Interviewing Techniques for Auditors: Eliciting Information

Fundamentals of Eliciting Information
Psychology of Communication

- The interviewer must understand the fundamental psychology of communication.
- There are inhibitors and facilitators of communication.
- The objective of the successful interviewer is to reduce the inhibitors of communication while enhancing the facilitators.
Elements of Conversation

- Because an interview is essentially a structured conversation, it is helpful to understand the basic elements of communications.
- When two or more human beings are conversing, several types of communication occur.
  - One at a time
  - In combination
Expression

- Self-expression includes ideas, feelings, attitudes, or moods.
- Urge of spontaneous expression can be a vital asset in interviewing.
- Interviewer should have the discipline to control his own responses, or he risks making the respondent feel threatened.
Persuasion

- Similar to expression, but persuasion is essentially aimed at convincing another person.
- Effective use of persuasion is mostly done by convincing the person of the legitimacy of the interview.
Therapy

- Information sought in an interview is often closely related to the respondent’s inner conflicts and tensions.
- A skillful interviewer will know the therapeutic value of such feelings when attempting to gather information.
Ritual

- Interviewers must learn to detect ritualistic answers and avoid giving them ourselves.
- The ritualistic function of conversation has little use in gathering information.
Information

- The exchange of information is the central purpose of the interview.
  - The word *exchange* reminds us that the flow of information in an interview goes both ways.

- Problems in information exchange:
  - The information sought by the interviewer is often not of equal importance to the respondent.
  - There is often a communication barrier between people of diverse backgrounds.
Inhibitors of Communication

- An inhibitor is any social or psychological barrier that impedes the flow of relevant information by making the respondent unable or unwilling to give it to the interviewer at the moment.
- The interviewer’s task is to minimize inhibitors and maximize facilitators.
Inhibitors of Communication

- Competing demands for time
- Ego threat
  - Repression
  - Disapproval
  - Loss of status
- Etiquette

- Trauma
- Forgetting
- Chronological confusion
- Inferential confusion
- Unconscious behavior
Facilitators of Communication

- *Facilitators of communication* are those social or psychological forces that make conversations, including interviews, easier to accomplish.
Facilitators of Communication

- Fulfilling expectations
- Recognition
- Altruistic appeals
- Sympathetic understanding
- New experience
- Catharsis
- Need for meaning
- Extrinsic rewards