

tice makes perfect to practice makes perfect if you know what you are practicing." Twenty years of experience may be one year of experience repeated twenty times.

We want to show in this and succeeding chapters that there is a vast difference between skilled and unskilled interviewers. Our purpose is to introduce you to the basic skills applicable to all interviews and to specific skills needed in specialized settings such as survey, journalistic, employment, performance appraisal, persuasive, health care, and counseling interviews. We will begin by defining the interview, identifying its types, and discussing its fundamental approaches.

The Interview Defined

We define interviewing as a *process of dyadic, relational communication with a predetermined and serious purpose designed to interchange behavior and involving the asking and answering of questions.*¹ The word *process* denotes a dynamic, ever-changing interaction, with many variables operating with and acting upon one another, and a degree of system without being fixed. An interview, regardless of its intent, does not occur in isolation from other influences. Once a relationship begins, our impressions go into our mental programming, are not reversible or stoppable, and will affect our perceptions of the other party regardless of the length or depth of the relationship. An individual or party who enters into a relationship with us cannot avoid the ongoing dynamic potential of the relationship.

The word *dyadic* denotes that the interview is a person-to-person interaction between two parties or units.² Thus, more than two people may be involved in an interview (for example, two members of a company interviewing an applicant, or a marriage counselor interviewing a husband and wife), but never more than two parties—an *interviewer party* and an *interviewee party*.

The word *relational* suggests an interpersonal connection between the interview parties. This connection may result from the roles being played, group memberships (social, professional, ethnic, political, religious), status differences of the interview parties within a group, and even common ancestry. Relationships involve interactions and mutual interest in their outcomes. Each of the situations presented at the beginning of this chapter involves a relationship. The reporter needs to establish a brief but intensive relationship between herself and two strangers. She must persuade them to appear on television with her, establish a level of trust so they will disclose their feelings before thousands of viewers, and maintain control of the interview. The telephone salesperson needs to establish a brief, superficial, and nonthreatening



relationship that either party can end by hanging up the telephone. The job applicant and the manager have a long-established relationship that each will want to protect during this most recent, and perhaps most unusual, experience—a relationship that is likely to continue long after the job interview ends.

Predetermined and serious purpose means that at least one of the two parties comes to the interview with a goal—other than mere enjoyment of the interchange—and has planned the interview to focus on specific subject matter. The predetermined and serious purpose distinguishes the interview from social conversation, although polite conversation, chitchat, or digressions are also important in many interviews. Each party in the interview usually has a purpose and some content to communicate, either planned in advance or developed during the interview. The degree to which each party's purposes are achieved is a measure of how productive and successful the interview is.

Interchanging behavior connotes a sharing of expectations, roles, feelings, and information. In successful interviews, both parties use words and non-verbal signals—touches, hugs, punches on the arm, handshakes, winks, and looks of concern or understanding—to express feelings of joy, fear, loneliness, satisfaction, trust, anxiety, and so on. These interchanges involve risk that can be minimized but never eliminated, and if one or both parties elect to “play it safe,” the interview will suffer. Interchanging behavior also means that each party speaks and listens from time to time. If one party does all the speaking

and the other all the listening, a speech, not an interview, is taking place. We believe that participation should follow a ratio of 70 percent to 30 percent, with the interviewee doing most of the talking. A few types of interviews such as information giving and sales may require a reversal of this ratio. The parties often exchange the roles of interviewer and interviewee, such as when a buyer makes a counteroffer or an applicant asks questions of the employer.

Asking and answering questions is crucial to the interviewing process. Questions are the tools interviewers and interviewees use to obtain information, check the accuracy of messages sent and received, and verify assumptions and impressions. Few interviews could take place or achieve success without purposeful questions thought out in advance and asked at appropriate times.

We present a model of the interviewing process in chapter 2, detailing the components of the process and how they interact. Major components include

- ① the two parties,
- ② perceptions,
- ③ levels and types of communicative interactions,
- ④ feedback, and the situation.
- ⑤

Types of Interviews

Now that we have a basic understanding of what an interview is, let us examine a variety of interviewing dyads. Charles Redding has developed a "situational schema" into which interviews fit according to their functions. Figure 1.1 is an elaboration of Redding's classification to include all types of interviews.

① Information giving interviews are used to orient new members of organizations or to train, instruct, or coach. Examples include explaining insurance benefits to a new employee, clarifying procedures for submitting research proposals, training students to fill out registration forms, coaching sales representatives on how to avoid the "door in the face," relaying information about hospital patients to the next shift coming on duty, or giving orders to factory crews prior to shift changes.

② Information gathering interviews are designed to obtain facts, opinions, feelings, attitudes, reasons for actions, or trends of belief. Some common types include surveys, polls, exit interviews, journalistic interviews, research interviews, and investigative interviews.

③ Selection interviews are used for screening, hiring, and placing applicants, employees, and members of organizations. Screening interviews are designed to weed out applicants who do not meet specific qualifications, while determinate interviews are designed to decide if an individual should be tested, interviewed further, or hired. Organizations use transfer or placement interviews to promote members or move them from one position to another.

④ Interviews dealing with problems of the interviewee's behavior include appraisal interviews to assess behavior, performance, or improvement; separation interviews to remove a person from active participation in an organization; discipline interviews to reprimand an individual and correct behavior; and counseling interviews to help a person understand and alleviate a personal problem.

1. Information giving
 - a. Orientation
 - b. Training, instruction, coaching
 - c. Job-related instructions
 - d. Briefings
2. Information gathering
 - a. Surveys and polls
 - b. Exit interviews
 - c. Research interviews
 - d. Investigations: insurance, police, etc
 - e. Medical psychological, case history, diagnostic, caseworker, etc.
 - f. Journalistic
3. Selection
 - a. Screening
 - b. Determinate
 - c. Placement
4. Problems of interviewee's behavior
 - a. Appraisal, evaluative, review
 - b. Separation, firing
 - c. Correction, discipline, reprimand
 - d. Counseling
5. Problems of interviewer's behavior
 - a. Receiving complaints
 - b. Grievances
 - c. Receiving suggestions
6. Problem solving
 - a. Discussing mutually shared problems
 - b. Receiving suggestions for solutions
7. Persuasion
 - a. Selling products and services
 - b. Recruiting members
 - c. Fundraising and development
 - d. Changing the way a party feels, thinks, or acts

⑤ Interviews dealing with problems of the interviewer's behavior include receiving a complaint from a customer, dealing with a grievance from an employee, or discussing a possible solution to a production problem.

⑥ Problem solving interviews deal not with the personal problems of either the interviewer or interviewee but with problems of mutual concern such as the loss of a client, a computer breakdown, a drop in sales, or the puzzling symptoms of a patient.

⑦ Persuasive interviews are efforts to bring about a change in an interviewee's way of thinking, feeling, and/or acting. Some examples are sales of products and services, recruitment of members for an organization, fund raising, and pep talks to motivate a person or improve an attitude.