

## **How to reach professionals:**

Eventually in your student journalist career, you will need to reach a source that is not a student, parent of a student or teacher. Reaching a professional to discuss topics in their own field can be very intimidating, and it is completely normal to feel nervous or like you are stepping on eggshells. For this part of your Newspaper bible, your own editor in chief will be explaining the dos and don'ts of contacting and interviewing a professional.

### Step 1: Know who you need to interview

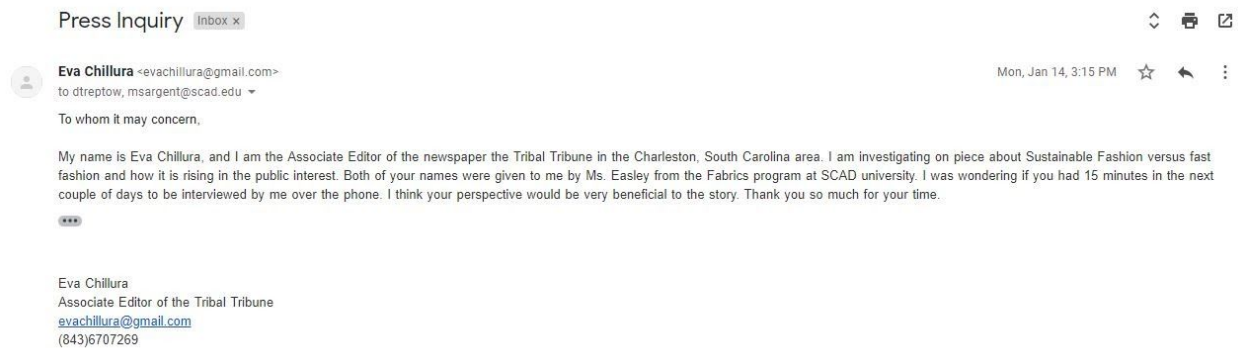
Sometimes this can be easy if you already have a specific vision of your angle, but other times you need a type of professional to interview but with no place to start. Think about college professors at College of Charleston or Savannah School of Art and Design. Think about your local representatives. Think about local firms or businesses. Think about local police or detectives. The internet is a beautiful thing. Most people or sources have websites with contact information, so obtaining a source is at a click of a button. It may seem awkward at first, but it becomes not so daunting. Do not forget -- you can always ask Watkins if she knows someone to interview or call an institution or business to direct you to someone who can help.

### Step 2: Initial contact

Reaching out might be the scariest part of this entire process, but it is not that bad. There are just some essentials that you need to be aware of when you initiate contact with a professional.

- *Be professional.* It is important to elevate yourself as a student journalist to a professional level to be respected and appreciated by adults. This is crucial to being taken seriously in your endeavor.
- *Call or leave a message over the phone.* If you have a phone number for you contact, this should be your step one because it leads you directly to them. Present yourself and your title on the *Tribal Tribune* and what you are searching for at the beginning of the encounter. Explain exactly what you need and who you are looking for with a deadline in mind. Give them a phone number and email for them to contact you back. Be assertive but polite.
- *Craft a cordial and respectful email with all necessary components.* Even if you have already left a voicemail or engaged in a phone call, follow up with an email to put the

engagement in writing and to remind the source that you need an interview.



- Appropriate subject line
  - Ex. “Press Inquiry” “Interview Interest” “General Press Interest”
- Appropriate address
  - Ex. “To whom it may concern,” “Doris Treptow,” “Director of the SCAD Fashion program,”
- An Introduction of yourself as a student journalist and the publication you work on
- A direct message of what you want: an interview, to be redirected, a resource or document. Be specific, respectful, but not timid. Be as direct as possible, many professionals do not have much time to waste on a student’s wordy email.
- Appreciate their time to read.
- GIVE THEM A TIME FRAME OR DEADLINE TO RESPOND
  - This is very important because it establishes a responding time for them, so essentially, they cannot blow you off.
- Leave your full name and multiple ways to contact you.
- *Be ready to respond.* Always have a phone on hand or you email notifications on and be able to recognize the phone number or address, so you never mistake a foreign number with a spam call. You need to be very reachable and accessible, so you do not waste anyone’s time.

### Step 3: Set up an appropriate interview time

Ask them first what time for a 20-60 minute interview fits in their schedule, depending on the importance of their role in the story. Tell them that the interview can be conducted over the phone or in person depending on how local they are. Phone interviews can be really helpful for reaching professionals because of their busy schedules. Just be sure you have a good way of recording the phone call and that the interviewee knows their call is being recorded.

#### Step 4: Conduct the interview

Be professional. Ask them their name and if it is okay to be recorded for the sake of accuracy. Be respectful if they ask for something to be off the record if it applies. Stay engaged and responsive and respectful.

#### Step 5: Follow up

Follow up with an email thanking them for their time and a link to the story. I always like to get an address and mail the printed issue to send to them if they are interested. Remember they are taking time out of their day.