

Keep digging for stories

On the occasion of Vietnam Journalist's Day, **HSBC Vietnam's CEO Sumit Dutta**, a former journalist, reflects on his own career in the media and offers some advice to young journalists working in Vietnam today

As a former journalist, I am a strong believer in the power of written word and a proponent of traditional print media. I understand the hard work that is required to stay ahead in the news industry, especially in today's world, but what I treasure most is reading a well-constructed and insightful article, one that can help inform opinion and generate constructive debate. Such an article is the product of diligent reporting, great writing and wise editorial, and I am very aware all of that requires talent and no shortage of tenacity.

In a day and age when the internet means contradictory, unverified or even false information can spread to the four corners of the globe with a single click of a mouse, I also place great value on trustworthy news sources, which can provide readers with not just the facts and figures, but also reliable analysis and expert opinion.

In my time as a journalist, I worked for more than 10 years for publications with global readerships including *the Illustrated Weekly*, *the Economic Times* and *the Statesman*. I also wrote a regular column for *Discover India* on tourism, which was translated into eight languages and sold in over 30 countries. In my career I wrote over 250 articles on a broad range of subjects, including youth affairs, politics, economics, business and tourism, before eventually focusing on sports writing for Indian, UK and US publications.

I look back fondly on these times and I will always feel an affinity for journalists even though I am now working in the finance sector. I am not the one asking the questions in an interview anymore; now, as the CEO of HSBC Vietnam, I am the one giving the answers, but I believe the skills I learned as a journalist - perseverance, the ability to meet deadlines, gathering and analysing information, forming a balanced opinion, articulating ideas, building a network of contacts - are all extremely valuable traits that have continued to serve me well in my present vocation.

For those who wish to remain lifelong journalists, I salute you. Writing is a craft, and wisdom accumulates - like a fine wine, you will only get better with age. So I think it's wonderful that in Vietnam journalists are officially recognised by the State on this day, June 21.

This information is issued by

HSBC Bank (Vietnam) Ltd.

Registered Office and Head Office:

Address: 235 Dong Khoi street, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Web: www.hsbc.com.vn



Journalists in Vietnam

Since embarking on my career in Vietnam, I have met many charming, young journalists, who are invariably warm, friendly, enthusiastic, open minded and willing to learn.

One of their common strengths is an ability to establish an instant rapport with the interviewee. This skill shouldn't be underestimated - by winning the confidence and gaining the trust of the interviewee the journalist will find it easier to talk at length with the interviewee, and thereby, acquire the information or quote that they're looking for. They will also have less trouble with any follow-up queries. Indeed, there seems to be a more collaborative approach between the journalist and the interviewee here in Vietnam, which seems quite effective.

In my experience, this is quite different to journalists in other countries. In Vietnam I often feel off guard when talking with journalists. I don't worry too much about being misquoted or misrepresented, or the facts getting distorted. Very often, I end up talking freely with Vietnamese journalists and as a consequence I will spend much more time talking to them than I did with journalists in any of the other countries where I previously worked.

Constructive criticism

In my opinion there is more information and more straightforward news pieces dominating print and online media both globally and in Vietnam. Generally speaking, as a reader, and specifically, as the CEO of a corporation in the finance and banking sector, I would like to see more in-depth analysis rather than basic news pieces.

I would welcome more opinion pieces or articles where the journalist offers us not just an overview of events as they transpired but also his or her own insights regarding the market. Journalists have an opportunity to offer us a different perspective to financial analysts, economists and other experts.

Perhaps, the distinction is thus: I would like to see less "news" and more "views" and the newspaper or magazine that publishes thoughtful articles in which journalists reach their own conclusions - rather than simply rehashing others' opinions - will always grab my attention. This takes plenty of thorough reporting. Journalists need to explore and gather all the evidence before coming to a conclusion. Editors must also encourage staff to dig deeper and cover a story from every angle. Rest assured your efforts do not go unnoticed. The finished article will serve as a testament to your abilities and determination.

General observations

The media landscape has clearly changed dramatically in recent years. In one sense, the power of the media is increasing rapidly although print media obviously faces many challenges with so many free sources of news strewn across the internet. There are also digital channels with 24-hour news stations offering us non-stop coverage of worldwide events.

News travelled more slowly in my days as a journalist, but we were still under pressure to meet our deadlines. Now the pressure is on news agencies and media groups to produce a constant stream of news and information. But as I said, there is still a need for quality reporting and detailed analysis. We still need people digging for stories and coming up with revealing answers. In a world of iPads and smartphones how we read the news may change, but the world still depends on reporters and editors to produce the news.

Young reporters have more options, platforms and outlets when embarking on a career in journalism today and I believe journalism remains a great career option in a country like

Vietnam, which is undergoing such rapid change and very much in the global spotlight as one of the world's most talked about economies.

So on the occasion of Vietnam Journalist's Day, let me wholeheartedly thank all of the reporters, editors and photojournalists scrambling to meet your deadlines day after day here in Vietnam. I trust you will continue to keep up the good work for the benefit of all your readers at home and abroad. As a former journalist, and an avid reader of the news, I truly appreciate all of your efforts.