you haven't heard something.
- **Do try to stick with the interview** even if kids, pets etc break in. Ask for their patience; probably easier to stop/start a couple of times than to ask to re-record. Watch for egos here...
- **Try not to talk over them!** Use nodding to affirm, hand signals as above. If you do cut each other off take a breath, smile and go again.

### EXTRO:

- **SMILE! & summary**, thank speaker, your name, Extro blurb and any sponsor thanks (provided by FoL).
- **Thank your speaker and ask for any thoughts/feedback** after official end.
- Click **leave meeting to end the call**. You can click on the link or enter the meeting ID to re-join.

## AFTER

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### EDITING:

- Be prepared to re-record parts if there was any issue; if that's necessary, try to do it with the same set-up you had during interview.
- Listen to the whole thing to build your skills!

### LEGACY!

- Share the link with the interviewee (FoL can do this, but it's a nice additional thank-you), add it to your LinkedIn profile or website if you have one, and put it on your CV. These are new-world skills!
- If you liked it, do another one!

## ABOUT FUTURE OF LONDON

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**OFFICIAL, for print:** Future of London helps build better cities through knowledge, networks and leadership – across disciplines, organisations and sectors. We are the capital's independent network for planning, regeneration, housing, infrastructure and economic development practitioners, with nearly 5,000 professionals using FoL as a hub for sector intelligence, connection and professional development, and a mandate to prepare the next wave of cross-sector city leaders.

**SHORT PODCAST version:** Future of London is the capital's independent cross-sector network for built environment practitioners. You can find out more and get involved at **future of London dot org dot UK**.

**From the podcast overview, to pick from as you like if speaking to an interviewee who doesn't know FoL:**

For more than 10 years, Future of London has offered its cross-sector urban network independent, timely, practical content. It does that in a convivial atmosphere that supports diversity and next-wave leadership.

More than 5,000 people engage directly with FoL across its live and online platforms... As of 2020, 500 increasingly influential city leaders will have graduated from its professional development programmes.

Future of London is now expanding that offer beyond its core network of built environment practitioners – and beyond London and the UK – through this podcast. All the ingredients are here: a trusted platform; a track record in intelligent, objective analysis; a broad, mixed-level network; and the capacity to connect diverse groups and new ideas.

This is a peer-driven podcast: FoL staff, alumni and associates invite guests from different sectors and roles to share stories, insights and ideas. The main aim is to support and inspire the next wave of city leaders. If other city lovers join the conversation, all the better.