

**ADVANCED INTERVIEWING  
TECHNIQUES**

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**John R. Schafer** is an 18-year veteran with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He is currently assigned to the FBI's elite National Security Behavioral Analysis Program. Special Agent Schafer's investigative experience includes foreign counterintelligence, civil rights, and crimes against children. He also served as a pilot and a Korean linguist early in his FBI career. Special Agent Schafer earned a bachelor of arts degree in psychology from Western Illinois University, a bachelor of arts degree in business administration from Elmhurst College, and a Master of Arts degree in criminal justice from Western Illinois University. He is currently working on a Ph.D. in clinical psychology at Fielding Graduate Institute. Special Agent Schafer has published numerous articles in professional journals.

**Joe Navarro**, received his undergraduate degree from Brigham Young University and his Master of Arts degree in International Relations from Salve Regina University. He retired from the FBI after 25 years of dedicated service to his country having served both as a Special Agent and as a Supervisor. He served in the Phoenix, New York, San Juan, and Tampa Divisions of the FBI handling complex counterintelligence and counterterrorism, investigations. For most of his Bureau career, Mr. Navarro was also an educator teaching a variety of topics to both the law enforcement and intelligence community. He was a founding member of the FBI's elite National Security Division—Behavioral Analysis Program where he served as an expert in interviewing and nonverbal behavior. He continues to teach for the



FBI as well as other members of the intelligence community and is on the adjunct faculty at the University of Tampa, the National College of District Attorneys, and Saint Leo's University in Florida. Mr. Navarro travels throughout the world sharing his unique knowledge and experiences in the area of interviewing and nonverbal communications with law enforcement, military, security, and intelligence professionals.

# ADVANCED INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

Proven Strategies for Law Enforcement,  
Military, and Security Personnel

*By*

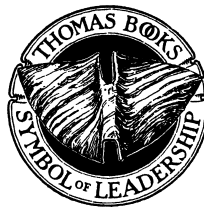
**JOHN R. SCHAFFER, M.A.**

*FBI Special Agent  
National Security Division  
Behavioral Analysis Program*

*and*

**JOE NAVARRO, M.A.**

*FBI Special Agent (Ret.)  
National Security Division  
Behavioral Analysis Program*



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## PREFACE

The purpose of this book is to assist law enforcement officers and security professionals become better interviewers. This book was written with working professionals in mind and contains advanced interviewing techniques. Some basic topics emphasized in other interviewing books will not be addressed. This book was designed as a quick reference guide rather than a comprehensive manual. The enhanced outline format of the text and the extended table of contents provide for easy reference, reading, and comprehension.

Material for this manual derived from numerous sources including formal interviewing models and decades of social and psychological research as well as the authors' over fifty years of combined law enforcement experience. In many instances, this book provides names for techniques instinctively used by experienced investigators. Identifying and explaining interviewing techniques afford investigators with less experience the opportunity to use the same effective techniques as do their more experienced colleagues.

The marketplace is replete with interviewing books and manuals; however, quickly locating information buried in thick manuscripts is costly and time consuming. The style of this book is consistent with the manner in which law enforcement officers like to receive information: quickly, authoritatively, and to the point.



## INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, obtaining information from others is divided into two categories, the interview and the interrogation. The interview, a more benign inquiry, gleans facts from witnesses and other people not directly related to the activity under investigation. The interrogation, a more intimidating process, extracts information from unwilling suspects. This two-paradigm approach suggests that the mindset of the investigator during an interview differs from the mindset of the investigator during an interrogation. Consequently, investigators adopt one persona during an interview and a more robust persona during an interrogation. Changing from the interview persona to the interrogation persona can be difficult, especially when interviewing witnesses who, for various reasons, offer resistance similar to suspects.

An alternative approach to the inquiry process places the interview on a resistance continuum. At one end of the continuum, interviewees offer information without resistance. At the other end, interviewees are reluctant to provide information or fall moot. This concept allows investigators to glide back and forth along the resistance continuum using a succession of specialized interviewing techniques to overcome varying degrees of resistance. Investigators need only focus on the appropriate selection of interviewing techniques to overcome resistance from witnesses and suspects alike. As the interviewee's resistance increases or decreases, the interviewer adjusts the intensity of the inquiry by selecting the suitable interviewing technique to overcome the interviewee's resistance.

Merely learning a variety of interviewing techniques, however, does not make a good interviewer. A good interviewer not only knows how to use interviewing techniques but can also identify the appropriate circumstances in which to use each technique. Using an interviewing technique at the wrong time can have a devastating impact on the outcome

of an interview. Investigators must exercise appropriate caution when using any advanced interviewing techniques.

Good interviewers glean techniques from formal training, personal experience, and fellow investigators, and then assimilate those techniques into their own personalities. When interviewing techniques become part of an investigator's personality, the investigator can act naturally during an interview without the added pressure of maintaining a pretense.

No single interviewing method or technique provides a magic formula for success. The fact remains, investigators only become good interviewers by interviewing. Every interview, no matter how trivial, provides an opportunity to practice new interviewing techniques or to hone previously learned skills.

An interviewing technique that works for one investigator might not work for another investigator, and, of course, each interviewee is different. If a particular interviewing technique does not work the first time, the investigator should change one or more aspects of the technique or add a personal touch. If the technique still does not work, discard it no matter how effective other investigators judge the technique.

Whether investigators subscribe to the traditional interview/interrogation approach or to the resistance continuum, effective communication with a purpose remains at the core of the interviewing process. This book builds on interviewers' communication skills and expands their repertoire of interviewing techniques.

The first three chapters examine interview planning, the interview setting, and the use of interview props, the foundation for effective inquiry. The next four chapters, assessing the interviewee, establishing dominance, building rapport, and Miranda warnings focus on establishing effective communications under legal constraints. Chapters 8, 9, and 10 discuss deception and the verbal and nonverbal cues to detecting deception. Chapter 11 provides investigators with interviewing tools of varying intensities to overcome interviewee resistance. Chapter 12 reviews techniques to break the interview impasse, a critical point in the inquiry. The final chapter focuses on the interview end game, an often overlooked component of the interview process.



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# **ADVANCED INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES**



# Planning the Interview

## Chapter

# 1

**I**nterview planning is the most important aspect in the interview process; yet, it is the most overlooked. Interviewers do not plan for interviews because they are either too busy or, for various reasons, they do not feel the need to plan. These excuses are not acceptable. Interview preparation is neither difficult nor time-consuming once the investigator develops a mental checklist applicable to most routine interviews. Of course, interviews that are more difficult require additional thought and planning.

### **Selecting the Interviewer**

Read the case file, learn about the suspect, and then ask yourself, “If I were the suspect, who would I want to interview me and why?” Ask yourself, “Am I the best person to do this interview?” If the case is important and you know you are not the right person to do the interview, select a more suitable interviewer. Be honest with yourself.

If two investigators conduct an interview, both investigators should plan to take the primary role in the event the initial interviewer and the interviewee experience a personality clash.

### **Number of Interviewers**

One-on-one interviews present an environment with the highest probability of obtaining a confession. If a one-on-one interview is not possible, no more than two interviewers should conduct the interview. More than two interviewers raises the anxiety level of the interviewee and inhibits emotional bonding between the interviewee and the interviewers. Multiple interviewers may be perceived as an audience afford-

ing the interviewee an opportunity to put on a performance to advance his or her personal or social agenda instead of answering questions. In some situations, the presence of multiple interviewers promotes competition between the interviewers, which is nonproductive and detracts from the focus of the interview (Meloy & Mohandie, 2002).

### **Age of the Interviewer**

The age of the interviewer should be considered. An older interviewer may provide a substitute father figure for an interviewee who was abandoned by his or her father during childhood.

An interviewer who is younger than the interviewee may be perceived by the interviewee as a person who can be manipulated due to inexperience or naiveté. A younger interviewer may evoke fatherly or authoritarian feelings in the interviewee, which can be exploited during the interview (Meloy & Mohandie, 2002). A younger interviewer could also assume the role of a student or apprentice for an interviewee who views himself or herself as a teacher or mentor.

### **Gender of the Interviewer(s)**

In most instances, the gender of the interviewer will not affect the outcome of the interview. However, under certain conditions, the gender of the interviewer may have a positive or negative impact on the interview. A female interviewer interviewing a male suspect may evoke emotions from the suspect that can be exploited, depending on the personality of the interviewee and the interview objectives. Contrawise, a female interviewer interviewing a Middle Eastern suspect may prove more difficult because Middle Eastern males view women in traditional, domesticated roles (Nydell, 1996).

### **Interview Objectives**

Take time before the interview to think. Formulate the objectives you intend to achieve during the interview. Carefully define your objectives. Well-defined goals increase the probability of success because the interview proceeds with direction and purpose.

### ***Confession***

If the goal of the interview is a confession, review the appropriate statutes and memorize the legal elements necessary to prove the crime. A confession is less effective if the suspect does not confess to all the elements necessary to prove the criminal violation in a courtroom. Keep in mind that some suspects will not formally confess, but rather make a series of smaller admissions, which in concert constitute a full confession.

### ***Lead Information***

If the objective of the interview is to obtain information of lead value, identify the specific information needed and either solicit the information using a straightforward approach or develop strategies to tease the information from the interviewee.

### ***Informant Development***

If the goal of the interview is to develop an informant, establishing rapport, the foundation for a long-term relationship, is the paramount objective. A slower, more measured approach is typically more effective in building a lasting relationship based on trust.

### **The Importance of Confessions**

At trial, the mere presentation of a confession increases the rate of guilty verdicts. Confession evidence is more powerful than eyewitness identifications and character witnesses. In fact, "Confession evidence is so inherently prejudicial that people do not fully discount the information even when it is logically and legally appropriate to do so." (Kassin, 1997)

### **The Interview as Theater**

As with any stage production, the dialog, the props, the costumes, and the actor (you) all have important roles. Everything and everybody on the interview stage should serve one purpose: Move the inquiry toward the interview objectives.