

INTERVIEWING

Interviewing As An Information Gathering Technique

The interview is essentially a method of collecting information.

Why Interview?

- C to enable the interviewer to find out facts and to verify them.
- C to provide an opportunity to meet and overcome resistance.

Advantages of Interviewing

The Main advantages of interviewing are:

- C The interviewer can interact with the person giving the information.
- C This means you can check your own interpretation of what the respondent said.
- C The interview can promote discussion rather than just data gathering.
- C The interview allows clarification and amplification of certain points.

Disadvantages of Interviewing

The main disadvantage of interviewing is that it relies heavily on the personal skills of the interviewer. If the interviewer fails to establish trust and rapport between him/herself and the respondent, little or no useful information may be obtained. The questioning technique is also very important. You may not ask the right questions and not get the information you need.

Who to Interview

Upper Management: To determine the objectives of a particular system and the desired output from the system.

Lower Management: To determine how a system is supposed to work or how management wants it to work.

Clerical Personnel: To discover how people in the system actually carry out procedures from the Managers concept of that procedure.

Preparation for An Interview

To make the best use of time available, it is important to obtain prior knowledge of the duties and responsibilities from which a check list of questions can be drawn up. It is important to ask questions at the right level.

Preparing a list of questions to ask makes an interview easier to conduct and more effective.

This list will help in:

- C Organising thoughts. So information can be acquired in a logical, efficient way.
- C Remembering all the questions that need to be asked.
- C Remembering the information acquired. So that the results can be recorded on leaving the interview situation.
- C Keeping to the point of the interview.

It may be helpful to send a list of questions to the respondent prior to the interview.

General types of questions to consider are:

- C Who is affected by the situation?
- C Who participates in the current system?
- C What should the system do?
- C What problems currently exist?
- C What benefits can be expected if the current system is modified?
- C When was the current system implemented?
- C Why are problems occurring?
- C How can the problems be solved?

Scheduling the Interview

Often the only place available is the normal workplace of the individual.

Advantages: Interviewee feels at home

Additional information can be obtained from observation. Interruptions may occur which may tell a lot more about the problems than the interview itself.

Disadvantages: Environment may be noisy.

Too many interruptions may occur e.g. telephone.

The interview should be scheduled at a time suitable to the interviewee.

Conducting the Interview

Beginning: The entrance and first few minutes, especially at a first interview are important.

The Systems Analyst should begin with an introduction and explanation of the purpose of the interview.

A few minutes should be put aside to establish rapport with the respondent, commencing the interview with topics that are easy to talk about.

Listening: Care should be taken not to cut the interviewee short.

Most of the time should be spent listening.

Accept and express interest in the information you receive.

Approach: The systems analyst should show a genuine interest in the interviewee.

- * Warm, friendly manner
- * agreeing and admiring
- * encouraging participation
- * ignoring displeasure or lack of response
- * looking around the room or at your watch shows a lack of interest.

The analyst must always be in control and steer the interview in the right direction.

Too much technical jargon should be avoided.

Non-Verbal Clues: A lot of information is learnt in an interview from non-verbal aspects of communication.

Facial Expressions

Body Posture

Voice Tone

Gestures

Note Taking: As a matter of politeness ask if it is acceptable that notes are taken. All relevant comments need to be recorded with opinion separated from fact.

Ideas for improvement should be encouraged and then noted.

Concluding: Summarise the key points of the interview.

Send a copy of the interview summary to the respondent.

Copies of any documentation or forms mentioned during the interview should be requested.

You should judge respondents' information on answers to the following questions:

- C Are the respondents aware of the importance of their statements, or do they only talk

- for the sake of talking?
- C Do the respondents act as if they know everything?
 - C Do the respondents support their concepts and data with documentation? Copies of any user documentation mentioned during the interview should be obtained.
 - C Do the respondents understand the problem?
 - C Do the respondents distinguish between important facts and unimportant details?
 - C Do the respondents trust you?

The analyst should also be careful to avoid making comments on what the new system will or will not do.

Why Are Questions Important?

Good questions help the interviewee to perform well and ensure that the information sought after is attained.

Poor, confused or unfair questioning will prevent the candidate from performing well.

There are four types of questions one can ask:

- a) Non-directive question
- b) Closed questions
- c) Leading questions
- d) Negative questions

The Non-Directive Question

Here you are asking for the other person's opinion or story.

- C Could you tell me about?
- C Why do you think that?
- C How do you find dealing with?
- C What do you think about?
- C How did you manage to get here?

A non-directive question is "open" - when you ask one of these questions, you don't really know what sort of answer will come back.

The Closed Question

This question invokes a short response from the other person. You either get a "yes/no" answer, or you get short one word answers.

For example:

- C Do you like music?
- C Where do you live?
- C Do you need to place a further order?
- C What time is it?

The Leading Question

When you ask this type of question, you are either expecting or trying to force a particular response from the other person. Examples would be:-

- C The weather is bad, isn't it?
- C You are happy with this system, aren't you?

The Negative Question

This type of question often assumes a particular stance or can be very interrogative.

- C You don't do it this way sure you don't?
- C You only process 20 orders daily, isn't that right?

Of the types of questions mentioned, the non-directive question is the most useful:-

- 1) You force the other person to talk.
- 2) You obtain a rich fund of information, personal values and needs from the other person.
- 3) You demonstrate to the other person that you are interested in his opinions.
- 4) You demonstrate that you are listening to him.
- 5) You force yourself to listen.
- 6) He feels flattered and begins to enjoy the conversation.
- 7) You create an impression on the other person that you are a very interesting and understanding person to talk to.
- 8) You obtain control over the progress of the discussion.

Using Qualifying Questions

People often express their thoughts using generalities.

e.g. "we're pretty happy with our present suppliers"
 "It can't be done"

These statements need to be probed further to find out precisely what is meant.

1. *Comparisons*

"This system is much more efficient"

- "More efficient than what?"
- "Compared to ---?"

2. *Impossibilities*

"It can't be done"

- "What stops it being done?"
- "What would happen if it was done?"

3. *Universals*

"We never do business with Foreign Companies!"

- "Never?"

"I always insist on this being done first"

- "Always?"

4. *Verbs*

"We must co-ordinate our activities"

- "How specifically will you do that?"

5. *Nouns*

"Our computer people handle that"

- "Who exactly in your computer department?"
- "Which Manager is actually responsible?"