



*Interviewing for Information:  
A Structured Approach to  
Unstructured Interviewing*

Presented by Carole Buncher  
to the  
*Mid-Atlantic Intergovernmental  
Audit Forum*

# Workshop Objectives

At the end of this workshop, you'll be able to:

- understand a structured 3-stage approach to unstructured interviews,
- identify and employ a dynamic questioning approach,
- communicate more effectively with your auditees, and
- overcome difficult interview situations.



# INTERVIEWING

- What is it?
  - Data collection technique
  - Provides perspectives and opinions
  - Leads to documents and referrals

# INTERVIEWING—Why we need to do it well

- Most frequently used data collection methodology
- Yields testimonial information
- Not strongest source
- So have to be skilled

# 3 STAGES

1. PREPARATION
2. CONDUCTING
3. POST-INTERVIEW

# Stage 1- PREPARATION

- Do homework
  - Subject matter
  - Interviewee—attitudes and personality
  - Prior working relationships
- Become conversant—time saver
- Prepare questions (linked to objectives)
- Schedule interview and begin establishing trust and rapport
- Prepare back-up plan—consider what-ifs
- Be prepared!

# What information would you discuss when you call the interviewee?

# Stage 2 - CONDUCTING

- Small talk
  - Continue establishing rapport/trust
  - Baseline for normal communications
- Introductions
- Background on audit
- Purpose of this interview
- How much time
- Questions?
- Ask questions linked to interview objectives
- End

# Stage 3 - POST-INTERVIEW ACTIVITIES

- Write up within 3 days
- Collaborate with other interviewees
- Share write up with other interviewees
- Follow up on documents and referrals

# A Dynamic Questioning Technique

## *The Funnel*

- Ask an open-ended question linked to each interview objective
- Paraphrase
- Ask follow-up questions
- Summarize
- Transition to next line of questioning
- Repeat funnel



# INTERVIEW GUIDE—Page 1

Notes on interviewee  
and directions

- Documents
- Referrals
- Action items

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- Interview introduction
  - Question 1—Open-ended

Room for notes for  
Question 1

Prompts (in margin)

# Communicating to Understand

## *Active Listening*

- Eye contact
- Posture
- Nervous gestures
- Funnel
- Distractions
- Sharing note taking and questioning equally
- Be curious—not interrogating

# Uh-oh! The difficult interviewee!

- Overly talkative
- Nervous
- Hostile
- Arrogant

# SKILL BUILDING OPPORTUNITY

- Teams
- Objective: Solutions for one difficult interviewee type
- Process:
  - Brainstorm for 5 minutes
  - Assign speaker
  - Share with entire group

# Notes—Overly Talkative Interviewee



# Notes—Nervous Interviewee



# Notes—Hostile Interviewee



# Notes—Arrogant Interviewee



# What have you learned?

- Talk with neighbor
- Identify several things to remember when you return to the workplace.

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Ms. Buncher owns *Carole Buncher and Associates: The Competency Company (CBA)*, a small, emerging, Washington, DC-based, woman-owned training and consulting organization. CBA specializes in delivering training to the audit community. Ms. Buncher also consults with organizations in a wide variety of areas, including organizational assessments.

In addition to owning *Carole Buncher and Associates*, Ms. Buncher has 23 years of professional experience in training and auditing. As Senior Program Analyst with the United States General Accounting Office (GAO—renamed U.S. Government Accountability Office), Ms. Buncher led a variety of assignments related to strategic issues and human capital within the U.S. government.

Her training accomplishments include developing and leading 1/2-day to 2-week training programs to auditors and implementing training programs from conception through implementation to evaluation. She is a highly skilled and experienced trainer and excels in delivering classes for inspectors and auditors in areas including public speaking, interviewing for information, and supervision and leadership. Carole also has expertise in designing and evaluating audit training, with emphasis on performance and organizational improvement.



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