



Telephone Interviewing Techniques

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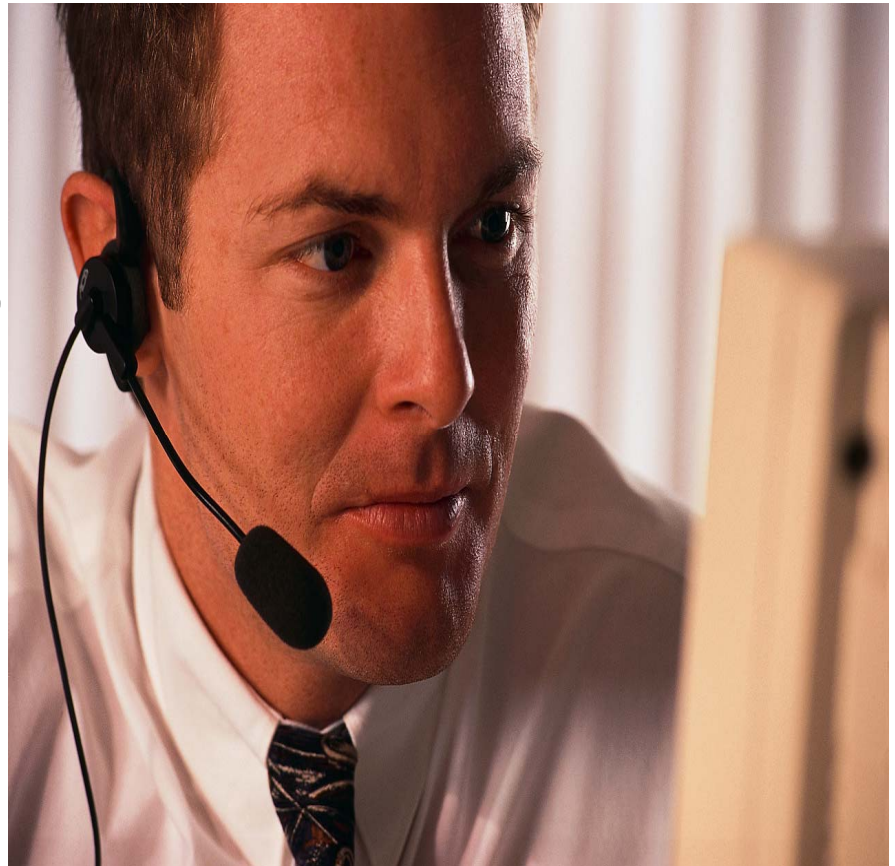
NEbraskaCERT

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- Purpose
- Considerations
- Principles of verbal behavior
- Discerning truth
- Detecting deception
- Questioning techniques



- Gather Information (Assessment)
 - Who (people)
 - What (events)
 - When (dates & times)
 - Where (places)
 - Why (interviewee's version)



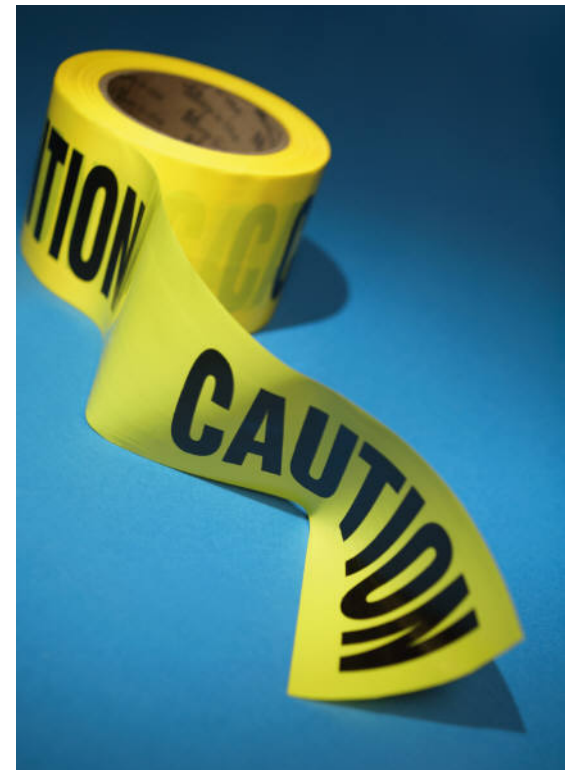
- Advantages
 - Cost & time effectiveness
 - Interviewee less able to rehearse responses
 - Less threatening environment
- Disadvantages
 - Less control over interviewee and the interview environment
 - Inability to observe nonverbal behavior

- When to Use
 - Screening multiple persons
 - Any interviewee from which additional information is needed
- When Not to Use
 - With a key interviewee
 - High level of emotional connection between interviewee and an event

- When & where to call
 - Interviewee privacy
 - Interviewee home vs. work
 - Morning vs. evening
 - Weekends
 - Cell phones
 - Leaving messages



- Recording telephone interview
 - State laws
 - Sensitive issues
 - Setting a precedent
 - Impact on interviewee
 - Legal document
- Confronting / Accusing interviewee
 - Terminates dialogue
 - Reduces chance for face to face meeting
 - Disclosure unlikely in this setting



- Truth (Yes I did it; No I didn't)
- Denial (No, I didn't.....)
- Omission (No, but I did.....)
- Evasion (Why would I do.....)
 - Q: “Do you have authority to transfer funds from the sales commission accounts into your bank account?”
 - A: “ No.” (truth)
 - A: “I have never transferred any funds from any unauthorized source.” (denial)
 - A: “I don't think so, but I do have a master password to access any sales commission account.” (omission)
 - A: “Which funds, which bank account? (evasion)

*Denial, omission & evasion are forms of deception

Truth vs. Deception

- Principles
 - Truth clarifies deception confuses
 - Truth pronounces innocence deception avoids detection
 - No unique **behaviors** differentiating truth vs. deception
 - Indicators yes, behaviors no
 - Most important indicator
 - **ATTITUDE** – interviewee's attitude towards interviewer and the interview

Discerning Truth

- Attitude
 - Spontaneous (Truth) vs. Guarded (Deception)
 - Free flowing thoughts vs. rehearsed responses
 - Volunteering information not asked vs. “pulling teeth”
 - Openly speculates theories vs. reluctance to share thoughts
 - “Don, that’s a great question and I can think of 3 or 4 reasons why John may have been in the lab without supervision.”
 - “Don, did know that everyone in the lab has to be supervised?”
 - Sincere (Truth) vs. Insincere (Deception)
 - Thoughtful response vs. too quick to answer
 - Reasonable emotional expression vs. being too nice or too polite (“laying it on”)
 - “Don, he could have been concerned with a data breach or he could have been monitoring protocols since we’ve had so many visitors in the building in the past six weeks.”

Discerning Truth

- Attitude
 - Open (Truth) vs. Defensive (Deceptive)
 - **Willing to answer questions vs. reluctance to answer question**
 - “Don, why do you need to know the answer to that?”
 - **Prolonging interview vs. looking to “be done”**
 - “Can I go now?”
 - **Offering evidence vs. “nothing to offer”**
 - “Don, I don’t think I can help you.”
 - Concerned (Truth) vs. Unconcerned (Deceptive)
 - **Listens carefully to questions vs. preoccupied or bored**
 - **Asks questions to clarify vs. responds inappropriately due to inattentiveness**
 - **Strong judgmental vs. won’t condemn**
 - “I don’t know his financial situation so I can’t pass judgment on him regarding the theft of the money.”

- Direct responses
 - Definitive answer to the question asked
 - **Q: When was the last time you saw Bill using his company–issued thumb drive?**
 - **A:** The last time I saw Bill using his company–issued thumb drive was last Friday when I dropped by his cubicle to say goodbye. He was saving some files onto it.
- Denials
 - Early responses
 - **Truthful person who responds early, will repeat their denial after the question is completed**
 - Broad
 - **Responses that answer the question plus provide additional information**
 - **Q: Did you have a previous security breach before this incident?**
 - **A:** The company has never had any security breaches, nor have we received any concerned customer calls regarding comprised data or ID theft, prior to this incident.

- Unsolicited denials
 - An unnecessary denial included within a response
 - **Q: Can you think of anyone who may have had access to your laptop and accessed the client's proprietary files?**
 - **A: I'm the only one who has access to my laptop. I suppose a hacker could have gotten into the network via the VPN.** But there's no way I accessed the client's files or sold them to a competitor.
- Realistic language
 - Words like steal, fraud, embezzle, theft invite anxiety and are often used by truthful persons
 - **Q: How do you feel towards the person that took the money?**
 - **A:** Anger, I wish they'd catch the guy that **stole** the money and prosecute him for this and anything else they can throw at him.

- Reinforcing language
 - Words which unnecessarily reinforce the confidence of a stated position
 - Absolutely
 - Positively
 - No way
 - Not at all
 - Never



- Use of “I” statements
 - Reflect ownership & responsibility
 - “I did not take the computer from the lab.”
- Use of pronouns
 - Reflect attachment
 - My
 - Our
 - Your
 - His
 - Theirs
 - “I was not in the computer lab when my laptop was taken.”

Deception vs. Truth

- Principles
 - Deception confuses truth clarifies
 - Deception avoids detection truth pronounces innocence
 - No unique behaviors differentiating deception vs. truth
 - Indicators yes, behaviors no
 - Most important indicator
 - **Attitude** – interviewee's attitude towards interviewer and the interview

Deception vs. Truth

- Denial
 - Avoiding fact by lying
- Evasion
 - Not definitively answering a simple and direct question
 - **Validate the evasive response by asking the question a second time**
- Omission
 - Transitioning from denial or evasion to omission is most likely a sign of deception
 - An unvoiced denial, e.g., “uh, uh”

- Denials
 - Early responses
 - Deceptive persons may respond early, before the question is finished
 - Specific
 - Focuses on some narrow aspect of the question
 - Literal interpretation = truthful statement
 - Q: On your last business trip, did you use your company-issued laptop to access gambling and porn sites?
 - A: I didn't use my laptop to access gambling or porn sites on my last business trip.

Deception Indicators

- Parroting
 - Incorporating interviewer’s words and phrases into a response
 - **“Buying time” to formulate a response**
 - **Uncomfortable with silence**
 - Q: **“Where were you last night at 8:00 PM?”**
 - A: **“Where was I last night at 8:00 PM, I was at the store.”**
- Stalling tactics
 - Interviewee repeats interviewer’s question
 - Interviewee asking questions
 - Q: **“Who were you with last night?”**
 - A: **“Why do you need to know that?”**
 - A: **“Why is that important?”**

- Qualifying language
 - “To the best of my knowledge”
 - “As I recall”
 - “As far as I know”
 - “At this point in time”
 - **Evaluate qualifying phrases in the context of the question asked**



- Unnecessary bolstering
 - Words or phrases used to make a denial more credible
 - “I swear”
 - “As God is my witness”
 - “To be totally honest”
- Declarations against self interest
 - “You may not believe this but,”
 - “As crazy as this sounds”
 - “I don’t want to confuse you but,”

Deception Indicators

- Erasure behavior
 - Occurs immediately following an important denial
 - Laugh
 - Cough
 - Clearing of the throat
 - “Erases the denial”
- Edited accounts
 - “I can’t remember what happened after that.”
 - “That’s all I remember happening.”
 - “I believe”
 - “I think”

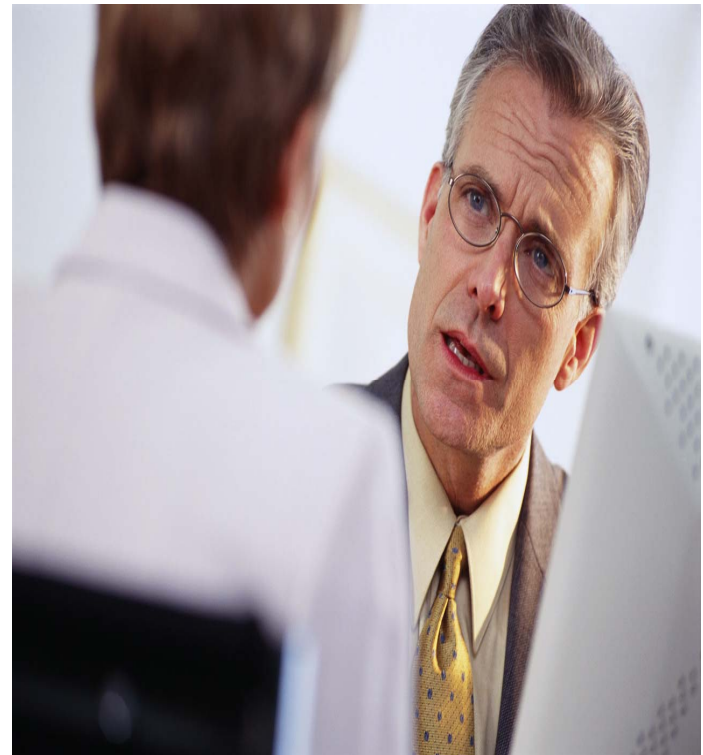
- Listing
 - A response that is a series of events or possibilities
 - **Q: Why did you wait two weeks before reporting your laptop stolen?**
 - **A: Well, first of all, I wasn't sure if it was stolen or if my brother borrowed it, and second of all, I really didn't know how to go about reporting this sort of thing, you know, and third of all, they usually show up sooner than later...**
 - The truth is rarely included as a possibility

- Lying by referral
 - Prefixing a response with a reference to an earlier statement
 - **Q: Can you tell me everything that happened concerning your use of someone else's network credentials?**
 - **A: As I provided earlier to my supervisor, I was installing a patch on the system, I left to take a smoke break, I came back inside, and the next thing I know when I unlocked my screensaver, I'm in some drive that contained the CEO's saved Email files.**

Deception Indicators

- **“I” statements**
 - Failure to use “I” is an attempt to disassociate from events or circumstances
 - **“Don’t know who took the laptop computer.”**
 - **“Wasn’t in the computer lab when the laptop was taken.”**
 - **“Can’t recall where I was at 3:00 PM.”**
- **Pronouns**
 - Failure to use “my”, “hers”, “their” is an attempt to disassociate from events or circumstances
 - **“the computer”**
 - **“the password”**
 - **“the keys”**

- Interview Structure
 - Introduction
 - Opening question
 - Getting information
 - Closure



- Identify purpose
 - To discuss the who, what, when, where and why
 - Establish rapport
 - **Affirming general information**
 - Address
 - Date of birth
 - **Connecting emotionally with interviewee**
 - Sincere compliment
 - Altruistic phrases
 - » “I would really appreciate your help”
 - » “I need your assistance”
 - » “It would really help me if you could”



Opening Question

- Broad and generic
 - “Can you tell me everything that happened on Monday?”
 - Can you tell me everything you know about the incident?”
 - **Do not ask questions during the interviewee’s response to the opening question (pure version)**
 - **Interruptions will break interviewee’s and interviewer’s concentration**

- Starting out
 - Specific to broad
 - **“Prior to the illegal penetration of the company’s LAN last Saturday, did you employ any social engineering techniques?” (specific)**
 - **“Have you hacked into other LANs?” (broad)**



- Asking direct questions
 - Purpose
 - To elicit a definitive position from the interviewee
 - To evaluate the interviewee's truthfulness
 - To get a denial commitment from the interviewee
 - Cautions
 - Limit questions to a single issue
 - Do not ask a negative question
- “Did you...”
- “Do you know who...”
- “Is it possible that...”

- Drawing out a complete response
 - Direct phrases to encourage
 - “After deleting the company’s entire database, what happened next”?
 - “Please continue”
 - “Go on”
 - Indirect phrases to encourage
 - “Ok”, followed by silence
 - “I see”, followed by silence
 - “Alright”, followed by silence



- Clarifying Questions
 - “Can you tell me more about...”
 - “What did you mean by...”
 - “Could you give me an example...”
- Questions to elicit explanations for events
 - “Why did you...”
 - “What made you decide...”
 - “Why didn’t you...”

Getting Information

- Questions to elicit feelings or reactions
 - “How did you feel after...”
 - “What was your reaction when you heard...”
 - “How do you feel toward the person who...”
- Story reversal
 - Ask the interviewee to tell the story in reverse
 - Lead interviewee through reversed story “What happened just before that?”
 - **Truth is consistent when told chronologically or in reverse**

- Summary Statements
 - Eliciting commitment to a story
 - Review interviewee's account asking "Is that correct?"
 - Get specific commitments to comments that are especially significant to the interview or investigation
 - Do not alert the interviewee that their comments may be incriminating

- Keep lines of communication open
 - “If I need further information you’d be willing to talk to me again, right?”
- Prepare the interviewee for future activity
 - Face to face interview
 - Expect correspondence requiring a signature
 - Request a revised form or document



- For a “face to face” meeting
 - Stay positive
 - Ask interviewee for their ongoing help
 - **Handwriting samples**
 - **To view documents**
 - **Log sheets**
 - **Time sheets**
 - **Risk assessments**
 - **Chain of custody forms**

Cautions

- Do not begin the interview with negative expectations
 - Excuses for the interviewee to have amnesia
- Refrain from comment, “I’d like to ask you a few questions”
- Skip titles and positions
- Avoid legal jargon and “trigger” words
 - Fraud
 - Theft
 - Crime

- Opinion questions
 - Do not reflect facts
 - Impossible to lie about an opinion
 - **“When do you believe you’ll have Windows Vista installed on every company issued laptop?” (opinion)**
 - **“How many licenses did you purchase for the installation of Windows Vista?” (fact)**
 - **“How did the 12-hour network failure restrict your ability to be productive?” (opinion)**
 - **“What tasks were you unable to perform while the network was down?” (fact)**

- Questions & Answers
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