Effective Interviewing Skills

This two-day course lays out a step-by-step process for conducting typical audit interviews. Although the course is not based on interrogation methods, it does model the processes used by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. This course also includes many tips from auditors who are successful in gathering information effectively from their clients.

Interviewing is a process that requires both structure (i.e., when to ask open-ended questions and when to use a step-by-step process) as well as flexibility (i.e., getting away from the checklist mentality). In addition, interviewing requires specific and important communication skills, such as active listening combined with follow-up probing or using the appropriate tone of voice and body language. Interviewing also requires planning. For example, the more clearly you know your objective for the interview before you meet, the better the quality of information gathered. Finally, good interview skills require a certain collaborative and consultative mindset. You want to use the interview to “assist” the person with giving you the information you need while helping him or her understand why it is in his or her best interest (or the organization’s best interest) to do so. A large appendix in the participant guide will share even more tips and strategies from auditors and forensic investigators.

The order of events and content may be changed depending on the needs of the group. Participants will be developing and conducting a mock interview as part of the training, and other exercises occur throughout the two days.

This course is appropriate for all auditors or audit managers involved in the audit interview process.
Course Duration:
2 Days

CPE Hours Available:
16

Knowledge Level:
Basic

Field of Study:
Communications

Prerequisites:
None

Advance Preparation:
None

Delivery Format:
On-site
Course Outline

Introduction

- Explain objectives.
- Share research on eyewitness accounts.
- Discuss why interviewing skills are the most powerful way for an auditor to uncover wrongdoing or reinforce innocence.

The Collaborative Approach to Interviewing

- The three types of interviewing approaches.
- The purpose of interviews: knowing objectives.
- Collaborative interviewing: what is it and how it enhances audit skills.
- Difficulties with conciliatory and competitive approaches.

Why Auditors Do Not Interrogate or use Interrogation Techniques During Typical Audits

- The research on interrogation programs: it’s not pretty.
- How unwarranted interrogation techniques reduce audit effectiveness for yourself and your colleagues.
- When you do need to interrogate.

The Two Most Effective Tools for Interviewing People

- Understanding, experiencing, and maintaining objectivity.
- Using the “Story” listening exercise as a way to develop the listening skills required for good interviews.
- Understanding the WIIFM principle — how to gain buy-in to being interviewed — an exercise.
- Handling passive resistance up front.

Six Steps of the Collaborative Interviewing Process

- Preparation/planning.
- Initial meeting.
- Information gathering.
- Information clarification.
- Closing/ending.
- Documenting/evaluation.
Planning

- Aiming the interview: getting clear on results you want.
- Developing questions.
- Using a checklist effectively, if at all.
- Scheduling appointments.
- Considering critical issues in logistics that really make a difference.
- Developing your ideas and strategy before the interview.
- Examining other do’s and don’ts.

The Initial Meeting (Opening the Interview)

- Establishing goals and objectives.
- Considering dress and appearance.
- Taking notes versus recording: which to use, when to use, and how?
- Establishing your “interviewee baseline.”
- Establishing congruence and rapport to develop the baseline.
- Deciding what questions to ask, what cues in body language and verbalizations to look for, etc.
- Establishing objectivity, neutrality, and expectations.
- Positioning oneself in the interview (i.e., physical arrangement).
- Examining other do’s and don’ts.

Information Gathering

- How to start the interview in a powerful way.
- How the interview is conduct directly relates to the quality of information.
- How the spiral process incorporates all you learned about interviewing and helps the interviewee open up.
- Spiraling as a process for making you look like a pro.
- Numerous other skills, as appropriate.
- Subtle tactics to facilitate memory retrieval in interviewing.
- Chunking, backwards to forwards etc.
- The critical art and science of using specific types of questions.
- How to conduct the Q&A.
- The eight categories of questions and knowing which to use and which to avoid.
• Critical distinctions: knowing when to use a “why,” “what,” or “how” question and what specific response to expect each time.
• Secret ways to use the checklist without actually using a checklist approach.
• A phenomenal technique to use when you want more meat on how the interviewee does things in his or her work.

Information Clarification

• Structuring techniques to gather more detailed, accurate information.
• Bridging and transitioning topics.
• Effectively using open versus closed questions.
• Reframing.
• Learning what to do when the interviewee knows more than you regarding the situation.
• Considering wording and tone of voice.
• Do's and don’ts if and when you suspect interviewees are lying.

How to Read Your Interviewee and How to Be Read (discussed throughout the day). Numerous areas include:

• Body language: facial expressions, posture, eyes, etc.
• Vocals.
• Why vocals are more powerful than body language in our culture.
• Using vocals to determine deception cues.
• Cultural differences in body language, voice, and words (as time permits and based on class needs).
• When it really is a cultural difference versus using cultural differences as a manipulation technique.
• Tips and suggestions.

Handling Resistant Individuals During Interviews

• Your experiences.
• Focus on the situation rather than the personality of the interviewee.
• Stubborn/resistant versus manipulative: a big difference.
• The five indicators of a hard-core manipulator.
• Defusing — how to calm upset people on the spot.
• Non-manipulative, collaborative, leadership, and subtle influencing skills.
- Keeping calm, objective, and focused throughout the interview.
- How to quickly get on the other person’s “wavelength” and establish rapport with almost any individual.

**Giving Positive Feedback and Encouragement Throughout the Interview**

- Using the DEE method for giving positive feedback.
- Why positive feedback is so critical to successful interviews.

**Ending the Interview**

- The final summary.
- The one sentence you always say at the end of the interview.
- What to do if you have to come back to interview again.
- Meeting check?

**What to Do After the Interview**

- Documenting and evaluating the interview.
- Office policy on note-taking, audio taping, etc.
- What to do with notes, charts, and outlines after the interview.
- Following up after the interview.
- When testing or further information gathering after the interview leads to suspicion.

*If Time Permits: Five Specific Techniques Forensic Investigators Use That May Help Auditors*

**Close**

- Practice, practice, and practice throughout.
- Action plans — strengths and challenge areas to work on.