

How to be a great journalist

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2007-6-6

If you want to be an outstanding journalist as opposed to just a working news hack, then there were some lessons from the legends at last night's [Media Society](#) tribute to [Channel 4 News](#)' presenter, Jon Snow. I am biased because I worked for seven years as Jon's programme editor in London and in the field. But the tributes from the assembled journalistic greats were heart-felt and accurate. They also gave us a list of tips for anyone seeking to emulate the silver fox of Grays Inn Road. So here's a few suggestions. The BBC's [Charles Wheeler](#) said that every great reporter (and he should know) needs to have had **A Life Outside of Journalism**. Jon worked for three years



at the [New Horizons](#) centre for young people with drug, crime and other problems before becoming a cub reporter – three decades on he is still a very active trustee for the charity.

In a rare public speech, [Channel 4 News](#)' Editor Jim Gray, spoke for all Jon's colleagues when he talked about how he inspires affection, but he rightly stressed how Jon has more **Intellectual Energy** than the rest of the (very young) team put together. A good reporter like Jon puts as much effort in to a dull day as he does in to the big events.

Guardian Editor Alan Rusbridger pointed out that Jon appeals to all ages because he is seen as an authentic **Character**, not a celebrity or a identikit TV reporter clone. People of all types and views admire journalists who admit mistakes, show enthusiasm and have integrity. The colourful ties help, but its the personal commitment that really shines through.

Jon's cousin, and BBC rival [Peter Snow](#) pointed out that lovely as Jon is, he is also a highly **competitive and innovative** journalist who gets scoops because of his high work rate, but also because of his ability to beat rivals by thinking quickly and differently – **don't follow the herd**.

And the man who 'discovered' Jon by giving him his big break at ITN, Nigel Ryan, pointed out that in a world of dry 'balanced' reporting what gives a great reporter like Jon the edge is his **personal commitment** to a story. You do have to feel the pain and get involved in the issue. Report it objectively afterwards but allow yourself some humanity.

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