The materials used are developed from PEF files, Civil Service Documents in the Public Domain, and study guides developed by PEF. The State of New York Department of Civil Service has had no involvement in the creation of this study guide program. Any Civil Service materials used herein are in the public domain and included by design by PEF Membership Benefits.
Interviewing & Investigating Techniques

**Interviewing**
Interviewing for Employment Selection

**Incident Study**
Interviewing for Time Critical Events, Accidents, Grievance Health/Safety Issue Inspection, Problem Report

**Investigating**
Investigating for Wrong Doing, Infractions, and Negative Inspection results
Interviewing & Investigating Techniques

The purpose of this guide: This guide is designed to help you develop and refine your interviewing and investigating skills and abilities. The strategies provided within this guide are proven to enhance the skills underlying the processes of conducting an employment interview, an incident study or an investigation and have been tailored to meet the needs of PEF members.

Rationale: In your work, you will be required to conduct interviews, incident studies, and investigations. It is important that you understand the different processes involved in these activities and that you practice and employ the skills presented in this guide to enhance your performance on the job.

Components of this guide: This study guide consists of three modules including Employment Interviewing, Incident Studying, and Investigating. Following the modules is a section, which includes random question and answers drawing from each module, a glossary and references for further research into this area of study. The processes involved in interviewing, incident studying, and investigating are increasingly complex. The skills build upon each other and are integrated into each of the modules accordingly. It is recommended that you begin with the first module and work your way through the guide. Each module contains an overview of the process steps for each process component, examples, questions and answers and a summary.
Employment Interview

Purpose:
After completing this training, the learner will be able to:

1. Prepare for an employment interview
   a. Determine critical knowledge and skill/competency requirements of job
   b. Write interview questions to assess candidate’s knowledge and skills
   c. Identify key information goals
   d. Predict potential hurdles that may occur in the interview
   e. List three appropriate interview opening strategies
   f. Utilize the Employment Interview Model and to design an interview outline
   g. Recognize key elements of a successful employment interview
h. Distinguish between a “good, better and best” close of an employment interview or customer inquiry.

**Overview**

Employment Interviewing for PEF members generally takes place during the hiring process. This process has four stages: preparing, opening, conducting and closing. This section of the Study Guide will walk you through this process, provide examples of appropriate procedures and practice in applying these skills.

Making your employment interviews productive involves interviewing and influencing skills. Historically, interviewing a job candidate involved finding out about a candidate’s schooling, work history, knowledge of the industry, and other general questions as well as relying on your “gut” instinct. Today there are a variety of interviewing techniques to employ.

Behavior-based interviewing (BBI) dynamically alters the historic approach. With BBI, you are “predicting the future by gathering relevant examples of knowledge, skills and abilities demonstrated in the past.” Instead of a candidate describing what they *would do* in a given situation, they are describing what they *have done* in a real situation. Using this approach eliminates “inventing” and significantly increases your chances of finding a successful candidate—success rates for BBI are 50% versus 10% for traditional interviewing strategies.

The knowledge, skills and abilities implemented in Behavior-Based Interviewing are integral to other interviewing techniques as well. Before concluding this module, we will share information on unstructured interviews, situational interviews, behavior description interviews and comprehensive structured interviews. Each of these types has a different purpose and process involved.
Influencing skills help you to establish a rapport and create a productive environment in your interpersonal endeavors. Influencing strategies operate from the assumption that you must “hear” other’s ideas and needs to be able to understand their needs or requirements. Once this listening is completed, the effective influencer can blend his/her motives into the other’s requirements. There are a series of steps that help you to structure interactions such that you control the conversation in a positive way.

The Employment Interview Model links key competencies from these two skill areas in an easy-to-use approach.

**Process**

**Preparing**

**Employment Interview Steps**

1. Know what you want.
   
   i. Define the 5-8 key outcomes for the position
   
   ii. Determine the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) required for a star performer in this job.
   
   iii. Write associated interview questions.
2. Anticipate hurdles and prepare workarounds.

3. Repeat steps ii and iii for each outcome listed in step i.

Example

Job Opening: Project Manager

- Outcome: Consulting and Problem Solving

- KSAs:
  1. Ability to solve complex problems
  2. Desire to learn
  3. Ability to prioritize
iv. Ability to analyze and synthesize

➢ BBI: No one can be everything to everybody! Tell me about a time when you were not able to solve a customer’s/client’s problem or meet their need. What was the situation? How did things turn out with this customer/client?

Job Opening: Technical Manager

➢ Outcome: Project Management

➢ KSAs

i. Everyone who works for candidate is clear about what’s expected.

ii. Manages at right level –doesn’t micro-manage or under-manage.

iii. Sets up milestones and monitors progress.

➢ BBI:

i. Consider a major work project you’ve been doing or have completed during the last two years or so. What were the goals for this project? How were they communicated? How was progress measured/evaluated? Do you think anything could have been done differently?

ii. Talk me through an initial project kick-off meeting you’ve had. What did you try to accomplish in this meeting? Would you say this meeting is typical of other initial project kick-off meetings you’ve had?

iii. Tell me about a particularly difficult consulting task/assignment/project you’ve been involved with in your work. Briefly, what was the situation? How did things turn out?

4. Anticipate hurdles and prepare workarounds.
Example

➢ Hitting a roadblock:

   i. Candidate says, “I haven’t had a situation where I wasn’t able to meet a customer’s/client’s problem or meet their needs.” Solution: Ask the candidate to describe a successful problem solution.

➢ Getting an uneasy feeling about a response:

   i. You ask the candidate to describe the toughest decision they have had to make in their work. Candidate says, “The toughest decision I have had to make in my work was to fire five individuals because of an ethics violation.” You get an uneasy feeling from this response but you are not sure why. You probe deeper to make sure that the candidate’s decision making abilities and integrity are reliable, “That must have been hard. Without naming names, can you help me to understand the situation more clearly?”

5. Look at candidate’s resume carefully. Prepare 2-3 conversation starters. Conversation starters can include: the organization of the interview, noting a professional membership or place of work mentioned on the candidate’s resume, or complimenting on a success listed on the candidate’s resume.

Example

➢ Tell me about your recent job experience at ABC Bank.

➢ What made you want to work as an auditor?

➢ I see you are a member of PEF (or other professional association). Have you attended any training or association meetings lately?

6. Prepare an outline for the interview.
7. Manage the interview carefully. In order to glean the necessary information, you will need to keep the process moving.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Allotment</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>2 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducting:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background Review</td>
<td>6 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBI Questions</td>
<td>6 @ 7 minutes each = 42 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>3 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions from candidate</td>
<td>6 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close</td>
<td>1 minute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Opening

Employment Interview Steps

1. Getting Started: Create a mood and environment where both parties feel empowered and comfortable. Don’t sit behind your desk. This puts you in a position of power. Come around and sit in a chair at a comfortable distance from the other party. Make him/her feel welcome. Use a warm, friendly tone of voice.

2. Build rapport: Engage the candidate in dialogue. Use one of your prepared conversation starters.

   - Try to avoid talking about the weather, holidays, hobbies or off-work activities.
   - Pay attention to the candidate’s emphasis, pitch and body language. These help you to determine what’s important to him/her. Your goal in the interview is to help him/her shine, too.
   - Try to mirror the pace of the candidate. If he/she speaks slowly, don’t race or use clipped sentences.
   - Use the type of descriptors that he/she uses too. Descriptors can be grouped into three categories:

      - Visual: “That casts some light on the subject.”
      - Auditory: “That sounds about right.”
      - Kinesthetic: “I just can’t seem to get a handle on it?”

You can use the type of descriptors the candidate uses to build trust quickly.
Examples

- Good morning! I am so glad to have the opportunity to talk with you today. To get started let me tell you a little more about the position. (Fill in details.)
- Can you tell me about your current or most recent work capacity?
- Have you had any recent training or learned any new skills?
- Ask a brain teaser:
  - ♦ If you had to build a tennis court, how would you begin? (The answer is not as important as the process. You are looking for the candidate to clarify—Clay or hard surface? How much money would I have to spend? How much time would I have to complete the project, etc?

Conducting

Employment Interview Steps

1. Achieving Your Outcomes: What do you hope to achieve in this interview?

2. Explain the interview agenda and timeline.

3. Set expectations for the behavioral questions section.

4. Tell the candidate you will be taking notes during the interview.

5. Take careful notes. After the interview, review them and elaborate on the details. Otherwise, your memory will become cloudy, especially if you are interviewing a number of candidates.

6. Focus the candidate by asking one of your prepared BBI questions.

7. Manage the conversation. If the candidate strays from the question, repose it or ask it again in a different way.
8. Probe, if needed. “I don’t understand…” “Would you please elaborate?” “Can you be more specific?” Make sure that the candidate is providing examples that portray their true abilities.

9. Give the candidate a moment to think.

10. Listen. Pregnant pauses are ok. Pay attention to non-verbal clues, gestures, inflections and facial expressions. Although subtle, these can serve as indicators of a candidate’s confidence and experience as related to a competency or job experience.

11. Verify what the candidate has said. “So, what you are describing is…” “So, you mean…”

12. Rank candidates answer; 1= No fit, 2=Fair fit, 3=Good Fit, 4=Better Fit, 5=Best Fit

13. Pose the next part of your question or ask the next question.

14. Repeat steps 1-5 above. Have you gathered enough information to base a decision on?

15. Learning Other’s Outcomes: Remember the candidate is judging you as much as you are judging him/her. Has he/she acquired enough information from you? Do they feel comfortable? Ask the candidate if there is anything else related to this topic they would like to mention. Do they have any questions for you so far?

**Employment Interview Pitfalls**

1. Discriminating. Asking an illegal question can put you and your organization at risk. Don’t ask about a candidate’s age, religious beliefs, ancestry, citizenship, native language, marital status, family member’s occupation, disability, a criminal record or sexual orientation. You may ask if any physical, mental or medical impairment would interfere with the individual’s ability to perform the job for which he/she is interviewing.

2. Interrupting the candidate. Talking too much.

3. Failing to correctly interpret information from candidate’s past experience.
4. Asking questions unrelated to the job.

5. Failing to maintain consistency in the questions asked.

6. Failing to listen carefully. Jumping to conclusions.

7. Failing to communicate clearly with the applicant.

8. Overlooking job and organizational fit issues. For example, candidate expresses a desire to work virtually and is hired even though this is not a possibility and the candidate may be very unhappy.

9. Failing to probe for more detailed information.

10. Failing to take adequate notes resulting in the interview results blurring with those of other candidate’s.

11. Allowing biases to affect results. Biases can include: stereotypes, asking different questions of different candidates, allowing your values or past experiences to influence what you are recording, taking a first impression instead of an informed decision, allowing one negative to foil a candidate’s chances, favoring a candidate based on his/her similarity to you.
Closing

Employment Interview Steps
1. Make an action plan.
   a. Tell the candidate that you will follow up with them within 1 week (or the appropriate time period for your organization.) Let him/her know you will not leave him/her hanging.
   b. State any actions the candidate needs to perform after the interview, e.g. get fingerprints, provide references, etc.

2. Anchor the interview.
   a. Tell the candidate how much you enjoyed meeting him/her and learning about his/her work experiences and stories.
   b. Summarize information.

Other Types of Interviews

Unstructured
Unstructured interviews involve asking different questions of different applicants. The interviewer generally uses a strategy to explore the work the candidate performs, currently. This procedure may elicit quality information; however, it makes it hard to compare interview results and relies more on the interviewer’s interpretation.

Situational
Situational interviews use the procedure of asking candidates about what actions they would take in a variety of job-related situations. As in Behavior-Based Interviewing, the critical knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA’s) for the job are assessed and questions are formulated to elicit responses which will provide evidence that a candidate has these KSA’s available and can implement them to solve a new problem. This type of interview allows results to be compared across candidates.

**Behavior Description**

Behavior Description Interviews involve a process in which candidates are asked about prior experiences they have faced that are similar to situations they may encounter in the new position. Interviewees are scored and compared to make a hiring decision.

**Comprehensive Structured**

Comprehensive Structured Interviews use the procedure of asking candidates questions related to how they would handle job related situations, job knowledge, worker requirements and specifically, given a scenario, how they would approach it. Candidate’s responses are compared and evaluated to make a hiring decision.

**Oral Interview Boards**

Oral Interview Boards are a type of interview in which a candidate answers job related questions asked by a panel of interviewers. Panel members rate candidate responses on a variety of dimensions and this information is used to make the candidate selection. This approach is not effective for making a selection from amongst a large group of candidates.
Questions and Answer

Questions

1. During an employment interview, you ask the candidate to describe a recent project they led that involved team members from different functional groups and to describe any problems or successes associated with this project. Which of the following responses would cause you to probe deeper?

   a. I managed a project in September in which we were merging two work groups together. We had members of each group on the team as well as a couple of folks from the IT team…

   b. I haven’t led a project team, but I have served on a project team, where we had members from five different functional groups. The project goal was to launch a training curriculum for new hires…

   c. If I were managing a cross-functional project team, I would start by writing an outline of the project goals and objectives and identifying people I thought would be best suited for the various project tasks…

   d. The project was to create a new work process for recording confidentiality breaches due to the new federal mandates…

2. You have determined that one of the competencies required for the position is “leading for high performance.” You ask the following BBI question: “Tell me about a time you had to handle a conflict between two of your employees. Briefly, what was the conflict and how did you find out about it? What did you do/say in this situation?” Three minutes pass and the candidate has not answered. What should you do?

   a. Ask the candidate, “Do you need more time?”

   b. Say, “OK, well. I guess you haven’t faced that type of situation. Let’s move on to the next question.”

   c. Dismiss the candidate. He/she is obviously not a good fit.
d. Mark the candidate’s answer down as a 1: No fit and thank him/her for thinking about the question.

3. Which of the following choices represents an appropriate interview opening?

   a. Hi. I am sorry I kept you waiting. Consider the people in the work group you work in or lead. If we could ask them…

   b. Good morning. Wow, you must be an athlete. What sports do you participate in?

   c. Hi John, I am so glad to have the chance to talk with you this morning. Your resume reflects some neat job experiences…

   d. Hi John, I see you went to UB on the five year plan.
Answers

1. C. This candidate is not telling you about experiences he/she has actually had. In order to predict the future, you need to collect actual experiences. You will want to follow up with, “Thank you for explaining how you would handle this type of project. Can you share with me the successes and failures of a recent project you have worked on personally?” All of the other answer choices either share specific experiences or honestly address the lack of experience.

2. A. Ask the candidate if they need more time. The other answer choices jump too quickly to either a dismissal or a “No fit.”

3. C is the correct answer. This answer shows that as an interviewer you have prepared for the interview and you are setting a positive tone. A shows the candidate first that you are not prepared by keeping the candidate waiting and second it jumps too quickly into their job experience. B is a mediocre conversation starter. It immediately jumps into hobbies rather than setting the stage to delve into knowledge, skills and abilities. D is inappropriate because although the candidate may be light-hearted about taking five years to graduate, he/she could be offended by this start.

Summary

The Employment Interview Model for employment interviewing combines essential behavior based interviewing techniques and influencing skills to ensure a smooth and productive employment interview process. By studying the material, practicing the techniques and applying these skills on the job you will find you are better able to select the right candidate for the job.
Incident Study: Defining, Collecting, Processing, Discerning and Making a Referral

Incident study

Purpose:
After completing this training, the learner will be able to:

1. Address a problem or perceived infraction requiring immediate attention
   a. Define the problem
   b. Collect data
   c. Process the information
   d. Discern the meaning and importance of the evidence
   e. Make a referral to the appropriate party
Overview

Conducting an Incident Study involves interviewing and influencing skills in a significantly different context than that of the employment interview, yet many of the skills are the same. An Incident Study occurs in response to a time critical event, accident, grievance, health/safety issue, inspection, or problem report. Incident Studies require applying a structured approach to the interviewing process to ensure that all essential data is gathered. The Incident Study process has five stages: defining the problem, collecting data, processing the information, discerning the meaning and importance of the evidence and making the appropriate referral.

The Incident Study Model combines interviewing and influencing skills customized for these sensitive situations. The goal is to gather the information without negatively influencing the people involved or affecting the situation.

Process

Defining the Problem

When defining the problem, you are preparing to collect evidence. You will name the problem or issue and then write a list of questions appropriate to this issue. Asking behavior-based questions helps you to secure specific details of what happened rather than interpretations. You should prepare a generic checklist so that you are always prepared for such an event. In a time critical event, the best way to secure an accurate account is to collect the information immediately. The more prepared you can be, the better you will be able to do your job.

Incident Study Steps

1. Articulate the problem or event.
2. Use concise, straightforward language, for example:
   a. Employee trips and falls on the job
   b. Hospital reports a gas leak
3. Prepare a list of behavior-based questions to ask to accurately depict the problem

**Examples**

a. When did the incident occur?
b. Where did the incident occur?
c. Has this ever occurred before?
d. Was anyone hurt?
e. How many people were involved? (or) How many people were present?
f. Were emergency services called?
g. Has the problem been resolved?
h. What did you hear?
i. What did you see?
j. What did you smell?

**Collecting Data**

Collecting the data is the stage in the Incident Study process where and when your interviewing and influencing skills have major impact. You want to gather evidence by asking for specific information that an individual saw, heard, smelled, etc. You may also include what the individual “thought” happened; however, this allows for subjectivity and interpretation and you are trying to gather facts. Your approach needs to be one of sincerity and calm. You should not be harsh or abrasive. Although you must gather the evidence in a timely fashion so that you do not miss important information or allow time for evidence to be destroyed, you do not want to upset the witnesses or parties involved causing them to withhold evidence or alter their responses in any way.
Evidence must be gathered immediately. Research has proven that memory becomes distorted very quickly. The sooner you retrieve the data, the more accurate your information will be.

Reflecting content can be useful in any conversation or interview setting. It is especially helpful when conducting incident studies and investigations. Reflecting what has been said enables you to check your understanding of what is being communicated to you, enables the other to know that you understand him/her, and reduces repetition on the part of the other person.

**Incident Study Steps**

1. Travel to the scene of the accident or event.
2. Inform individuals at the scene or the individual(s) involved in the incident that your role is simply to acquire an accurate account of the incident.
3. Tell individuals that in order to collect this information, you must ask a series of questions and that you must speak with each of them, individually, so that you can secure the most accurate account of the incident. Ask them not to discuss what happened amongst themselves until after you have spoken with each of them.
4. Thank them in advance for their cooperation.
5. Ask prepared questions.
6. Record all answers.
7. Take note of surroundings and any associated evidence in the area.
8. Thank individuals for their help.
9. Say good bye.

**Incident Study Tips**

1. Be neutral or unbiased.
2. Don’t make assumptions.
3. Be calm and professional.
4. Be sincere and thorough.
5. Be considerate and sensitive.
6. Don’t indicate how you think a question should be answered. Your influence should only be used to generate results, not to affect results.

7. Be aware of non-verbal behaviors. These can transmit a great deal of the meaning of a message. They can also reveal hidden agendas, confusion, or dishonesty.

**Processing the Information**

**Incident Study Steps**

1. Return to your office.
2. Review data.
3. Prioritize information from most important, most relevant to least important, least relevant.
4. Note any information gaps.

**Discerning the Meaning and Importance of the Evidence**

In this stage, you need to be aware of your values and biases and understand how they could influence your interpretation of the data so that you provide a professional and unbiased assessment. Your role is to accurately describe what happened and write a report stating what went wrong, who was at fault, what should have been done, how this incident might have been avoided, etc.

**Incident Study Steps**

1. Analyze prioritized items.
2. Make determination as to cause and effect of incident.
3. Write report describing problem and articulating cause and effect.
4. If a process caused the problem, prepare to refer to an appropriate agency responsible for correcting processes and procedures.
5. If an individual was at fault, prepare to refer to a supervisor or appropriate party.
6. If incident was an unavoidable accident, make note accordingly.
Making the Appropriate Referral

Incident Study Steps

1. Send report to appropriate party
2. Save a copy of report for your files.

Questions and Answer

Questions

1. When conducting an incident study, the best way to begin is to ask:
   a. What do you think caused this problem?
   b. How could this have happened?
   c. Can you tell me what you saw?
   d. My name is John Doe. I am here to collect information on the event. I need to ask you a few questions. I really appreciate your cooperation.

2. An employee submits a grievance claiming an unfair allotment of overtime hours. You make an appointment to meet with the employee. He/she is extremely upset and is accusatory toward you regarding the problem. How should you respond to this individual?
   a. You should reflect his/her feelings by saying, “I can see that you are very upset about this situation. Let’s take down some notes so that we can be sure it is properly addressed.”
   b. “I haven’t done anything wrong here. Don’t blame me. I am here to help.”
   c. “I will have to refer this case to my supervisor.”
   d. “You need to take some time to collect yourself. When you are prepared to discuss this situation, please call me and I will speak with you.”
3. An employee has suffered an accident in his/her organization. You are responsible for conducting the incident study and writing the incident report. Your first step is to:
   a. Call the employee and ask what happened and if they are all right.
   b. Write down a statement of the problem and prepare a list of questions to collect the data.
   c. Travel to the accident scene and immediately collect data.
   d. Travel to the scene and ask individuals to work together to write an account of what happened.
Answers

1. The answer is d, because you should preface your questions, by introducing yourself and asking the individuals for their cooperation. C is also a good question to ask as it is a behavior based question which helps to secure accurate information, but you should first let the individuals know who you are and why you are there. Questions a and b are very general questions and allow room for subjective answers. You may end your interview with this type of question, but it is best to get specifics first.

2. The answer is a, because often if you reflect someone’s feelings, they begin to trust you and will relay the problem or concern in a more professional manner. This should be your first action. B is an inappropriate response. Your job role is to conduct incident studies and you know that people are often upset in such situations. You must remain calm and professional. Answers c and d are possibilities if you are unable to conduct the interview but they should not be used until you have tried to reflect the individual’s feelings and collect the data.

3. The answer is c. You should have a checklist of questions ready so you can proceed directly to an accident scene in a time critical event. Answer a is incorrect because you should arrange to interview the individual face-to-face. Answer b is incorrect because an accident is a time critical event and you must travel to the scene immediately. This is an occasion to use your prepared checklist of questions. Answer d is incorrect because asking individuals to work together to write an account of the incident causes information to become distorted. You must interview the individuals, one-by-one to secure an accurate account of the incident.

Summary

Incident Studies are an important part of your work. In order to achieve strong results and collect accurate information, you must be timely, sensitive and responsive. The Incident Study Model will help you structure your interviewing process and ensure successful outcomes.
Investigating: Collecting, Examining, and Analyzing Evidence and Submitting a Report

Investigation

*Purpose*
After completing this training, the learner will be able to:

1. Conduct an investigation by
   a. Collecting evidence
   b. Examining evidence
   c. Analyzing evidence, and
d. Submitting an investigation report

**Overview**

Investigations generally take place in response to suspected wrong doing or inspection results. Investigations are the most complicated process you may conduct because they often involve evidence which should not be disturbed and can have legal or ethical implications, as well. An investigation relies on your interviewing and influencing skills to secure information. You will ask probing questions to understand the root issues involved and you must apply your knowledge and skills to identify inconsistencies and incorrect assumptions being made during an investigation. Reflecting content will be critical in an investigation interview.

An investigation is an intensely personal process. Watching experienced practitioners in action can help you improve your abilities before you go “live.” Enlisting experienced investigators to provide feedback and coaching for you as a beginner can be very advantageous for you. Gain as much familiarity with the subject’s background, native language and character as possible before you begin.

Within the category of investigative work you perform, you will need to prioritize your work efforts. Given a report of fraud versus a report of a missing expense reimbursement, you would choose to investigate the fraud case first, for example.

**Process**

**Collecting Evidence**

In the Collecting Evidence phase you are looking for evidence or clues to associate with the event or violation, determining if there is additional material that may qualify as evidence, collecting the evidence material and documenting what you have collected. Evidence can be extremely fragile. It is critical that evidence be processed quickly to ensure that it is not destroyed — intentionally or unintentionally.

**Investigation Steps**

1. Close off the investigation site from other (or uninvolved) parties, if applicable.
2. Preserve the site from being tampered with or disturbed, if applicable.

3. Prepare for the investigation, researching topics to be covered, subject’s personality, cultural background and native culture to avoid making incongruous remarks or misinterpreting information or gestures, subject’s prior work history, life history and what documents would have bearing on the investigation.

4. Obtain any necessary approvals or permissions to perform investigation.

5. Walk through site to identify, collect and document evidence, if applicable.

6. Conduct investigation interview, implementing techniques from the Incident Study Model. Your goal is two-fold: to build rapport and remain a detached observer. If you have received a form to use or specific questions to ask from your supervisor, be sure you understand the reason for and importance of each question before conducting the interview.

   Know what you want: understanding what it is you are trying to determine from the interview, will help you to make the process more productive. Be sure your setting is free of distractions, using a “do not disturb” sign, if necessary, and eliminating telephones. If appropriate, make arrangements to tape record the interview. Is your interview one on one? Maybe you should consider bringing a colleague along for assistance. He/she could act as a witness and conduct the interview in your absence, if necessary. Be sure to consider the timing and how you will end the interview.

7. Begin the interview by introducing yourself to the interviewee with a friendly tone. Explain the purpose and process of the interview: you are trying to gain an understanding of this situation; you need to ask some questions; and you are thankful for his/her cooperation.

8. Frame questions to elicit positive, multi-word responses.

9. Ask behavior based and probing questions of involved individuals.

   **CAUTION!**

   Allow subject time to obtain a union representative or an attorney of their choice to be present during an investigation if they are likely to be charged with a disciplinary action.
Examples

a. When did you submit this report?

b. Do you have the associated data, receipts, etc?

i. If so, may I see them?

c. Which individuals are responsible for this process?

d. How often does this report get submitted

10. Allow some rambling when beginning to allow observation of non-verbal behaviors—tension, fear, etc. Note these as well as physical gestures, body language, mouth, for meaning. Note, the topic eliciting these responses as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Aids</th>
<th>Possible Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Indicator</td>
<td>(not conclusive proofs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruddy or flushed face</td>
<td>Anger or embarrassment but not necessarily guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold sweat</td>
<td>Fear or shock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry mouth</td>
<td>Nervousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wringing or clenching hands or handkerchief</td>
<td>Nervous tension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pumping heart visible through pulse and throat</td>
<td>Emotional strain or tension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slight gasp, holding breath, unsteady voice</td>
<td>Subject is guilty or surprised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidgeting</td>
<td>Nervousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing elbows to one’s sides</td>
<td>Protective defense mechanism demonstrating emotional strain or nervous tension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased movement in foot when one leg is crossed over</td>
<td>Increased pulse rate due to emotional strain or nervousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the knee</td>
<td>Pauses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Anticipate resistance: type of resistance, intensity, if information could be damaging to subject, and if information could be obtained from another source.

12. Return to your office to begin examining evidence.

**Investigation Tips**

1. Given an uncooperative interviewee(s), first ask why the interviewee is being uncooperative. It is easier to change strategies once you know the reasons behind the behavior. It is important to maintain the cooperation of interviewees and witnesses to ensure your investigation moves forward.

2. Given a flight defense from an interviewee (when an interviewee rationalizes his/her behavior, talks about problems excessively, or withdraws,) you must refocus or draw out the individual in order to acquire the essential evidence.

3. Given a confused interviewee, slow the pace of the interview and ask more pointed questions to refocus the discussion.

4. Be friendly, so the interviewee feels comfortable. Don’t be abrasive, harsh or bossy or you may make the interviewee nervous, scared or uncooperative.

5. Be “calm, cool, and collected.” This demeanor demonstrates a professional bearing and conveys that you are not nervous yourself. You are in control.

6. Be objective. Being subjective or biased is not acceptable in any type of interview situation.

7. Be fair.

8. Be thorough. Wait on making judgments until enough facts are known.

9. Be timely. Memory becomes homogenized, omitting important details and information, the longer time passes.

10. Reflect subject’s feeling innocuously: Yes, I can see you were angry or Yes, I can see that you were confused.
Examining Evidence

The Examining Evidence phase relies on your expertise and knowledge to explain how the evidence impacts the investigation. Does it prove or disprove the complaint or misconduct, fraud or negative inspection results, for example?

Investigation Steps

1. Explain the origin and significance of each piece of evidence.
2. Explain any information found that is difficult to see and important to the case.
3. Document this information for inclusion in your investigation report.

Analyzing Evidence

The Analyzing the Evidence phase requires you to assess the importance of each piece of evidence and to explain how it pertains to the investigation.

Investigation Steps

1. Prioritize evidence as to importance.
2. Explain relevance to investigation.
3. Document this information for inclusion in your investigation report.

Submitting an Investigation Report

Your investigation report should be clear and concise. The goal is to be thorough without being redundant or going off on tangents.

Investigation Steps

1. Provide an overview of the problem.
2. Outline the investigation process.
3. Share your Examining Evidence and Analyzing Evidence results

4. Summarize findings.

5. Submit report to appropriate party.

Questions and Answer

Questions

1. Given an audit result which questions an employee expense report as potentially fraudulent, which of the following should you do first?
   a. Call employee and ask them to explain the report.
   b. Read the audit report and create a list of interview questions.
   c. Go to the employee’s office and ask to speak with him/her.
   d. Assume that the employee is innocent and tell him/her that there has probably been a mistake but you are required to investigate the situation.

2. An employee claims that his/her supervisor is misappropriating funds to pay for entertaining clients when organization policy forbids this. You must schedule appointments to interview the supervisor and the employee. The supervisor seems extremely agitated when you contact him/her. You should:
   a. Diffuse his/her agitation.
   b. Empathize with him/her.
   c. Convey sincerity without conveying emotion.
   d. Appeal to the supervisor’s sense of humor.

3. As an investigator, you uncover information that indicates criminal activity. You should first:
   a. Document the evidence
   b. Contact the police.
c. Contact your supervisor.

d. Inform the involved individual about your findings.
Answers

1. The correct answer is b because this is not a time critical event. You can take some time to acquire information pertinent to the case and prepare relevant questions so that your time is productive during the interviewing process. Answer a is incorrect because investigation interviews should be conducted face-to-face whenever possible so that any associated body language indicators can be accounted for. Answer c is an action that may be pursued if wrongdoing is suspected but it would nevertheless occur after answer b. Answer d is incorrect. You should not make an assumption as to the innocence or guilt of the individual or try to minimize the importance of the investigation. You should simply explain that you are conducting an investigation to clarify an audit report, you will need to collect some information, and you are counting on his/her cooperation to make the investigation as painless as possible.

2. The correct answer is c because you do not want to influence the investigation by conveying emotion; rather you should maintain a professional demeanor. Answers a and b are incorrect because they convey emotion rather than staying neutral. Answer d is incorrect because appealing to the supervisor’s sense of humor in this situation is inappropriate because the situation is serious.

3. The correct answer is a because you want to collect all the pertinent information before taking any other steps. Any other party such as the police or a supervisor will need this evidence so you should document its origin and significance. Answers b and c would take place after answer a. Answer d depends on the organization policies but would still take place after you have documented the evidence.

Summary

Investigating is an essential and complicated task. It combines essential interviewing techniques, influencing skills, evidence collection strategies and documentation skills to ensure accurate results. By studying the material, practicing the techniques and applying these skills on the job you will find you are better able to perform investigations. The next section provides questions
and answers from all three categories—employee interviewing, incident studies and investigations—presented in a random format.
Questions and Answers

Questions

1. You are conducting an incident interview and the interviewee is providing one word answers, using an irritated tone of voice and resisting your attempts to gain information. First, you should:
   a. Change the topic to a different question area.
   b. Try to discover why the individual is being uncooperative.
   c. Reflect the individual’s last answer.
   d. Ask the individual if he/she has any questions.

2. You are preparing to interview an applicant for the position of Labor Standards Investigator. One of the outcomes or competencies required for this job is “analyzing and interpreting information.” Which of the following would be the best question to ask?
   a. Are you comfortable reading information for meaning and interpreting information?
   b. What would you do if given a report to submit for a labor standard infraction?
   c. How would you rate your ability to analyze information; poor, good, or excellent?
   d. Can you tell me about a time at work when your “first take” on an issue or problem was wrong?

3. Interviewees can sometimes launch into a flight defense. This is evidenced by:
   a. Intentionally being uncooperative.
   b. Intentionally interrupting.
   c. Becoming quieter.
   d. Becoming argumentative.

4. An interviewee is nervous and twitchy as you begin the interview process. Your first objective should be to:
   a. Be friendly
   b. Be efficient.
c. Ask a behavior based question to capture the interviewee’s attention.
d. Ask the candidate why he/she is nervous?

5. When conducting an investigation interview, you rely on starting the interview the same way each time. You feel this routine helps you to “get off on the right foot.” You always begin by talking about the weather. This opening is generally considered to be which of the following?
   a. Desirable because it is neutral and helps to get the person talking.
   b. Desirable because everyone is interested in the weather and it helps to establish rapport.
   c. Undesirable because it annoys people and makes them uncooperative.
   d. Undesirable because an investigation interview is best started by introducing yourself, and then explaining the purpose of the interview to the person being interviewed.

6. As a safety inspector, which of the following cases would you investigate first?
   a. A report of chronic lack of use of safety belts when operating state vehicles.
   b. A report of lack of salt/sand distribution on organization walkways on icy days.
   c. A report of lack of use of safety goggles in construction zones.
   d. A report of lack of use of latex gloves in a dental clinic.

7. As an interviewer, it is acceptable to ask an interviewee which of the following questions?
   a. If he/she has an impairment would make him/her unable to perform the job requirements.
   b. What his/her spouse does for a living.
   c. How old they are?
   d. What language they speak at home.
8. When conducting an investigation, one of your main objectives is to ensure you acquire an accurate understanding of the event. Which of the following issues can most interfere with your success?

   a. An interviewee being tired and upset.
   b. An interviewee being nervous.
   c. Interviewees discussing the event with each other.
   d. Interviewees who want to leave.

9. As a Labor Standards Investigator, which of the following problems should you consider to be the most serious?

   a. An employee reporting discrimination.
   b. An employee reporting a broken time clock.
   c. A supervisor reporting sexual harassment.
   d. An employee reporting systematic overtime infractions.

10. As an investigator, you find that you continually miss collecting important evidence from eyewitnesses. Which of the following choices is the best course of action for you?

    a. Study investigation techniques.
    b. Ask your supervisor to accompany you on your next investigation to provide feedback on your techniques.
    c. Review your procedures and alter them accordingly.
    d. Watch a video of a simulated investigation.

   **Answers**
1. The answer is b, because trying to find out why the individual is uncooperative should be your first response to this type of behavior. Answers a, c and d are all strategies you might take after determining why the interviewee was being uncooperative.

2. The correct answer is d because this answer is asking for an example of past behavior. It is much easier for you to predict future behavior given a candidate’s past behavior than it is to predict his/her success based on suppositions.

3. The correct answer is c because a flight defense means to withdraw, to rationalize or to ramble on. Answer a could be correct but it is not as good an answer as c because it does not specifically demonstrate a flight defense response. Interrupting or becoming argumentative do not represent flight defense behaviors.

4. The correct answer is a, be friendly because that is the most effective strategy to help an interviewee relax. Answer b is incorrect, because being efficient conveys a lack of caring which can make the candidate more nervous and make the interview even less efficient. Answer c is incorrect because launching into a behavior based question before the interviewee is reasonably comfortable can also cause the individual to become more nervous. Answer d is incorrect because unlike the approach for uncooperative interviewees in which you do want to first determine why he/she is being uncooperative, when dealing with nervousness focusing attention on it can make the individual more nervous. The best way to handle nervousness is just to be friendly, ask a few easy to answer questions and then try to move forward with the interview.

5. The correct answer is d because an investigation interview is less jovial than an employment interview (even when conducting an employment interview it is best to avoid topics like the weather, hobbies or other unrelated subject matter.) A desirable opening for an investigation interview is to introduce yourself and explain the purpose and process of the interview. Answers a and b are incorrect because, although they may be true, they are not desirable ways to begin, especially when conducting an investigation interview. C is incorrect because although discussing the weather may annoy people, it is unlikely to cause them to be uncooperative.
6. The correct answer is a because chronic indicates that it is happening repeatedly and not wearing your seatbelt is against the law and can have fatal consequences. Although b, c, and d can have serious consequences, there is no indication that these violations are happening repeatedly.

7. The correct answer is a because asking if an impairment would cause the candidate to be unable to perform the work requirements is the only question you may ask, legally. Answers b, c, and d are all illegal questions.

8. The correct answer is c because discussing the event with each other causes the interviewees’ memories to be distorted. It is important to ask interviewees not to discuss the situation with each other until after you have spoken with each of them. Answers a, b and d can all have a negative impact on your evidence collection success however none of these is as damaging as interviewees discussing the information with each other.

9. The correct answer is c because sexual harassment is the most serious of the issues presented and can lead to even more serious criminal behavior. This complaint should be addressed first. Answers a and d are serious and should be investigated but they are not the most serious of the issues presented. Answer b is not serious and should be addressed but it is not time critical.

10. The correct answer is b because an informed observer is most likely to catch what it is you are omitting or doing wrong and be able to provide feedback for you to correct your techniques. Answers a, c, and d would all be helpful actions, however since you are already an investigator, it can be assumed that you have trained for this position and learned the techniques; you are not as likely to be able to determine what you are doing wrong using these strategies.
You have completed the Interviewing and Investigating Techniques Study Guide. The following page provides additional resources for further study. Good luck using these techniques in the workplace!
Glossary - Interviewing

Accessing Cues – Subtle behaviors that will both help to trigger and indicate which representational system a person is using to think with. Typical types of accessing cues include eye movements, voice tone and tempo, body posture, gestures and breathing patterns.

Anchoring – The process of associating an internal response with some external trigger (similar to classical conditioning) so that the response may be quickly, and sometimes covertly, reassessed.

Auditory – Relating to hearing or the sense of hearing.

Behavioral Flexibility – The ability to vary one’s own behavior in order to elicit or secure a response from another person.

Calibration – The process of learning to read another person’s responses in an ongoing interaction by pairing observable behavioral cues with a specific internal response.

Gustatory – Relating to taste or the sense of taste.

Kinesthetic – Relates to body sensations. The term kinesthetic is used to encompass all kinds of feelings including tactile, visceral and emotional.

Modeling – The process of observing and mapping the successful behaviors of other people.

Olfactory – Relating to smell or the sense of smell.

Pacing – A method used by communicators to quickly establish rapport by matching certain aspects of their behavior to those of the person with whom they are communicating – a matching or mirroring of behavior.

Predicates – Process words (like verbs, adverbs and adjectives) that a person selects to describe a subject. Predicates are used to identify which representational system a person is using to process information.

Rapport – The establishment of trust, harmony and cooperation in a relationship. This is primarily accomplished through the process of “pacing”.

Representational Systems – The five senses: seeing, hearing, touching (feeling), smelling, and tasting.

Visual – Relating to sight or the sense of sight.
Bibliography


Bosrock, Mary Murray. (1990s) *The Put Your Best Foot Forward* series. St. Paul, MN: International Educating Systems. These introductory books come in several editions by continent; Asia, South America, Russia, and so forth.


References/Resources

The references listed below are websites that can be used investigative tools. Some of the data can be used to view trends and for comparative purpose.

Crime Data/Statistics
National Sex Offender Public Registry http://www.nsopr.gov
Search of names in various states

Population/Geography
US Census Bureau Quick Facts http://quickfacts.census.gov/gfd/
Latest census data by state
Map digger http://www.naco.org/
US counties directory with contact information

People Searched
Local white and yellow pages http://areaconnect.com/
State white, yellow page directory
Reverse phone look ups http://www.whitepages.com/0000/reverse.phone
Find some ones name and location from the phone number
Telephone number database http://www.tndatabase.com
Telephone numbers listed by area codes
Geobytes http://geobytes.com/Phocator.htm
Internet protocol access to find address of someone who sent you email
Skip eases http://www.skipease.com/blog/
Blog to search for people or public records

Professional Investigating Tips
Wondir http://www.wondir.com/
Ask any question and someone will answer

Research Material
Search Systems http://searchsystem.net/
Free and fee based searches of license, inspection records, etc.
Fallacy Files http://fallacyfiles.org/
Discusses different illogical argument aid supporting discussion
Story Database http://ire.org/resourcecenter/initial-search-stories.html
Investigative stories to provide ideas, discoveries

Search Engines
Data Place http://www.dataplace.org/
Demographic data on a various US locations
Jupiter Research http://www.jupiterresearch.com/bin/item.pl/home
Business research and reports
First Gov http://firstgovsearch.gov/
Government
Google http://www.google.com
General excellent information

US Government
Public agenda issues/topics
US Food and Drug Administration
Health warning letters
Congressional Budget Office  http://www.cbo.gov/
  Budget information and economic reports
US Public Interest Research Group  http://www.uspirg.org/
  Public interest information
BUILDING CULTURAL CAPACITY

LEARNING GUIDE

The materials used are developed from PEF files, Civil Service Documents in the Public Domain, and study guides developed by PEF. The State of New York Department of Civil Service has had no involvement in the creation of this study guide program. Any Civil Service materials used herein are in the public domain and included by design by PEF Membership Benefits.

© ALL RIGHTS RESERVED 2008

Kenneth Brynien, President
Arlea Igoe, Secretary - Treasurer

Trustees:
Joe Fox, Chair
Ken Brynien
Arlea Igoe
Pat Baker
Tom Comanzo
Building Cultural Capacity

The purpose of this guide: This guide is designed to help you develop and refine your skills and abilities in dealing with diverse cultures in the workplace. The strategies provided within this guide are proven to enhance the skills underlying the intercultural interactions and have been tailored to meet the needs of PEF members.

Rationale: In your work, you will be required to conduct business meetings, interviews, incident studies, and investigations with a diverse population. It is important that you expand your cultural awareness and ability to empathize with behaviors, logic and activities of culturally diverse people and that you practice and employ the skills presented in this guide to enhance your performance on the job.

Components of this guide: This study guide consists of four modules including Foundations, Inspections, Finish Work and Trial Run. Following the modules is a section, which includes questions and answers and tips for building your cultural capacity. The Foundations section provides the basic knowledge about culture, as the foundation of a house provides a solid base. The Inspections section takes a closer look at variances in culture and where we fit on the continuum. The Finish Work section provides a process for applying these knowledge and skills in the workplace. The Trial Run section allows you to practice in cultural capacity building exercises.
Overview

The Building Cultural Capacity study guide provides a framework to gain knowledge, skills and abilities to function effectively in diverse cultural settings, being able to make appropriate judgments and take action accordingly. This guide focuses on culture in an international sense, as it applies to individual countries, regions, ethnic, linguistic or religious groups rather than to race, sex, sexual orientation or age.

Individuals span all continuums of cultural styles and trends. Culture groups are characterized by where the majority falls on these continuums. Individuals may not align with the norms of their culture group.

This process guide is divided into four phases: Foundations, Inspections, Finish Work, and Trial Run. The process is cyclical because you can continually upgrade your knowledge and skills by learning new information, examining its application, applying it and incorporating it into your skills and abilities through practice.
The Objectives on the next page provide a focused approach to the guide.

**Objectives**

After completing this training, the learner will:

- Gain increased familiarity of culture and cultural awareness
- Cultivate empathy with the views of people from other cultures
- Gain an understanding of his/her personal style
- Discern between correct and incorrect interpretations of situational interactions amongst people from other cultures.
Introduction

There is an ancient Chinese Proverb called “Frog and Sky,” which tells us of an argument between a bird who stopped to drink at a well and a frog who was resting there. They were arguing about the appearance of the sky. From their different perspectives and experiences, they each had a different view. The frog’s view is very limited compared to the bird’s, of course; thus, the proverb “Frog and Sky” refers to someone who is very insular and narrow-minded in their outlook. The Building Cultural Capacity guide endeavors to expand your view, exposing you to a variety of cultural norms and nuances, and hopefully to cultivate empathy for other’s “way of doing things.”
Foundations

What is Culture?
Definition

Culture is the integrated pattern of beliefs, values, behaviors, and activities of a group of people.

Aspects

There are many aspects that make up cultures. Some of these aspects are represented in our environment: language, artifacts, stories, rituals, heroes, and symbols. Whereas others are found deeper in our culture in the behaviors-goals-strategies-philosophies and values rings: beliefs, attitudes, and values.

Language

Language is the system of words, symbols and conventions used to convey information orally and in writing. A cultural group may use a particular language, and within that language, it may have a particular dialect, accent or jargon. Language incorporates vocabulary, speed of speech, grammar, use of silence and inflection. American speech is fast and nimble, informal and uses humor and quips to deliver its message. Americans are not comfortable with silence. Other cultures, the Finns and Asians use it to convey meaning.
Artifacts +

Artifacts are objects made by people. Often there are particular artifacts that are representative of a culture. For example, the Swiss are known for precision watch making, and the British for their fine china.

Stories +

Stories, myths, and legends are methods of passing down values and guiding people within a culture to behave in a certain way. A familiar story in our culture is that of Santa Claus who leaves gifts for good children but coal for bad children.

Rituals, rites, ceremonies, and celebrations +

Rituals, rites, ceremonies, celebrations are specific activities conducted during specific days of the year or for life events/milestones to convey a specific meaning. We are all familiar with marriage ceremonies and retirement celebrations, but we may not be familiar with the hajj, a journey to Mecca made by Muslims wearing simple clothing (men wear two white sheets with a sash; women wear a traditional, simple hijab or tunic-like garment with head and face coverings) to show their equality in the eyes of Allah. There are many rituals to avoid bad luck: don’t open an umbrella indoors, don’t change the name of a boat, etc.

Heroes +
Heroes, in a culture, are individuals who performed in an extraordinary manner within that culture and exemplify things believed to be good or virtuous. In US culture, of course, Abraham Lincoln is a hero of fairness, justice and leadership, whereas Joan of Arc represents courage and bravery for the French.

**Symbols**

Symbols and symbolic action are artifacts, concepts, ideas, colors or movements that convey a particular meaning to a group of people. Symbols can cause confusion across cultures. For example green is associated with the Irish in the US and is associated with the environment across continental Europe.

**Beliefs**

Beliefs, assumptions and ideas are philosophies, concepts or operating principles held by a group and believed to be true and which help to define that group to others. For example, children should go to school or people should arrive on time.

**Attitudes**

Attitudes are formed by beliefs and have a dynamic impact on our behaviors. A culture may have a particular attitude toward work: work defines who we are; whereas, another culture may express the attitude we only work to provide for ourselves—our family and hobbies define who we are.

**Values, rules, and accepted ways**

Values, rules, and accepted ways are principles or standards considered to be worthwhile by a group of individuals. The Japanese consider respect and status to be worthwhile values. The Iceberg Metaphor on the next page demonstrates how these pieces fit into our everyday world, what we can see and what is below the surface.
Iceberg Metaphor

The Iceberg metaphor is found throughout the literature regarding culture.

Meaning

It is insightful in describing the makeup of culture, illustrating the tip of the iceberg above the water line as visible to all and the base of the iceberg positioned beneath the water as invisible to all. The aspects of culture denoted with a + in the list above are all in the tip of the iceberg. Beliefs, attitudes, values, rules and accepted ways are found in the base of the iceberg.

Cultural Features

Using the following list of cultural features, we will demonstrate how they fit in the Iceberg metaphor by sorting them for you. Cultural features:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unsorted Cultural Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Styles of dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes about personal space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept of self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Styles of dress, Foods, Greetings, Paintings, Facial expressions and hand gestures, Literature, Religious rituals, Gestures to show you understand what you have been told, Holiday customs, Music, Dancing, Celebrations, Ways of greeting people,

Ideas about clothing, Attitudes about personal space and privacy, Work ethic, Rules of polite behavior, Concept of fairness, nature of friendship, Beliefs about hospitality, Importance of time, Concept of self, values, Beliefs about child raising, Beliefs about the responsibilities of children and teens, Concept of beauty, Attitude toward age, The role of family, General worldview
Differences between stereotyping, generalizing and cultural awareness

Stereotyping, generalizing and cultural awareness are important aspects of culture, requiring sensitivity and astuteness.

**Stereotyping**

Stereotyping is making simplified, exaggerated or distorted descriptions about people, often in a negative or discriminatory manner. We have all been stung by the lash of a stereotype: xxxs are noisy, xxxs are tightwads, xxxs are dirty, xxxs are chauvinists, etc. Stereotyping has a negative connotation.

**Generalizing**

Generalizing is grouping things together in meaningful ways which follow a rule: For any two related concepts, A and B; A is considered a generalization of concept B if and only if:

- most instances of concept B are also instances of concept A; and
- there are instances of concept A which are not instances of concept B.

For instance, the term Hispanic means someone from Latin America or of Latin American descent. It does not take into account race or language. Hispanic is a generalization of Mexican because most Mexicans are Hispanic, and there are Hispanics who are not Mexicans (Columbians, Peruvians and American Hispanics, for instance). Generalizing can be useful.

When it comes to building our cultural capacity, however, the only acceptable generalizations are those founded in research and informed experience. For instance, referring to every Spanish speaking person as a Columbian or a Mexican would be inappropriate.

**Cultural awareness**

Cultural awareness means knowing your cultural style, knowing there are other cultures and knowing one culture is not better than another, just different.
Stereotyping, generalizing and cultural awareness make you realize just how much care cultural capacity building requires. In the Inspections section, which follows, you will delve further into examining cultural styles.
Inspections

Cultural Awareness
Scales of Differences
The scales of differences are continuums, which provide a method for us to define our own style and to compare it to those of other individuals and other cultural groups. These five scales are found throughout the literature regarding cultural styles. With each scale, try to discern where you fit and then where your workplace culture group fits.

Scales

- Equality/Hierarchy
- Direct/Indirect
- Individual/Group
- Task/Relationships

Risk/Caution

Equality/Hierarchy

Equality  Hierarchy

Values on hierarchy and equality differ according to individuals and cultures. Some cultures put great emphasis on roles and rank, whereas others have a very egalitarian nature. The Japanese for example are known for stressing the importance of hierarchy: appropriately seating the most important person in the room for a meeting, using correct titles, and following the “chain of command” are important in their culture. The U.S. is known for an equality style. However,
even in the U.S. there are many instances of hierarchical styles: the military, certain companies, etc. It is important to know what the style is where you work and what your style is. If you are most comfortable with a hierarchical style and you work for a “dot-com” where there is a very egalitarian style, you need to be aware that you will probably not be “managed” and you are expected to contribute to the best of your ability. Where do you fall on the continuum? What is the management style in your workplace?

**Direct/Indirect**

Direct  
Indirect

The direct/indirect continuum has various applications, including how individuals and culture groups tend to communicate their points, linearly or in more circuitous route, and how individuals and culture groups tend to conduct business, moving quickly to the task at hand or emphasizing relationship building as the primary focus. The US is known for being very direct. Japanese people are known for being indirect. They want to build consensus and trust and go to great lengths to save “face.” They list justifications for an effort to avoid having to give a directive. Do you like to get right to the point or do you like to work up to it, gradually? How do the people in your workplace communicate?

**Individual/Group**

Individual  
Group

The Individual versus Group continuum measures the degree to which cultures are focused on the individual guarding his/her own welfare versus the group’s welfare. In some cultures, individuals will lose face for the benefit of the group. In other cultures, an individual is more
likely to save his own reputation rather than worry about the welfare of the group. Individualist cultures focus on individual accomplishments, skills and independence. Group cultures generally put heavy focus on family. From birth, the children are kept close by, often sleeping in a family bed. Dependence is fostered and familial obligations are high. This approach transfers into the educational and work arenas as children mature. A Group culture would be unlikely to move their families frequently for the sake of a job, which is often the case in Individual cultures such as the US. Where do you fall on the continuum? Are there people you know who would pass up a job opportunity for family harmony or would they expect the family to adjust?

**Task/Relationships**

The Task/Relationship Continuum compares focus on task, getting the job done, to relationship building. Many cultures want to build trust and understanding before they would consider doing business. These same cultures tend to “visit” at business meetings before moving into the business of getting tasks accomplished. Japanese and Latin cultures are known for being on the Relationship end of the scale. German and U.S. cultures are known for being very task oriented. How do you operate? When you run a meeting do you move right into the business at hand or do you take the opportunity to socialize before getting started?

**Risk/Caution**

The Risk versus Caution Continuum measures risk aversion. Are you a risk taker? Are you very cautious? Some cultures and individuals are known for weighing all pros and cons, risks and
benefits, very carefully before making a decision. Others jump right in, believing they are equipped to make quick judgments. The U.S. is known for its risk-taking. The Japanese are known for being risk averse. Do you feel comfortable with risk? How do you feel toward risk-takers and risk avoiders? Can you empathize with their viewpoints?

**Why is building cultural capacity important?**
Cultural capacity building helps us connect to our global world, full of diverse peoples, and economies.

**Globalization and Immigration**
- More interactions professionally, diplomatically, economically, socially
- Need for fair and mutually beneficial interactions
- More diverse workforce
- More diverse partners, clients and suppliers

**Statistics**

**Did you know?**
- Hispanics make up 13.3% of the US population, are the largest minority group, and make up 4.1% of the New York State Workforce.
- Over 55% of employed Hispanic women work in “white-collar” jobs, managerial, professional, technical and sales. (Working With Hispanics)
- 67% of mothers with children under 18 are employed today compared to just 33% in 1962.
  
  http://www.pdp.albany.edu/Media/CommuniquePDF/V10_PDP_Commuunique.pdf
- Today’s workforce contains four generations: The Veterans (born 1922-1943); The Baby Boomers (born 1943-1960); The Xers (born 1961-1980); and The Nexters (born 1980-2000)
  
  http://www.pdp.albany.edu/Media/CommuniquePDF/V10_PDP_Commuunique.pdf
• The eleven countries that account for over 75% of the immigrant population in New York City are: 1) Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Haiti, and Guyana; 2) the Dominican Republic; 3) Russia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan; 4) China; 5) Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Honduras, and El Salvador; 6) India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan; 7) Mexico; 8) Poland; 9) Korea; 10) the Philippines; and 11) Japan.

• Chinese immigrants, even though they are less educated are more likely to be employed. (http://www.newyorkfed.org/research/current_issues/ci11-6/note10.html)

These statistics help us see the way our workforces are changing, becoming more culturally and demographically—gender and age—diverse, requiring new knowledge, skills and abilities to operate effectively.

Cultural Differences
Engaged or Disengaged: An eye contact story:

Recently, a department supervisor, Patricia, was interviewing a candidate, Tom, for a job opening. Tom had emigrated from Africa ten years prior and had very strong credentials. During the interview Patricia was very friendly, telling Tom about the job requirements, the workplace culture, her rise through the ranks, and so forth. Tom would glance at Patricia from time to time and then look around the room, down at his feet, glance at her again and then look around some more. Tom’s responses were right on target, he was obviously bright and seemed like he would be a good fit for the job, but Patricia was uncomfortable. She couldn’t get over the fact that Tom wouldn’t maintain eye contact! Finally, she said, “Tom, everything you are telling me ensures you would be a great fit for this job, your education and work experience are just what we are looking for, but I am uncomfortable about something and I don’t want to lose you
for the wrong reason. Can I ask you something?” “Sure.” Tom says. “Why do you keep looking away from me when we are talking?” “Oh,” Tom explains, “In my culture, if I looked at you the whole time you were talking, that would be considered a hostile stare and very impolite! Even though I know that is not the case here, when I am nervous, I sometimes forget. I apologize.” “Oh please don’t apologize. I just knew there had to be a reason. Everything else was right on!” exclaimed Patricia.
Finish Work

**Building Cultural Capacity**

The more we expand our cultural capacity, the better we are able to leverage the positive aspects of each culture, allowing for smooth interactions, productive meetings, and increased returns in terms of morale, time and financial investments.

**Definition:**

Building Cultural Capacity means understanding that there are legitimate cultural, social, and religious roots that underlie people’s behavior, logic, intent and ethical stances. Our ability to understand what our values are helps us to adjust our behaviors to function effectively in diverse settings.

**Process**

The Information-Judgment-Action process will help you recognize cultural influences as you witness them, make judgments on them and take appropriate, informed actions.
For this guide, we have selected certain communication, planning, timing and spatial styles we think are helpful in building your cultural capacity.

**Communication Styles**

**Linear/Circular**

Americans, Germans, Danes and Norwegians tend to be linear, using concise language to deliver a message. Asians, Arabs and Greeks are on the opposite end of the spectrum, talking around and around the issue, making hints and ambiguous statements, infusing silence and gesture to make their impact. In a recent business meeting, I found myself growing increasingly impatient, because my Japanese colleague who had sat quietly back during the bulk of the discussion was now asking numerous questions, even rephrasing questions he had already posed. I hadn’t anticipated and made accommodations for this difference in style and had to coach myself to
leverage his questioning to my advantage; his questions might prevent me from making a rash decision I might soon regret.

**Rational/Emotional**

Cultures are known for their emotional approaches. One can immediately imagine the cool British, the reserved Asians, the highly emotional Italians and Greeks. These styles are an integral part of the culture. When interacting with people from other cultures, just try to “Vive la difference!” These differences can be seen in dialogue exchanges, as well. For instance, the Italians are more apt to interrupt in a conversation, where Americans and British people expect to take turns talking and the Asians tend to speak a slow, pendulous style.

**Direct/Indirect**

This style element is truly multi-faceted, combining language, intent and body-language. Direct cultures are known for stating exactly what is meant even if it is unpleasant or may offend. Direct cultures are uncomfortable with silence, indirect cultures often use silence as part of their language. Indirect cultures try to maintain harmony, preserve “face” or standing and may convey messages with their words which are not intended. The Japanese may say, “I think so,” when in fact they mean, “No,” just to maintain harmony.

In indirect cultures, it is extremely important to pay close attention to body-language and gestures. Body language such as diverting ones’ eyes is done in indirect cultures to convey respect and politeness. In direct cultures like the U.S., it is done out of shyness or because someone is lying. Gestures Westerners frequently associate with “yes” such as head nodding may mean the opposite in another culture. Look, instead, at their face: Is the person tense? Does he/she look uncomfortable or at ease and happy?
For people of direct cultures to interact successfully with people from indirect cultures, it is important to be patient, not to rush or push, allowing adequate time for consideration. It is rare for decisions to be made in a meeting in indirect cultures, rather discussion takes place in the meetings and consensus and decisions are made privately. For indirect cultures, “Yes” may mean “I think so” or “I’ll look into it” or “Maybe” and “Maybe” may mean “I don’t think so” or “No.”

When it comes to agreements: beware! Cultures have significantly different approaches and this can cause huge misunderstandings. For Americans, British, Germans, Swiss and Finns, signing a contract is a final proclamation: yes means yes. In other cultures, a contract may not be bound by a rule of law; rather it is left to the discretion of the parties involved. For the Japanese, it is a statement of intent, which they intend to adhere to as best they can. For Latin Americans, Italians, and French, a contract is valid for the present but if circumstances change, they may void it without hesitation. (Choi, 1994).

**Decision making by consensus/command**

Decision making takes vastly different forms in different cultures. Americans will list pros and cons, brainstorm and seek collaboration, but ultimately, we are quick to make decisions and take action. We do not labor over our decisions. British are similar to Americans in their approach. Japanese like to move very slowly toward a decision, weighing the pros and cons of every issue and making plans as they go through the process in the event they do reach a consensus and agree to take action. Other cultures, Spanish, Italian, Latin American, look for their leaders to
make a decision without relying on a consensus. However; they are like the Asians in not wanting to make compromises or concessions once their decision has been made.

**Informal/Formal**

The differences between informal and formal are fairly easy to identify. Titles, greetings, dress, etiquette and courtesy all indicate how formal or informal a culture is. Americans are known for being informal, greeting people by first name, using informal lingo, patting others on the back, often using a loud voice and foregoing formal courtesies. Individual Americans, of course, may be very polished, impeccably following all rules of etiquette or very casual, finding comfort in a lack of rules and regimen. Other cultures may place great emphasis on courtesy and formality, such as the Japanese, who are sure to seat the person with the highest rank in the seat facing the door, formally exchanging business cards and bowing in greeting another. In Germany, business is not discussed during a meal, only before or after.

**Timing**

Timing involves a number of cultural issues. First, is an approach to time as scarce or plentiful. Spanish speaking peoples are known for their mid-day siestas and late-night meals, conveying a sense of time being very plentiful. Americans are known for being hurried, ever mindful of starting on time and rushing on to the next meeting. Chinese often arrive early for meetings and are happy if they finish their business before a meeting is scheduled to begin.

The second major timing issue is how one spends time: working to live or living to work. Americans and Asians are closer to the living to work end of the spectrum. And Mediterranean and Latin American cultures are closer to the working to live end.
A third issue of timing is how different cultures approach meetings, getting immediately to the task at hand or working gradually into the business after visiting and getting to know each other. France falls near the middle of this spectrum, allowing for a short visiting time and then beginning. Germany falls at the “get right to work” end and Spain and Italy are at the opposite end, waiting to begin until the last person arrives and a leisurely visit has occurred.

**Spatial**

How different cultures value personal space is a subtle yet extremely important style. Being alert to nuances such as personal space and the body language that someone might employ to protect their space is important. Some cultures, Nordics, British, Germans and Asians fiercely guard their personal space, wanting nearly four feet distance between people. Latin and South American people find themselves at the other end of the spectrum, engaging others at one to two feet! Preserving the space required of people from other cultures is truly a common courtesy.

The **Finish Work** section provides a process for applying your cultural knowledge and skills in the workplace. The **Tips** section provides additional suggestions for you to use.

**Tips for building your cultural capacity**

- Anticipate, judge, act.
- Polite and professional is always the safest route.
- Do some research on the other cultures you come in contact with.
• What country does a particular person come from. A Hispanic, for example, may come from any of 21 countries. Does this individual like to be referred to as an American, a Hispanic or a Panamanian? Find out and apply this knowledge.

• Learn some basic language from that culture, including yes, no, please, thank you, hello and good bye.

• Learn some of the traditions that are important to them.

• Research the basic history of the cultures you may be interacting with.

• Notice the communication styles, planning styles and so forth of the individuals from other cultures you come in contact with. Practice responding to them in a culturally sensitive manner.

• Notice how they behave. How do they dress? How do they greet people? What courtesies and protocols do they follow? Are they informal or formal? Do they emphasize status or are they casual with respect to titles and names? These actions are important to them. If you do not want to offend them, be sensitive to them and integrate these actions when appropriate.

• Take a genuine interest. If someone has immigrated from another country, ask them about their customs, behaviors. People love to share about things that are important to them.

• Avoid jargon, metaphors and colloquialisms. Jargon is confusing for people who are unfamiliar with a language and/or culture. For instance, if you said “Hang on. I’ll be there in a minute.” Your listener could be confused: “Hang on to what? Ten minutes have passed. Is there something wrong?”

• Don’t jump to conclusions. Ask questions, instead.
Summary

The Foundations, Inspections, and Finish Work sections helped to build your knowledge, skills and abilities building your cultural capacity. The Trial Run section which follows will enhance these abilities through practice.
Questions and Answers

Questions

You are conducting a business meeting with a diverse group of business people to finalize a proposal you have been negotiating for many months. You expect each side to make concessions so an agreement can be reached. Which of the following events do not align with your expectations? Check all that apply.

a. The dialogue moves back and forth and negotiations continue throughout the meeting, with each side making concessions and a final position being reached.

b. Another meeting is scheduled.

c. You are doing all the talking and the other side is listening and smiling.

d. You are talking and you are continually interrupted, asked questions and then judgment is deferred.

One day when you are conducting an employee interview, the candidate becomes very excited and emotional when relaying a story of a past business success. You are quite surprised by this display and think this employee is not suitable for this position. Which of the following is the best answer?

a. You should rethink your assessment because the candidate has an outstanding education.

b. You should rethink your assessment because your cultural style maybe biasing your assessment and you should give an impartial assessment based on skills and abilities.
c. You should rethink your assessment because you really need to hire a candidate. You are extremely short-staffed.

d. You should rethink your assessment because the candidate’s other answers were good.

In the course of your business day, you are having a discussion with a talkative woman of British descent. When you ask her questions, she sometimes diverts her eyes. Which of the following judgments are you likely to make?

a. She is shy.

b. She is being respectful.

c. She doesn’t want to upset you.

d. She isn’t telling the truth.
Answers

1. C and d do not meet your expectations. You expect the other party to make demands and “spar” with you. However, many Eastern cultures prefer to maintain harmony and do not want to make concessions from their position. Once they have weighed the pros and cons and come to a consensus on their position over the long months of negotiating they do not expect to change their position at the final meeting. They expect to celebrate. D does not meet your expectations, because in a professional setting, you are not accustomed to being interrupted and you are accustomed to the people present being able to make decisions for their companies. Interrupting is commonplace and expected in some cultures—indicating interest—and decision-making may not be allowed when these individuals come to a final meeting; they are not permitted to change from position they arrived with. B may not be what you desired, but certainly aligns with your expectations. A is firmly aligned with your expectations for the meeting.

2. The best answer is b because a candidate being excited and emotional aligns with many people descending from Mediterranean and South American cultures, and quite possibly this candidate. This type of individual could bring fresh insights and perspectives to your group. A is incorrect because although an outstanding education is valuable it does not address the issue of bias that is affecting your decision-making. C is incorrect because it is also the wrong reason for reassessing the candidate. You need to reassess to be impartial. D is incorrect because the candidate’s answer in question was not necessarily bad; your interpretation of it may have been biased and that is why you need to reevaluate the candidate.

3. Answers c and d could be true. She may be looking down because she is telling you something she thinks you don’t want to hear and she is nervous. D could also be true. People often divert their gaze when they aren’t telling the truth. A and b are not judgments you would
be likely to make. If a woman is talkative, you would not guess that she is shy when she diverts her gaze. B is incorrect because the British are not known for diverting their gaze to show respect so you would not be likely to make this judgment.

**Summary**

Building your cultural capacity is worthwhile for many reasons. You gain the empathy and understanding necessary to interpret nuances and norms for other cultures, you expand your “world” and you become more able to leverage the strengths of other cultures to balance your weaknesses.

**References**


**Glossary - Cultural**

**Communication Gap** - Lack of understanding of people of other cultures, because of differences in language, cultural attitudes, etc.

**Core Beliefs** - basic concepts of a natural group which have been learned and internalized from an early age

**Cross Cultural** - comparison of beliefs, attitudes etc. of different cultural groups of nationalities

**Cultural Display** - something we do or say which reveals our core beliefs (cultural attitude) to people of other cultures

**Culture** - the customs, beliefs, art and all the other products of human thought made by particular group of people at a particular time

**Culture Shock** - the feeling of shock or of being disorientated which someone has when they experience a different and unfamiliar culture

**Empathy** - the ability to imagine oneself in the position of another person and so to share and understand that person’s feeling

**Horizon** - one’s world view (limited)

**Linear Time** - a concept of time as a ‘line’ of sequential events with the past behind us and the future in front

**Listening (culture)** - a culture whose people listen well, never interrupt and show a great deference to others’ opinions; they do not precipitate improvident action, allowing ideas to mature

**Networking** - the establishing of professional connections with the aim of sharing information, advice or support

**Power Distance** - a measure of the interpersonal power of influence between superior and subordinate as perceived by the latter, often honor, dignity (Spanish)

**Reactive (culture)** - a culture whose people rarely initiate action or discussion preferring first to listen to and establish the other’s position, then react to it and formulate their own

**Stereotyping** - fixing a set of ideas about what a particular type of person or nationality is like, which is (wrongly) believed to be true in all cases

**Values** - standards or principles, ideas about the importance of certain qualities especially those accepted by a particular group.
Bibliography


Berry, Michael (1992) *Know Theyself and the other follow too: Strategies for Effective Cross-Cultural Communication*, Institute of European Studies.


Holladay, Neal *Working with Hispanics*, Holladay Management Services, Inc.


