



**Stanley M. Slowik, Inc.**  
*Interviewing Design and Training Consultant*

## **ELICITATION TECHNIQUES FOR BLIND INTERVIEWS**

*Procedures For Encouraging Pre-test Interview Information  
Using Non-accusatory Techniques*

**AMERICAN POLYGRAPH ASSOCIATION**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

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### A. Purpose

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## TO THE CLIENT AND PARTICIPANT

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. The Problems With Blind Investigative Interviews and Screening Examination Validity

1. Relevant and Control Question separation

2. Multiple issue construction

3. Establishing Ground Truth

### B. Pre-established Criteria and Guidelines

1. Legal considerations

a) Methodology: unsubstantiated opinions v.  
unsubstantiated admissions

b) Creating Standards: Qualifiers and Disqualifiers

- Consistency issues
  
- Discriminatory impact
  
- Predictive accuracy
  
- Less adverse alternatives

## 2. Procedure

### a) Identifying appropriate information targets/needs

- Bona Fide Occupational Qualifications and Essential Job Functions

OR

Just Cause and stipulated agreements (PCSOT)

- Historical precedents
- Prevailing practices
- Negligent Hiring and Negligent Retention

### b) Defining information fields

- Thoroughness vs. time to conduct
- Subject and investigator fatigue
- The paralysis of analysis

### c) Quantifying information needs

- Periods of Accountability
- Frequency
- Quantity
- Circumstances and exceptions

### 3. Defending Information Target Selection and Standards

a) Organization's experience and face validity

b) Profession's experience and face validity

c) Empirical proofs

d) Statutory requirements and exemptions

e) EEOC, APA and other guidelines

#### **Equal Treatment, Consistency and the Absence of Cause & Effect**

**PRINCIPLE:** Is the lack of any standard worse than even a subjective or arbitrary standard?

## II. ORIENTATIONS

A. PURPOSE: To raise sensitive topics inoffensively

To elicit accurate information when the subject perceives that candor could result in negative consequences

B. PROCEDURE: Raise the topic subtly

OPTIONAL: Establish credibility

Indicate relativity

Minimize the negative consequences of candor

Overcome barriers

Confidentiality promises: different settings

OPTIONAL: Mention verification

**EXAMPLE: (Pre-employment) We realize that many people have tried or experimented with drugs. As you probably know, the organization sets standards in this area and at (employer), we've evaluated this issue in thousands of applicants. Now, we realize there's a difference between trying or experimenting and a \$500 a day heroin habit. We're not looking for perfect people. I do want you to realize, however, that following this interview we do ask candidates to take a drug test (and) everything we discuss is confidential - used only for employment evaluation.**

**NOTE: NEVER say, imply or infer anything that is not true.**

## C. ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ORIENTATIONS

1. The "I too ..." orientation
  
2. The "Employer's, Media's or other's experience" orientation
  
3. The "Professional Associate" orientation

## WHEN TO USE ALL/SOME OF THE ORIENTATION COMPONENTS



### III. QUESTION DESIGN AND FORMULATION

#### A. Direct/objective

WHERE TO USE: information needs susceptible to misrepresentation

when time to interview is restricted

when large numbers need to be processed

#### B. Indirect/subjective

WHERE TO USE: information needs that cannot be defined or quantified; in validated behavioral interviews

#### C. Scenarios (a type of subjective question)

WHERE TO USE: knowledge/experience/judgmental information needs

**NOTE:** Some Subjective and Scenario approaches (those that result in adverse impact) may require extensive clinical training to "score" or evaluate and must be validated against performance criteria that are themselves difficult to define. When in doubt, use the Direct/Objective Approach, particularly for topics susceptible to misrepresentation.

#### D. **PROCEDURE:** Direct/Objective Approach

**PURPOSE:** To present questions in a manner that makes rationalization difficult

To present questions in a manner that facilitates accurate responses

**PRINCIPLES:** (1) Directed, specific, precise

(2) Avoid multiple issue questions

(3) Avoid compound questions

(4) Avoid leading questions

(5) Avoid telegraphing consequences

a) In note taking

b) During Orientations

(6) Avoid interpretive and intent questions

(7) Soften sensitive issues (weasel words)

(8) Speak the subject's language except...

(9) Tailor to opportunity and background

## ASKING THE INITIAL QUESTION

### **Open Mode**

"Did you ..." "Have you ..."

### WHEN TO USE:

### **Assumptive Mode**

"About how much/many ..., if any, did you ..."

### WHEN TO USE:

**CAUTION:** Only use the Assumptive Mode when the subject's non-verbal behavior clearly indicates an unspoken "Yes". Always use the qualification, "if any". When in doubt, use the Open Mode.

#### IV. RESPONSE ANALYSIS

A. Compare Admissions to Standards

B. Evaluate Behavior and/or Charts

#### V. FOLLOW-UPS

**PURPOSE:** To substantiate disqualifiers, clarify answers and/or confirm suspicions of untruthfulness

**PRINCIPLES:** If answer is an admission exceeding Guidelines, then, substantiate: who, what, where, when, etc.

If answer is uncertain, then: clarify as to meaning

If answer is an admission within Guidelines or a denial, then: probe, watching for quick and significant changes in answer

#### GENERIC TYPES OF FOLLOW-UPS

Silence

Repeating the Inquiry or Question

### Testing for Certainty

"Are you sure?"

"What if ...; What will they say?"

### Suggesting Possibilities - Using Menus

Equally weighted alternatives

Gradients within a range of possibilities

### Providing face saving excuses and justifications

#### **AVOID:**

1. Judgmental expressions or comments
2. Direct challenges to statement accuracy
3. Blanket acceptance of statement accuracy
4. Inferring that any counterproductive activity, even minor misdeeds the requesting agency is willing to overlook, is "OK".

#### VI. CONCLUSION