

Helpful Interviewing Techniques

- I. Be prepared for the interview. Familiarize yourself in advance with the technical information to be discussed. Plan a list of questions or items to be discussed.
2. Begin by telling the interviewee what you want to accomplish. This clarifies what your objectives are and increases the likelihood of achieving them.
3. Effective questioning and active listening are the keys to a successful interview. Ask one question at a time. Listen carefully to the response. Keep things simple and follow up for specific details.
4. Use open-ended questions to obtain more complete answers. Use questions requiring an unqualified "yes" or "no" (closed-ended) to verify your understanding of an issue.
5. Be aware of non-verbal cues. The interviewee's eye contact, posture, and alertness, for example, add additional insight (e.g., fidgeting might indicate a lack of certainty about an answer, which suggests you may need to check the response with someone else).
6. Get the interviewee to do most of the talking and listen attentively. Follow up with additional questions to ensure that you have gathered all the interviewee's important thoughts on a particular matter. Use paraphrasing when appropriate to verify your understanding.
7. Take notes. Write down as much information as you can. You will not be able to remember all of the interviewee's comments if you wait until the interview is over.
8. In closing, acknowledge the value of the information received and thank the interviewee for the time spent with you.

To be sensitive to the interviewee's feelings;

Additional Interviewing Considerations

- Be prepared to adjust your natural style to meet that of the person you are interviewing.
- Have a structure for the interview, but flex it, if necessary in response to the answers you receive.
- Start off with questions about 'neutral' known areas that will relax the interviewee.
- Listen carefully for 'hooks' that may be an indication of more important issues that need following up, eg '•**most** people in the department operate the controls effectively" - follow up the "**most**"
- Probe superficial answers to try and arrive at the real facts
- Use your own non-verbal communication effectively. People often 'mirror' this, so if you look relaxed, they will be too.
- Listen actively with encouraging 'noises' and head nodding etc. (within reason!)
- Give people '**The courtesy of time**' to respond to your questions. Be prepared to wait for them to produce a considered answer. Don't rush in to ask further questions if they don't reply immediately.
- Avoid emotive words or phrases that may produce an adverse reaction eg 'weakness, need to be efficient'.
- Helpful question types are set out below:

Questioning Skills

The art of asking questions to elicit information, attitudes, and explanations is key to a successful interview. See also 'Listening Skills' which complement these.

Some hints on asking effective questions are:

- Take time to prepare some key questions, especially to give a crisp start to a session.
- Devise interview questions to illicit an interviewee's likely future behavior in typical circumstances arising out of your review of the job description. Encourage the interviewee to describe their behavior in the past in similar circumstances.
- Open questions (Why, How, When, Where, Who) are more likely to produce useful information.
- Closed questions (inviting a yes or no answer) give the opportunity for a closed reply, but 80% receive an open answer anyway. Avoid them with reticent people.
- The focus of a question is more important. A wide focus gives away the reply topic, eg 'Tell me about your year?', and may cause confusion as to what answer is expected. It is however neutral and less assertive than a more focused question, eg 'Tell me what you disliked about working with Tim at Smith & Company last year'. Open questions are best used at the beginning of a questioning topic. These are followed by more probing questions in an active listening session to illicit a complete response. Closed questions are best used to bring a questioning stream to a close.
- Keep questions concise.
- Avoid multiple questions. They are confusing and only the first, last, or easiest will be answered.
- Be aware of the impact of tone, emphasis and phrasing on questions. Eg 'How did you spend yesterday evening?' Vs 'Where were you last night?'.
- Give time for replies to be considered and delivered. Don't add another question if you haven't received a reply after two milliseconds.

- Have an interest and curiosity to automatically ask questions.
- Be prepared to probe beneath superficial answers that provide no information.
- Explain the reasons for questions you are asking if they are not clear, eg 'We need to value your trade debtors, can you tell me why X hasn't paid you for six months?'.

Some useful types of questions are:

- Introduction - to set the scene
- Clarifying - eg "by 'check', do you mean an overview, or a recalculation?"
- Implication - eg "but if that is the case, won't this happen?"
- Comparing - eg 'earlier you said it wasn't significant, but now you say the error was £10,000?"
- Linking - eg "so these, together with the checks you say Mary makes, are the controls?"
- Expanding - eg "Does this also take place in the Purchase Ledger department
- Summarising - eg "So I'm right in saying these:- are all the controls you operate?"

Listening Skills

The very term auditor means listener, but to listen is not enough, you need to demonstrate you are listening· **Active Listening.**

- Body language: - ensure you look interested - lean forward to show extra concern/interest and settle back to encourage confidence
- Maintain eye contact and avoid looking shifty or dishonest, avoid staring
- Smile (in appropriate places) this is encouraging and friendly
- Respond to information given and avoid ploughing on with your own pre-prepared agenda
- Referring to previous information clearly, shows you have been listening:
- Summarise what has gone before, Link to previous points and Paraphrase what is said
- Contrasting statements that seem to contradict each other
- Leave plenty of long pauses to allow time for thought and reflection and allow 'The courtesy of silence' for putting a response together
- We have one mouth and two ears - use in those proportions
- Respond to 'hooks' that need following up
- Encourage grunts and nods