



THROUGHOUT TIME, innumerable people have been conquered. Conquerors, on the other hand, have been merely numerable. The cunning media conqueror knows his history well, and turns to the past for inspiration.

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME

Ancient Conquerors	Media Elite
Invasion of Roman Empire.	Invasion of Condé Nast.
Occupation of enormous palace.	Occupation of prime table at Michael's.
Overthrow of a previously existing system or regime in neighboring territory.	Overthrow of previous masthead.
Suppression of slave rebellion.	Suppression of assistant's personality.
Merciless tyrant.	"Climber."
Massacre of tens of thousands of people.	Massacre of tens of thousands of packs of cigarettes.
Defeat at the hands of a rival conqueror.	Defeat of ever paying for drinks.
Victory in long, bloody battle.	Victory in long quotation battle on Page Six.
Assassination of competitive younger brother.	Assassination of own conscience.
Mastery of raping and pillaging.	Same.



Today's media conqueror must be constantly poised for battle. Let's do a quick check on your arsenal. Do your emails have a glaring subtext of superiority? Do you know how to exploit personal relationships for business gain? Read on.

INVESTIGATIVE BANTER: HOW TO GRILL A PROFESSIONAL FRIEND MERCILESSLY IN THE GUISE OF A "HANG"



No matter which branch of the media you work in, investigative banter is a vital job skill. Perfect it or quit the game. Remember: If your inquiries *sound* polite, your companion will probably feel compelled to answer.



As your companion unknowingly babbles, take careful notes below on anything that might prove incriminating/useful.



SAMPLE INVESTIGATIVE BANTER:

Are you still working at X?

No?! (shocked pause, eliciting further detail)

Why not, what happened?

Ooh! So then who hired you for your current gig?

How'd you find out about it?

Isn't so and so mad about that? I would be!

Is the pay okay?

Are you working closely with anyone else?

Is s/he any good?

CAREFUL! ASK AND YE SHALL PROBABLY RECEIVE . . .



If you're dealing out the questions, chances are your opponent will fire back. When you find yourself on the *receiving* end of "friendly" interrogation, make like a crab and sidestep.

Take the previous example question: "Is the pay good?"

A quick sidestep turns the question back:

"I'm not sure! Salaries are so relative—what do you make?"

Or try a rhetorical sidestep:

"Ain't pay always good?"

Or an evasive adage/exclamation:

"Well, the early bird gets the worm, I can tell you that much!"

Then ask for the check and jump in a cab . . . it's like you were never there.



If you want to be a big gun, you've got to start thinking of yourself as a big gun: alternatively silent and explosive . . . cold . . . evil. Or think of yourself as a remote island, or a castle surrounded by a moat full of crocodiles, or a big vat of shit or something else no human would want to be near.