

HOW TO SUCCEED WITH YOUR INVESTIGATIVE PROJECT

To succeed with your investigative project, you'll need both financial and organisational backing. And you need to believe in yourself.

By Mari Hauge Åsland

The experts agree, to succeed in your investigative project, you need to trust others.

"Among the best sponsors of serious investigative reporting are the nonprofit investigative journalism centers that have arisen, particularly in the last ten years. There are now more than 40 centers worldwide, many of them sponsor regional and international reporting, and they are usually eager to hear about new stories and work with freelancers", says David Kaplan, director of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalism.

On extensive, complex investigations, it is helpful to have the backing of a major institution, like a media organization, a nonprofit or NGO, or a university, because large investigations tend to be both expensive and labor-intensive, is his advice.

"Reporters on big projects can also face isolation when they go up against formidable opponents, such as big corporations, big governments and organized crime, so it is good to have a support system and the backing of an institution with some resources."

Sell the story, not the idea

Another dean of investigating journalism Mark Hunter, also have some advices on how to succeed as an investigative reporter.

Do not sell an idea or facts. Sell a story. Tell your editor this is your hypothesis, and tell him or her how the story will turn out, whether or not the hypothesis is true.

Budget your project. If the project is commissioned, the buyer will know what it will cost them. If it is done on speculation, you will know what it will cost you.

Decide what value you want to get out of the project. Money? Reputation? Contacts? Social benefit? New skills? How much of each? If you cannot see how you will get those things, do not do the project.

Stop thinking that your work is worth nothing. It is another way of thinking that you are worth nothing.

But also Hunter stresses the need for a supporting system.

"As an investigative reporter you need to create a support system, because the main challenges of investigative journalism are psychological. You will have to deal with depressed sources, arrogant wrongdoers, good people who did something bad. Colleagues who don't do investigative journalism will not understand. The industry will provide you no support"

The facilitating of investigative reporting will be presented in a series of seminars at the GIJC, see program for details.

David Kaplan

Investigative journalist and media consultant. Director of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, and teaches journalism at Georgetown University. He has reported from more than 20 countries, and won dozens of journalism prizes. www.icij.org

Mark Hunter

Awardwinning reporter whose work has appeared in the New York Times Magazine, Washington Post, Columbia Journalism Review, Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics and elsewhere. Hunter is a founding member of the Global Investigative Journalism Network, an associate professor at the Institut Francais de Presse of the Université de Paris and an adjunct professor at INSEAD.

FUND FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM:

Gives grants to reporters working outside the protection and backing of major news organizations. The journalists have to be working on investigative pieces involving corruption, malfeasance, incompetence and societal ills in general, or investigative media criticism. Founded in 1969 by philanthropist Philip M. Stern, the fund has awarded more than \$1.5 million in grants to freelancers, authors and small publications the last three decades. Result: More than 700 stories and broadcasts, some 50 books and two Pulitzer prizes. www.fij.org

