



Dream of Travel Writing

Securing Interview Sources to Make Your Stories Sing

Let's go ahead and get started. This week we're going to talk about securing interview sources. The reason I spoke first last week about how to do interviews and how to do them successfully and how to get the right quotes is that I feel like talking about where to find sources is kind of putting the cart before the horse if you are afraid or intimidated by doing interviews because me telling you where to find them and especially me telling you "Oh yeah, you can completely talk to the president of a national tourism association" is only going to make you more intimidated if you're feeling like you, either because you didn't go to journalism school or because you're new at this, aren't feeling 100 percent about your ability to do interviews.

Last week when we spoke about how to do interviews successfully one of the things I really emphasized was that you can do an interview, and a long interview at that. You can talk to someone for half an hour or even an hour and not actually end up with information that's going to help your story. And so this week I'm going to start by talking about who you need to interview because part of securing the right sources for the story you're working on is identifying what quotes and what information are really going to make a difference in your final piece.

April's got a great question here that I just wanted to answer quickly because I don't strictly have a slide on it which is, is it better to do an interview over email or by phone? And when I was looking up some other people's thoughts on interviewing before this call I saw a really funny piece which I actually linked to in the blog post and the email about today's call, but it wasn't the whole piece so much that was funny. I guess funny isn't the right word, but there was a particular quote in there in which the person said "Yeah, I always do interviews by email both because then it's easier to check the quotes, but also because I stopped reporting my stories 30 years ago. And I say that because it sounds funny, but it kind of gives you a hint of how journalists view email interviews.

Email interviews are kind of seen as lazy, as an easy way out, but also a lot of editors just don't accept them. For instance, if you are writing for a very, I don't know, arrogantly internalistic publication is the right word, but a very high on the ideals of journalism outlet like the New York Times with its famous press trip policy. Not only are they going to not like or perhaps accept you doing email interviews, they're going to want you to do them in person rather than on the phone which is its own whole disaster for freelancers because it takes way more time. And a publication like that is also going to want you to record and transcribe the interview and give that to the fact checkers along with your story, so it's even, even more time.

That goes to say that you might have instances in which doing an email interview is okay. However, especially if you're new to doing interviews, I really recommend doing them by



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phone because you'll get better information that way. Because people tend to do email interviews, people who were on staff for publication say, people tend to do email interviews rather than phone when they have a specific piece of information that they need or when the source has a hard time going on the record and it's better for the quotes to be checked by somebody in advance.

I can't really give you an answer one way or the other because there certainly are times that you can do email interviews, but also depending on who the source is, they might feel like they don't have time to do email, to sit down and write and answer questions, but getting them on the phone for five or ten minutes would be something that would be easier for them to fit in their schedule. And I'm going to have, towards the end of the call I have a script that I use when I email sources to set up a call and I'll show you that as well so we can talk more about the scheduling aspect then.

The main things that I want to talk about today are, like I said, I want to start by talking about does your story need sources and what type of sources do you need for this story? Who exactly do you need to be reaching out to? And just to kind of get your gears rolling a little bit, I'm going to ask later for some examples of stories that some of you might be working on to workshop the types of sources that would be good to talk to. So if you have any stories that you're thinking about pitching or that you've already pitched and that you're working on, but particularly ones you're thinking about pitching, get those ready for when I ask for some ideas to workshop for later in that section. And then we're going to talk about where you can find people and I have some tricks that I use that I'll share with you and if any of you guys have tricks that you like as well, I'd love to hear that.

The thing today is that a lot of the useful ways to find sources are based on some application or another online and they change. Like I was checking out on LinkedIn because I haven't used it to find sources in a while, but I used to use it almost exclusively and they really changed a lot of their settings and what kind of search results they allow you to do with a free account and they've made it harder to get the journalist accounts. So that's almost out as a way to find sources. So if any of you guys have things that you like, feel free to drop them in the chat box so I can share them with the rest. And then like I said, at the end of the call we're going to talk about how do you reach out to people and I'm going to give you my script and I'm going to tell you the things to make sure to include.

I used to do a ridiculous number of interviews every month and we talked last webinar about how much time you typically need to set aside for an interview and I mentioned that when I first started doing them I would set aside a half hour and maybe even an hour and I would just talk the interviewee to death. I would just ask them every single thing about the topic and then walk away not really feeling like I had necessarily gotten anything useful in terms of



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specific quotes out of the call. And so if any of you are wondering if you weren't with us last week about how long you should set aside for interviews, these days unless it is a profile of the person and the whole story is about that one person, I generally recommend setting aside 15 minutes for each interview.

Even though this looks like a lot of interviews, if you're doing four in an hour even if I had four different articles that I had to do for one magazine, if my schedule worked out that way I could just sit down and in one day do every single interview. And that sounds crazy and tiring, you kind of get into a flow with it, but the thing is that's how staff writers work. That's how people who, not so much now because there's not so many dedicated news rooms anymore, but that's how people who have to write three, four, five, six stories a day for a newspaper, that's how they do it. They just sit there and they're just on the phone all the time.

Somebody had mentioned in the chat box that they do prefer to be on the phone and it's the kind of thing where it can definitely be intimidating at first. I remember I would put off scheduling my interviews until I felt up to the task, but once you get used to it it's just a part of the job. So before I get into talking more about the specifics of where to find your sources and who your sources should be, I want to talk about how to know if you need them.

Sometimes this is really cut and dry. Sometimes your editor tells you in advance that this story should have three sources or that every story should have one source for each business feature or something like that. So sometimes you more or less don't have a choice about what number of sources you're going to be speaking to, but other times it's really up to you. And another way to look at this is that you might also be sourcing as in getting interviews for pieces that you're doing even for content marketing work. And in that case, it's really great actually to include interviews because you can up the rate on the content marketing. And you're obviously producing a better piece in the end, but it allows you to add an extra layer as well to your pricing.

One of the best ways to know if you should be getting other people on the phone for the story you're working on is if your expertise is enough. So what do I mean by that because this is kind of tricky. So what if you live in Japan and you're writing an article about traveling in Japan and you're writing it about an area that you know very well? Does that mean that your expertise is enough? What if you used to teach English as a foreign language in South Korea and that's what your story is about, specifically ESL in South Korea? Does that mean you're experienced enough?

This is a really tricky thing to look at yourself and understand if you're not used to doing interviews because you've pitched a piece because you know it and you think you know what



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to write. And if you go in with the mindset of “Well this was my experience and this is what I want to write about”, then when you do the interviews you’re just going to ask them questions to reinforce what you already say which isn’t going to be a productive use of anybody’s time, but you can certainly shape the quotes into your piece. However, when it’s best to use interviews is a time when the article might be about a topic that you know well, but it’s not strictly about your first person experience. It doesn’t mean it’s not a first person article, but the point of the article, the real substance of it isn’t your experience.

In this case let’s go to the teaching in South Korea. There’s a difference between writing a story about your own experiences teaching in South Korea versus tips for people teaching in South Korea. And it can be really easy to say “Oh well I know what these tips are”, but if you saw the blog post or the newsletter before this webinar, you’ll notice that I talked a lot about the power today of social proof which has really always been the case. We all know that testimonials help sell things, that people check Trip Advisor and Yelp before going to restaurants. We all know that people want other people’s opinions. If they don’t know something well, they want a recommendation. And when you are writing, even something as simple as a round-up or a tips article, even if you have experience with that thing, the reader doesn’t necessarily know you, they don’t know — I mean first of all, they don’t know how deep your experience is, but even if you tell them, what do they have to go on? It’s not like you’re including your resume as an attachment for them to double check or a link to your LinkedIn profile showing that you spent two years in South Korea for example.

Having multiple voices to lend credence to what you’re talking about can really help with your article. And in service pieces such as tips pieces or round-ups are one of the areas where this is least used, but can have the best results. So again, the difference is are you writing a piece about your experiences teaching in South Korea where all the stories, all the anecdotes, all the facts are going to be specifically things that happened to you and thus, you are the expert? Or are you writing about tips for acclimatizing yourself to the culture as an ESL teacher or tips for successfully teaching ESL in South Korea if you’ve taught other places or have a background with other places? That’s really the difference here. And so again, if you’re not familiar yourself with making that distinction, the best way to go about it, the best way to look at it is, is my experience, am I the person, the subject of this story? Or is the subject of this story either someone else entirely, for instance, perhaps you’re writing about a hotel that’s just opened. The hotel is the subject. Or is the subject actually the reader? And service pieces or advice pieces where you’re telling the reader how to do something, the subject is the reader.

In that case even though it’s based on your expertise and your own experiences, the subject is actually somebody else. And in that case you need to look at what’s going to be most beneficial to the subject. So Carrie asks here, can you do both? And I think what she means is



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can you include your own first person anecdotes as well as ones from sources? You certainly can depending on the piece. Carrie tell me if there was something else you mean there. You certainly can include both, but it really depends.

It's the kind of thing where another example that I used in the blog post and newsletter proceeding this call was women's magazines. So magazines like Redbook and Cosmopolitan as we all know, have tons of stories like 15 Ways to — I'm trying to think of ones that don't have to do with sex because that's all Cosmopolitan seems to have on its cover. But like "15 Ways to Get a Bikini Ready Belly before Beach Season" or something like that. They have all these round-ups that are very service-oriented. And the way that they make these, not only new, but also more worth paying for, more relevant, more authoritative than something you might just find online or some kind of anecdote, is talking to experts.

Often, these pieces might start with a first person lead. However, it depends on the format, it depends on the column, it depends on the publication. So while you can include your own experience and weave in that of others, it really depends for the publication at hand, you qualify as an expert. So this is something that I think a lot of us who, especially people who aren't as familiar with magazines and haven't been published as frequently, it's really easy to forget that even though you are familiar with something, that's not enough for an editor. Or that's not enough for a reader.

One of the things that can help here and we spoke last week about whether you should include interview sources in your pitch and how to go about doing that. But one of the things that can help if you find that you've been pitching pieces that are more service-oriented, so they're more advise-oriented pieces, or their round-ups and you haven't been hearing back from editors, it's probably because your expertise isn't good enough. That's one of the big things that it can be.

Obviously it might be that the idea isn't a fit for their publication, but if it's a great idea and you're not hearing back, then you're not showing the editor clearly enough why you are the one who should be writing this piece. And one of the best ways to do that is say "I've already spoken with the owner of this business about being featured in this profile" or "I have a relationship" or "I already know" or something like that. So one of the ways that you can make yourself more attractive to an editor and more qualified to write a story is to be self-aware enough to know when your expertise isn't enough and you need to get source and to make sure that you line that up and mention it in your pitch.

I don't want to dwell on this too long, but I do want to workshop some story ideas that may or may not need sources to talk a little bit about what type of sources you might include



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before I get into a more bigger picture list of all the different types of sources that you can use for different articles. So whose — I'm going to pick on people from Pitchapalooza if nobody has any ideas. So tell me some ideas of articles that you're either working on or that you're thinking of pitching that we can talk about what type of sources you might include. Come on guys, I'm going to pick on Pitchapalooza people whose pitches I already know about if I don't have any ideas. Oh good, we got some, okay.

Trends in the food scene in Santiago. Yeah, this is a great example. Okay, great, great. Okay so I've got three here that I've got already, so I'm going to start with these. So somebody who is writing a guide book — is it just to Chile or also to Argentina, I'm not sure Steph? But somebody who I know is working on a guide book for an area is — Chile, okay great — so is gave the example of trends in the food scene in Santiago. So this is the kind of thing where you as somebody who lived there could very easily write up what the trends are, but to do this for a magazine you absolutely need to have other people weigh in. And then the question is who should be weighing in?

This is a really prime example because for a story like trends, you actually want to have a mix of authority sources and everyman sources and we're going to talk about the difference for that in a second. But in this case, you know when you watch the evening news or something? I typically don't watch the news in the U.S., I only do in Italy, but I imagine they also do this in the news there. But they often have the kind of man-in-the-street thing where there's a broad vest journalist standing outside somewhere and maybe it's a U.N. Summit on environmental change or the Environmental Goal Summit that just happened and they're talking to people outside. They're talking to people who are maybe protesters or people who have just come to watch. They're talking to diplomats as they're coming out. This is the kind of everyman reporting that you would include also in this trends in the food scene style piece.

You might while you're out at a restaurant ask the person sitting next you “How did you find out about this restaurant?”, “Do you eat out often?”, “How do you think this compares to other restaurants?”, “Are there particular things that you've seen start recently in the food scene here that are notable or that you think that you haven't seen or heard of somewhere else?”, but then you're also going to mix that with authority sources. So those would be, not just people who own restaurants, but also perhaps somebody who works with the tourism board, someone who works for the local hospitality organization, or even the mayor or someone from the mayor's office.

That would be the kind of sourcing that you would use for a story like that. Well we've got another one here which is a nice different example which is one specific attraction. Now I'm not quite sure what the story angle is on this. If you want to drop that in as I'm talking about it that would be great. So for the World War II Museum in Sicily, if you want to write about



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this, it depends on the type of story. If you are writing again, a first person story about your visit to the World War II Museum as somebody who had a relative that was in an internment camp, you could write that without any sources just comparing stories that you've heard from growing up with what's going on in the museum.

She says that this is for World War II magazines why Sicily was such an important part of the war, great. So if you're visiting an attraction at a site and the point of your story is to use that attraction to paint a larger picture, then it's especially important to get the voices of people who are authorities on that topic. So this is the kind of thing where, I'm always very careful not to knock people's blogs per se because they have a very different purpose than magazines, but this is the kind of thing where if somebody were writing about a visit to the World War II Museum on their blog, they would write about what they saw, they would maybe describe the exhibits, say how they felt, maybe say some quotes from the tour guide.

As soon as you start adding the tour guide in there then you've got some sources, right? However, a tour guide at a museum is typically not going to be an authority source. They're not going to be something not even that an editor would care about, but with the reader as well. So for a reader they might be like "Okay. The tour guide said that. Huh. Okay", but if the tour guide was somebody who fought in World War II, if the tour guide is a professor who regularly lectures on World War II at the university and volunteers his time tour guiding, if the tour guide is in Italy. For instance tour guides, not for attractions that's different, but tour guide for regions have to have if not one, but several master's degrees and take a lot of tests on their area of expertise in order to get their license.

You can build up how the tour guide does have a background, but what would be even better would be to visit the museum, to look at the museum, to talk about what's in the museum, and then to include sources who might be professors. Or like I said, people who have in fact fought in the war, who are survivors. So those are some other different types of sources that you could bring in there.

Now we've got one more and Marta I'd love if you could tell me the angle on this as well. So we've got one more that's again, very different, that I want to talk about here. Marta's mentioned reindeer crossings in the arctic. That's a fantastic story. That sounds great, I can imagine the pictures. That sounds so cool. I've done some research myself with the Sami people in Northern Sweden who herd reindeer and reindeer herding is its own whole other story. But the reindeer crossing that Marta's talking about sounds like a more natural occurrence and not like they're being herded.



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Herding reindeer to help people with food — oh it is related to people. So this would be the kind of thing where if someone is herding the reindeer, I would definitely want to hear from them. I don't want to hear why you, as the writer, think or have heard the reindeer are being herded. I want a quote from somebody who is herding the reindeer about why they do it. And I want to hear — she's saying that it dates back to the 1920s — I want to hear from their mouth, not from yours, that this person's grandfather did this and his grandfather before him and that they have been doing this every year even in snowstorms. And I want to hear an anecdote from them about one year when it was really hard because there was a big blizzard or something like that.

This is the kind of story that you could just write what you had observed, but talking to those sources, especially that kind of everyman's source who has a story about a different iteration of this annual even that you weren't there for, can really add to the fabric of your piece. Okay, great. Thanks so much Susan and Steph and Marta for sharing those examples. Those were really great and I'm so glad you brought those up.

I want to get now into what I was just talking about in more specifics. So I spoke about how there's really two main types of interview sources; the interview sources and the everyman sources. And I'm going to talk more about some examples for that, but if those two concepts of authority versus everyman don't make sense to anybody, drop that in the chat box and let me know and I'll expand further. So one of the interesting things is that both of these types of sources can be set up either in advance or when you're on the ground. And I think we tend to think "Well if I'm going to interview somebody like an official or somebody with the tourism board or a business owner I need to set that up in advance, but if I'm going to interview just a random person to get their opinion, I won't know who that is beforehand and I'll need to find them once I get there." But this is actually not the most true thing and in fact, sometimes the best interviews work in reverse.

Sometimes the best everyman sources that really make your story because of the ripple factor, you set up in advance. And what I mean by that is that it's kind of an old school, pre-internet way of going about things, but some people still do it. So a lot of journalists used to, before they arrived in a foreign destination, make sure they had some contact on the ground who was going to be their local guide and introduce them to the scene. And I was just speaking with somebody at the North American Travel Journalist Conference about a very interesting time when she did this. So she was going to India for the first time and they didn't have a contact. And so she was about to leave, not just for India but another trip before that so it was about three or four weeks before they were going to be in India but they're about to leave the U.S., and they didn't know who — not even who was going to host them, but they just didn't really know very much about what they were going to do in India because they just didn't have the a connection.



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She was at a gallery opening and just saw this stunning Indian woman in a sari and said “Okay, well that’s going to be our person” and she went up and started chatting with her and the woman needed to go somewhere to a different event, but said “Here’s my number. Call me tomorrow and we’ll talk about your trip.” And sure enough, she called the next day and not only did the woman remember her, but the woman said “Okay, great. I spoke with my mother, they’re going to pick you up at the airport, and this, this, and this.” And so the woman had gone out of her way to start to set up things for that person to see in the city.

This is one of the great things about setting up everyman source interviews in advance is that you might reach out to somebody perhaps who owns a local business. There’s a really interesting, I can almost see it from where I’m sitting, but there’s a really interesting brewery restaurant across the water from where I am in Stockholm which kind of calls itself Brooklyn Brewery even though I’m sure they’re not trying to infringe on that trademark. But they say they make Brooklyn style beer with local Swedish ingredients in their cuisine and they match the beers to the Swedish cuisine and they’ve got this brew master that they’ve imported from New York and all the chefs are Swedish and it’s meant to be this interesting cultural amalgamation.

That would be the kind of thing where I could say “Hey, I’m from New York. There’s this cool thing in Sweden. I want to do a story”, even though everyone is doing these stories now. Pretend I wanted to do a story about the Brooklyn/Sweden connection and about based on this statistic that I read somewhere that one quarter of the people in this neighborhood in Stockholm wished they lived in New York City. So I would reach out to this guy and I would say “Hey, I’m from New York. I’m coming and this is the story that I’m working on. I want to see if I can talk to you.” And the kind of thing that usually happens in that case is that they not only say yes, but then they say “Oh, great. I’ll have you for dinner, and I’m also going to bring this person and this person and this person.” And so then they start to connect you with other people. And so when you do that at the beginning of your trip it allows for all of these wonderful opportunities to open up after that.

Now the flip-side is that authority interviews, sometimes these can be hard to set up in advance. Especially if you don’t have a story. Whether it’s you’re trying to get in touch with a tourism board that’s usually very easy to meet or somebody who might be the head of an association or an important business owner or something like that. Trying to get them in advance by phone or email might be hard, but once — God, sorry I don’t know what’s happening — but once you’re there to just pop into their office and say “Hey, can I talk to you for five minutes? I’m here from across the world”, it’s usually very difficult for them to say no. So either of these types of interviews can be done both ways and obviously you can do both types of interviews exclusively by phone or by email if needed, rather than being in the location.



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Let's look more specifically about one type of interview. So I talked about how getting in touch with somebody for an everyman type interview can be really useful in terms of opening doors to other interesting people in the location that might have great inputs, not only for the story that you're working on, but maybe for other stories. But one of the best types of interviews and most important types of sources for you to reach out to no matter what story you're working on, is the Convention and Visitor's Bureau or the tourism board. And I used to get flak from one of my editors that I wouldn't tell the CBB I was in town and I would just go around and do my own stuff. So I certainly understand the different reasons that you might not get in touch with the CBB, either because you're pressed for time or you don't have enough story set up, or whatever it is.

I have to tell you that if you have the time to take a half hour or an hour to go meet with them and they'll often set you up with a lot of other things, so it might be more than a half hour or an hour. But if you take that time one of the interesting things that can happen is that it's not like they're just going to tell you about the top attractions. They're not going to just read the visitor brochure to you which I think a lot of us worry about the tourism board because if you just go to the Tourism Information Center which is different than going to see the people who work for the tourism board. At the Tourism Information Center they do tend to specialize in what most tourists are looking for just because that's most of the people who come in the door. But if you go instead to the actual tourism board, their job is to help journalists with stories and they are perfectly accustomed to the fact that not all journalists already have a story. Sometimes you're there trying to figure out what your story is.

What that means is that they're going to throw away the book, so to say, and they're going to tell you off the top of their head what is helpful for you. So I remember I was working on a story, I think this is the story I was working on when I spoke to this person, but I had a really interesting story a few years back where I was working. I was writing about downtown shopping areas that had no chain stores. Everything was locally owned and independent in the whole downtown main street area and I was speaking with somebody and she told me, even though it wasn't specifically in downtown, that "Oh I should come. I didn't live that far away" and they had this really cool thing called Press Bay Alley which was where the local newspaper used to essentially just store their junk. It used to be just an alley and then they embarked to clean it up and move their stuff out of there and help a bunch of small business open there.

There was a maker studio and a really cool café and a greenhouse and all sorts of neat stuff going on. So even though that wasn't necessarily something that I could use for the story I was working on at that time, it was a great idea for all sorts of other stories. And so when you talk to people from the CBBs they are going to know their destination so, so well. I've talked to people who work at CBBs and they've only started two or three weeks ago, but they tend



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to have already been living in the place that they are telling you about. So what happens is that even if they can't tell you the statistics of every hotel in town, they know and are very happy to share with you the quirky story of the guy who started the hotel where the whole entire is leather and they feature guitars from famous rock bands and how he collected them and what's the best time of day to catch him to get his stories.

That's really what they're there for. And so by either taking an interview with them before you get to your destination or before you start working on your stories, you're going to have just a wealth of characters. A wealth of people that they have recommended you talk to because they have talked to all these people and they know who is interesting. They know who can give a good interview and who just in and of themselves or particularly, their business and the struggles they were through to start it, is a great story just on its own. So that's my just a little sales pitch about talking to tourism boards because they're really an underutilized resource I think today by a lot of travel writers and they certainly understand the desire or the need if you're writing for certain publications, to not have sponsorship from the tourism board. But that doesn't mean that you can't use them as a resource to get story ideas, yes, but also connections to interesting sources.

Let's talk about different types of authority interviews. So I mentioned already people who work in the CBB. That's one for sure and there's a couple other ones in here that I mentioned when we were talking about the herding reindeer, the World War II Museum in Sicily, and the trends in the food scene in Santiago. But I want to expand on each of these and talk a little bit about where you can find each of these and how and when you should use them.

Talking head types, I think that this has become a main stay of broadcast journalism and I do see this in some print/online outlets, but most of us aren't using these people. Most of us aren't using the kind of vaguely qualified, but off quoted experts that appear on the news whether it's a talk show or the evening news. But these can be great people because they're essentially professional quote givers. So they're going to be an easy interview, they know what kind of things you might be looking for, or what makes a good story, and they're reputable. They've also been featured on CNN or I guess I shouldn't use news networks, they're so polarizing these days, but they've also been featured on other news outlets.

These can be great people when you just want to have a source for, a lot of journalists call it color or texture, but you just want to have a quote in there to lend some more authority to what you're talking about. Especially if it is a trend piece. So this is the kind of thing where, especially trend pieces that tend more towards general travel topics or aviation, there's a lot of talking head types for things like that. Though you can also find ones that are more food-focused. For instance, you might say Anthony Bourdain would be a talking head that's a little more food focused even though it would be a little of an odd characterization to call him a



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talking head. But Andrew Zimmern is one like that. There's a lot of these people who have a bit of celebrity in the food travel scene that are also good for this.

One of the good ways to source these as well can be people who have popular blogs on these topics and when I say popular, I mean very seriously popular. So this is going to be in the past seven days, I'm talking more about people who are more household names. o another really untapped resource though is hospitality and tourism professors. I think we tend to even forget that there are people who have PhDs in tourism who can speak to these trends and who write papers about these trends and spend their whole days studying and teaching students how to study these things.

This is probably my favorite resource that I invite you all to further take advantage because just like the talking head types, professors are very used to speaking, they're very quotable, and they're also shockingly accessible. And so they're really great people to reach out to, to get that extra level of authority in your pieces.

We talked about CBBs, but another thing that's above and beyond a CBB, and also really great because it's a bit more independent per se, is an association professional. And so there's so many associations, I'm always boggled by the ones that I come across. And I used to write for a magazine that was specifically for people who plan association events. And so there's associations out there that are incredibly small in scale and ones that are international. There's associations just for the teachers in a state or the teachers in a county. There's associations for people who work in insurance only for a specific industry. There's just so many different types of associations and the ones in tourism that you might be aware of are there's associations for bus tours, there's associations for tourism boards. So every state almost has an association of tourism boards for that state.

These association people, kind of like the talking heads, one of the main things that they do is advocate for their industry. So they're also very used to speaking, they've got this nice credential to back them up, and they also have a big picture view about trends and about their industry, so they can be very useful in that way. Another good get, so to say in terms of an authority source, would be an actual city or state official for the area that you're looking at talking about. And again, this is the kind of thing where you might think that it's very hard to set these up, but there's almost always somebody at that level, at the state or regional or city level who you can speak to. It might not necessarily be the mayor themselves and sometimes it is, but just get in touch with that press person and unless you're doing something really controversial, they tend to be more than happy to give you a quote because they have their own press quotas that they need to meet and every story that they get in is a tick in that box and it helps show that they are getting their job done.



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Now business owners, this can be very easy to set up or very difficult to set up. And this is kind of a weird thing because if you want to write about a very quirky boutique in Soho in New York, it's great to get on the phone or get in person with the owner and talk about how they sourced the unique things that they sell. However, I've seen something unfortunate happen with a lot of small business owners. They are probably my biggest offenders in terms of trying to tank my story the day of my deadline by saying "Oh actually, I can't do it this month. Do you think we can do it next month?" I swear. I will get the president of a CBB for a huge city on the phone, no problem. They make time for me, they understand the value of this, but somebody who owns a small business that is not getting this kind of publicity that would be a great thing for them to hang on their wall, and so on and so forth, they're like "Oh sorry. Can we do this next month?" No we can't do this next month, you're not the only person in this story, the story isn't about you, I have a deadline, grow up.

This can be a double-edged sword and this is one of the reasons why it's really great to get these interviews done in person if you can when you're onsite and for sure on the phone by just calling them and trying to catch them, rather than by setting up a specific time. But they can also be the very, very best sources in terms of information because they have their hands in the day-to-day operations and they know the founding of their business. And so they are just a great wealth of stories and also often quotations because somebody who has started a business tends to have to talk about it a lot and they have a really good flow with the story of their business.

Now I've made a distinction here between CBBs or tourism boards and DMOs or DMCs. So I've put DMCs also in here and this is a term that I don't use so often that you guys might not be familiar with, but what these are is Destination Management Organization or Companies. So the difference between a destination management organization of some kind versus a convention and visitors bureau is how it's funded in a way, but it's almost more than the DMO is a third-party versus the tourism board which is an offshoot of the city itself. So it's the difference between essentially non-profit versus profit or government versus contract or something like that. That's the division there.

It's an outside party that's for profit who isn't started specifically with these high-minded ideals or goals like a tourism board would be that they have to check in with. They're more profit-driven. So DMOs and DMCs can be really great and because like a small business, they're a company. They know their story and they know what they're selling, but on the other hand they're selling something. So unlike a tourism board which is there for the promotion of the region, DMOs and DMCs can be a little more promotional, I guess is really just the best word, about how they speak about themselves and the destination that can be a little too PR-y, blustery, sometimes what you need. And obviously that's a gross generalization and some are better than others, but I say this because I've worked for a group



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of magazines where we were not allowed to use them in fact because it had just turned into all the quotes that we were getting and all the interviews had just become too self-promotional.

In some cases, there won't strictly be a tourism board an area that you might be writing about and you do need to go to a DMR or DMC, but this is something to keep in mind if you find yourself in that case. So everyman interviews, how do you set these up in advance? How do you find them besides just talking to somebody that you run into in your destination? So I've never personally used couch surfing, this is me slightly going out on a limb, but I know people who have used this.

I've heard from somebody today that couch surfing like mentioned earlier, these apps are always in flux about their usefulness, but that couch surfing is more of a hook-up site now which is a whole other story. But a lot of the people on couch surfing, or another corollary here is Wanderlust which is only for women though I must say, offer you the opportunity to meet people in a destination for coffee and just chat and have them be a resource about a destination. An Airbnb host can also be really great for this, but one of the things that Airbnb has started doing which can be a great source of stories and I'm just waiting for somebody to start specializing in this because they've made it so easy for us, is that Airbnb has these new experiences which are just ridiculous things. It's like a DIY press trip basically, but for non-journalists where you get to follow an interesting person around and do cool things.

That can be a really cool concept if you are going to a destination and you haven't done too much research to find out what Airbnb experiences they have set up. Because they've got some really cool things in there at are typically not what you would expect to do in a destination and that always makes a great story. So there's a lot of other social networks that are specifically for travelers. They kind of come and go all the time and change in terms of their pricing and things like that, so I didn't want to a list here. But if any of you guys are familiar with A Small World, that was really one of the first ones of this variety.

Now I've mentioned Twitter on here and I didn't mention Facebook and that was because Facebook has so many privacy settings now that you can't really just go through and see who's talking about blah, blah, blah and reach out to people that you don't already know. People who are outside of your social circle. But on Twitter you can see who's tagging Stockholm, who's tagging Tokyo, who's tagging Brooklyn, and just say "Wow, that looks cool. I just got here, do you have some tips for me?" or something like that.

I'm going to get in a second to talking to people or to the extensions of people that you already know, but Twitter can be a really great place to source, if not specifically talking to in



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person someone, but just to get these tips and specifically quotes that you can then throw into your stories. Now another really great resource for that is local bloggers. So I haven't done this myself in a while, but it's a very good and easy way to get that pre-arrival everyman interview who introduces you around that I mentioned earlier.

When I say local bloggers, I mean really digging in and who is the person who locally has a blog specializing just in Fika for instance, which is the African Coffee Brig here in Sweden and is writing about the places with the most authentic Swedish cakes. Cake culture is a huge thing here in Sweden. So that would be the kind of thing where you could find both some tips from that person and also reach out to them and tell them that you've been loving their content on cake cafes, but you also would just like to talk to them about food trends and what they've noticed and do a more general interval as well. And because they do have a blog on that topic it makes them somewhere between everyman and authority, but what I really like about local bloggers is that you can get them to talk both about what they're an authority as well as about other things as somebody who lives in that place and experiences that culture every day.

Now I mentioned earlier the woman who needed an Indian connection and walked up to a person in a gallery, but usually she would reach out to her social network and say "Does anybody know somebody?" And this again, is kind of a good old-fashioned thing, but even I've used this. For instance, my typical social circle is very different, but also somewhat travel-related. So my husband is a computer scientist and not from America and most of our computer scientist friends, most of his colleagues or people he went to his PhD with, are also not from America. So I was going to a part of France that I didn't know very well at one point and he said "Oh, Phillippe is from there. Let's ask Phillippe for some recommendations" and we said "Hey Phillippe, what should I eat while I'm in Lyon?" and he said "Hold on, let me ask my friends" and he went and got a bunch of recommendations from his friends who still live there and sent me all of those. And somebody invited me over for dinner and somebody else wanted to meet me at this bar, and so that can be again, old-fashioned, but the friend of a friend is a really great way because these days everyone is so global that you never know who has a really strong connection with a place that you might be very good friends with and you just didn't realize that they have a very strong connection with this place and can hook you up with some people on the ground.

Now I want to be sure to talk about HARO or Help a Reporter Out. Have any of you guys used this or are any of you guys familiar with it? Drop it in the chat box, let me know either if you've used it or just if you've heard of it. Oh okay, so some of you haven't heard of it. Some of you have just heard of it. Interviewed by Oyster, check it every day. Love it. Aileen say "Yes I've gotten great tips and been a source, even got a job from it." Oh I want to hear about that. Email me about that, great to see you by the way.



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This is really interesting. So for those of you that have a blog and don't know about HARO, I would recommend checking it as Susan said, checking it every day because this is an opportunity for you to be a talking head authority source based on the content of your own blog. So it's H-A-R-O, Help a Reporter Out. And the way it works is that — I was going to do a flip-over to Firefox and show it to you, but it's really the interface is pretty easy. So I'm just going to talk about it and then we can get on to some other things, but the way that it works is that every day, I believe three times a day, I don't know if you can set it to happen more often, but they send out an email. It's HARO, H-A-R-O. Right here on the list here. Every day they send out an email where they include just hundreds, it's not hundreds in one email, but over the course of the day hundreds come out, of requests from journalists for specific people that they need as sources for their stories. And then there's also another section which is people who are offering to be sources.

You can put the most granular type of everyman source that you need in here. To go back to women's magazines for instance for a second, you can say "I need a woman who is between 35 and 45, divorced, has two teenage children, and is thinking about getting remarried, but concerned about how it will affect her children." So that's how specific you can be in terms of your HARO request and you will get people. It is crazy. I have used this, I needed to do a story for a magazine for private pilots and they need so many photos. They needed photos of the airplanes, of these things, but they needed photos of the runway from the air and I personally don't fly planes. And now I have some friends who fly planes, but I didn't back then, and I needed photos from the air of a very specific, very small airport. And I put it on HARO and in a day practically, not even that long, I got an email from this person who had 20 odd photos and they were exactly what I needed.

When you have something very specific that you're looking for an everyman type interview for, this is a really great place to find it. And the thing is that it's important when you're doing everyman interviews to make sure that the source is highly relevant to your story because when you're doing a non-authority source and the source is tertiary-ly related to your topic, it can really just sink the social proof level of that source and by extension, your story.

I talked a little bit when I was talking about these sources about where you can find them, but I just want to offer as well because we're getting very close on time here, a couple other ways, networks so to say, or tactics for finding sources. So like I said, LinkedIn used to be the go-to place to find sources and it's changed a bit and it's kind of gotten to the point where you need to have a membership of some kind for it to be useful in terms of sending in-mails through LinkedIn. And in-mails, if you're not familiar, are something that LinkedIn guarantees will get responses and they guarantee that by refunding you an in-mail credit if you don't hear back, but they allow you within LinkedIn itself to connect to people without having to find their email.



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I've found that in reality, it's not the hardest thing to find most people who have a job's, professionally now, finding their personal email can be different. These days so many people are on Twitter and Facebook, that you might be able to just get them that way. So in a sense, the necessity of in-mails on LinkedIn has decreased, but LinkedIn's searches, they've also capped but you can still do them. And this is really the huge, huge usefulness for us journalists of LinkedIn, is that you can search for people who have a specific type of job. They have a specific title or they've listed specific credentials, they work at a specific company or in a specific city, or they previously worked at a company or in a city.

Anytime you need to say get a source for food trends in Santiago and you might know some restaurants, but you can also go on LinkedIn and put in chefs or restaurant owners or maître d's in a place and search that way and people on LinkedIn will select if they want to talk to you to be featured in a story. And often, especially people who are in professions where they want to be contacted, they will just include their email address right there on their profile on LinkedIn. But the other really great thing about LinkedIn in terms of finding sources is the LinkedIn groups.

LinkedIn has all of these professional groups. They have ones if it's a professional association. For instance, like the Society of American Travel Writers or The North American Travel Journal Association, some of these professional associations also have a group on LinkedIn, but they tend to be a bit more affiliation-based. So they'll people who work in tourism with an eco-tourism focus that are small business owners or something like that. So by getting on these LinkedIn groups you are not only going to see the people who are commenting and see in advance if they're a good source or not, but you can also as a secondary benefit, pick up some good article ideas there by looking at what people are talking about. So this is really great if you have a beat or a focus area that you write about frequently.

Now Facebook groups are also really great for this, but can be harder to get into if they're a closed Facebook group and you might not even be able to find out about them. So that's another unfortunate point about the Facebook groups, but the LinkedIn groups, I don't think there's a way to make them invisible, just closed and it's pretty easy to get into them. So we talked about HARO, another thing like HARO though is ProfNet. So this is just for professors.

I talked before about the value of all of these academic tourism and hospitality folks that we're not using and you can certainly — every academic in the world has a website with their email address. It's just impossible not to. So you can usually just find the person and put in their name and their university and get their email, but what if you don't know who you're



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trying to find? So ProfNet has listings of professors that want to be contacted for articles and they talk about what they know about that they can speak to.

Another thing I didn't mention here because you kind of need to have the mindset of dealing with academic papers, but is Google Scholar. Google Scholar is really what all of the academics use to collect their citations which means the number of times that their papers have been mentioned. So what you can do is you can go on Google Scholar and look for a certain topic and then see who has the most citations. So whose paper on that topic has been quoted most frequently? And that tells you that that professor has authority on that topic.

There's also a lot of specialized forums. These have been around since the dawn of the internet, but if you have a really specific subject area that you want to look into, you can go into these forums and see who's been commenting a lot. And these can really, like I said, back to — let's go back for a second — Things like A Small World or social networks that are travel-related as well. Or they can be something that's more specific for your subject area like a forum for chefs in New York to talk about where they like to eat late night and what restaurants they will all want to check out.

A couple that I use a lot that can be really useful are award lists and association membership lists. So every industry, every single industry has awards of some kind if not several, that might come through an association or that might come through a larger for-profit organization. But going through the awards lists is a really great way to find sources in an industry that you're not familiar with who are definitely qualified. Association membership lists are really great for again, like a starting point in an area that you're not familiar with, but especially if you need to get an interview done quickly or you're having trouble finding email address because it's just a great big hit list and you can put a bunch of people in Google and see what you come up with.

Now I just want to mention for a second something about finding email addresses. I mentioned before this call that it just kills me when I see people selling lists of tourism board contact information because it's all on the internet and the second that that list is put together in a PDF it's already stale and you might be contacting the wrong person. So if you, particularly for tourism people, if you're looking to find somebody's email address and it's not readily immediately apparent on the website, my favorite thing to do is just put the person's name, their full name, in Google and then "@ " the URL of whatever they work for and look that way. And you would be surprised how often it comes up.

This is really important because when you're trying to set up an interview, you need to email the person directly to their primary email address. You can certainly write them through



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LinkedIn if you have LinkedIn credits or through Facebook or through Twitter or something like that, but don't email a bucket email to set up an interview because it's going to be a very slow response if you do get one.

I just want to talk for a second — we've got one question, hold on. What if you can't find a contact name? I really can't find any contacts for the Chile and tourism board. So this is an interesting point. What if you can't find a contact name? I'm trying to think if there's ever been a case where I really can't find a list of staff for a tourism board. So what I just said about a name and the "@" URL dot com or dot org, I do that for press releases. So if I'm not finding an individual name, I'll put in the name of the organization and then type a press release and put that in Google. And it's very rare, especially for a tourism board, for them not to have released press releases.

Then what happens is that you might get a press release and they always have to give contact information in a press release. It's a standard part of a press release, but when tourism boards hosts their press releases on their own site they often take that information off. So I use Google to find their press release through other sources and see who's mentioned there and then I start with that person. But also you can look on LinkedIn. LinkedIn also has a lot of names and if that's not working, I also do a Google search on the website itself for staff or for a directory or something like that because sometimes there's not a clear link on the website to a staff directory or to a listing that, but it is there somewhere, it's just not linked to.

You can go to the site map of the website, but what you can also do is you can go in Google and write — I'm going to type this in the chat box — so you write URL dot com. So whatever it is that you were trying to search and then you write your search terms. So we would say staff list or just staff. So you should all see this, but you put URL dot com and then colon just in a normal Google window and that restricts the Google search to start only on that website. So that's another good way to go about it, but I've never had a case where I can't find contacts for the tourism board. So one thing you can do if you're not finding the email is to just find the phone number and that's always going to be listed somewhere. You can usually find their marketing collateral or something that has a phone number on it or you can look just in the good old phone book or something and find their office trunk line and just call and ask who would be a starting person to interview.

If you really are having trouble finding the email address for a person or a place, call them and get some receptionist on the phone and say "Oh I need to know the right person to reach out to for blah, blah, blah" and they're like "Oh yeah, it's so and so" and they give you the email address. So the cases in which you wouldn't be able to get an email address that way are like if it's a famous person or a CEO or something like that, but in those cases you should be going through their listed contact which should be available online.



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What should you include in the email when you reach out to people? The name of the publication you're writing for or your pitching if this is something about you're setting up an interview before you're pitching the story. The perspective publication date if you have it. The deadline if pressing, but you typically don't want to include the deadline, your deadline because what happens is the source will try to push off the interview until your deadline and nobody wants that. If people ask you what your deadline is, I always tell them a week before my actual deadline. But put the deadline if you need to talk to them in the next two days.

What you want to talk to them about again, and brief, we're not going to be telling them all of our interview questions or anything like that, and then why you've selected this source. So I've included on the next slide my very, very standard thing that I use for formulating a type of article that I do often and in this case it's with a source that I speak to with some regularity. So in the subject line I just say in lowercase "interview and photo request" because I need photos from these people as well. So it's also important to be brief. Just like any pitch, when you're reaching out to an interview it's very easy to spend way too much time talking about why you're reaching out to them and what the story is about and all these things, but you should not because they won't read it and you won't get your interview.

When you're trying to set up interviews you need to keep it as short as humanly possible. Anytime you're asking for a favor from anybody who has no need to do it for you, you should keep it short, but particularly in this case. So here I have a little intro. This is where I would say if I'm reaching out to them cold how I found them or why I'm reaching out to them for these. So I've thanked them for helping me with my previous piece and then I said "I'm working on" and I talk about what the story is about and then I tell them that I'm going to be featuring their destination. So that's why I'm reaching out to them and this is the angle of the story, this is what I want to talk to them about. And then I tell them that I need help with two things and I say the length of the interview.

This is also really useful to say so that they don't feel like "Oh long is this going to take? How much time of my day? I don't know if I can really do this." So I always say the length of the interview and then I say with who to the best of my ability. So if I'm emailing a museum and I want to talk to them about a new exhibit, then I'll say "with someone who can speak about the new exhibit" or "with somebody who can speak about events at the museum" or something like that. I say not a name because sometimes that person's away or they're just out of the office, but I tell them the type of thing that I'm looking for because that helps them if you give them flexibility. That's really important.

Then because I need to get images for this publication, I tell them I need images from them and I tell them at the same time that I'm asking for the interview so that have a heads up. And



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then I just say thanks so much. You can also say, like if you're on a tight deadline you can say "Would it be possible for us to speak about this in the next two days because I'm on a tight deadline?" or something like that.

I mentioned that you don't always want to tell them your deadline, that you typically don't want to tell them your deadline because they can say "Okay well you have two weeks, I'll get back to you." I try to always follow up in a week if it's not too urgent or a couple days with interview requests if I haven't heard from them, but sometimes they're just really flakey. They're like "Oh yeah sure. Yeah, let's talk about it" and you send them sometimes and you don't hear back and then they just keep putting it off and putting it off. Or they want to do on email and you're not allowed to do it on email. Or they want to do it for a different issue because they've looked on the magazine's website and they've seen that there's another issue about blah, blah, blah.

Sometimes you need to be pushy. I would say it depends on the type of stories that you're doing, but maybe it's 20 – 30 percent of the time. And the thing that's like — I have never, ever, in hundreds of interviews had a negative result of being like "No, I need to talk in the next two days. Can we do that?" I've never, ever, ever had any negative anything about that because when you're interviewing somebody, you are getting them press. You are doing them a favor. It is a favor for you, but it's also a favor for them and you could interview somebody else. Don't feel bad about following up and don't feel bad about being clear about what you need from them and when you need it by because they can always simply say "It doesn't make sense for me to be in this story at this time. Can you please find somebody else?"

Until they say that and again, that's incredibly rare and usually a result of their poor time management rather than you being pushy. So unless they've said that. Unless they are self-aware enough to know it's just not going to work out, follow up with them. Do what you need to do to get them on the phone. Just call them and try to catch at random times of day. I have to do this often and it's totally fine and no one ever gets angry about it. So don't feel bad if you need to be pushy, but do what you need to do to make sure that you have the information that you need before you have to sit down to write the story so that you're not stressed.

I had such a great time chatting with you guys today about interview sources and thanks so much for the great examples.