Citizen Video

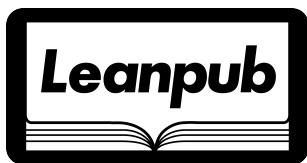## Training and engaging citizens in video journalism

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1 Introduction - Be an advocate

It's obvious to start a book about citizen journalism with a statement you've probably heard quite a lot of times now. But I'm still going to do it: Media and journalism are changing. Here you go again.

It's a huge change. An exciting one though. Period.

Part of understanding this change is to stop thinking that there's a clear distinction between distributors and audience. "The people formerly known as the audience have arrived", as Jay Rosen points it out (Rosen, 2010). If we take a look at the development of journalistic video content, there's a change from camera teams producing it to single video journalists joining them. However, video journalism isn't limited to those working in the media industry as their profession:

> "small [sic] digital video cameras are the gutenberg's [sic] printing presses of the 21st century. they make it possible for anyone with an idea to publish, in video. this [sic] is a revolution, a revolution that is going to change the world as much as gutenberg's [sic] printing press did a half millenium ago. but [sic]

> it is happening today…" (Rosenblum Institute, 2012)

So with cheaper and smaller digital cameras, with mobile phones being able to be used as video cameras and the possibility to easily share content online, the distinction between distributors and audience has also become blurred in video journalism:

> "Shooting, editing and distributing video once belonged to you, Big Media. Only you could afford to reach a TV audience built in your own image. Now video is coming into the user's hands, and audience-building by former members of the audience is alive and well on the Web." (Rosen, 2006)

More and more media organisations are asking for user generated content while citizen journalists create their own websites and report about their community.

Surely you will notice doubts or rejection when it comes to citizen journalists and the work they are doing. If you share those doubts, this book is probably not for you. Even if you want to give citizen journalism a try though, because you think you might get some useful content out of it. As well as you shouldn't teach videography skills if you don't have any experience yourself, or don't like shooting videos

and just do it because you think you need to, you should neither teach it in an area you don't believe in or support. If you are not convinced that it's not only up to professional journalists anymore to produce content and/or if you're not into video journalism, you shouldn't teach people doing exactly this.

You should rather be an advocate to make this work:

> "It means that in your heart of hearts, you can get out there and shout from the rooftops only about what you truly believe in. (...) when people know you are an advocate, and know this is how you tick, your opinion really counts to them. Advocacy requires trust: you are putting your belief behind your words. If people like you and trust you, they are likely to trust and like what you are advocating." (Bacon, 2009, p. 152)

Regarding citizen journalism this doesn't mean that you have to be part of dozens of appropriate projects or wear a shirt with a "I heart citizen journalists" print. But if you are only doing it because others are, then you are doing it wrong from the start.

What this book is for: **Not** to give a detailed description of how exactly workshops should look like content-wise, **but** what you have to consider if you want to hold those, either as pure workshops or in combination with a certain engagement you're aiming to get. It will take a closer look at community building (either as a forum to exchange feedback or a publishing community, for example for a citizen journalism site). However, it's not about tips how to manage a community in the long run, as it is focussed on general advice on training and engagement. Especially the process of creating a forum will only be touched briefly here. For further reading I highly recommend Richard Millington's "The Proven Path" and Jono Bacon's "The Art of Community", which are both available as free e-books.

However, there's one important statement to make before we start: If you're holding those workshops you should be realistic about the outcomes you can gain. If you're expecting to start with a group of beginners and turn them all into video journalists, with similar skills to those who are doing that for a living, you're on the wrong track. Not because they couldn't do it. But because they will probably not want to.