### Conducting Interviews

**Plan the Interview**

1. The purpose of a Training Needs Analysis interview is to collect information about the job performance of the target audience.
2. List the broad subject areas to be discussed.
3. Seek background information on the people who will be interviewed.
4. Select question types (usually open-ended questions).
5. Compose specific questions within each subject area.
6. Conduct a simulated interview with a colleague to find weak areas.
7. Revise the interview plan.
8. Conduct the revised interview with 2 or 3 people from the group to be interviewed.
9. Revise the interview plan.
10. Conduct the final interviews.

### Key Considerations

1. Degree of structure:
   * Highly structured, which is much like filling out a questionnaire face-to-face (e.g. census-takers).
   * Moderately structured in which specific questions must be asked but the interview may seem like a conversation.
   * Unstructured in which there are no specific questions and the flow depends on where the interviewee leads the conversation.
2. You can offer the interviewee confidentiality (“just between the two of us”), anonymity (“your data will

be made public but you will not be quoted directly”), or full disclosure (“your data will be made available to other people”).

1. Note taking or tape recording can be a major disruption to the flow of the conversation. It is best to note only key words during the interview and then expand on the notes immediately after.

### Rapport

1. Make sure management has told the interviewee about the meeting.
2. Schedule the meeting at the interviewee’s convenience.
3. Arrange for a comfortable, private setting.
4. Have coffee available.
5. Work on building a comfortable relationship before discussing content.
6. Explain your purpose openly.
7. Explain your agenda and how long it should take.
8. Explain what you will be doing with the information collected.
9. Let the interviewee see your entire list of questions. Allow them to add to the list if they wish.
10. Don’t be in a hurry. Be willing to spend enough time to build rapport.
11. Ask general, non-personal questions before probing into more specific, personal areas.
12. Use positive non-verbal cues (smile, direct eye contact, head nods, leaning forward, attentive posture).
13. Use expressions to encourage the interviewee to continue speaking (“OK,” “sure,” “good,” “right,” etc.).
14. Show an interest in what is said. Ask for clarification, examples and explanations.
15. Thank the interviewee for taking time to talk with you.

### General Interviewing Tips

1. Use the interviewee’s terminology.
2. Use open-ended questions whenever possible.
3. If the interviewee rambles, don’t interrupt. Rapport is more important than efficiency.
4. If documents will be discussed, bring copies with you.
5. Avoid meeting just before lunch or quitting time.
6. Summarize answers in your own words so both you and the interviewee can tell if you understood.
7. Don’t agree with the interviewee’s opinions. Simply note and discuss them.
8. Try to distinguish between opinion and fact. Probe gently for “evidence” if you’re not sure.
9. Probe gently when you’re hearing vague, carefully worded, rambling, or complex answers. These are often signs that you’ve hit a key issue.
10. Watch non-verbal cues carefully. In particular, notice the interviewee’s eyes. Be alert for decreased eye contact, darting eyes, excessive blinking, and sudden aversion of gaze. These are also signs that you’ve hit a key issue.