

Interviewing for Information Tips

by: Steve Snelling

Whether investigating a Root Cause Analysis problem or talking to an experienced mechanic about an assembly, there is often a need to Interview for Information.

Listed below are some tips on Interviewing for Information:

- Set up the interviews ahead of time (if possible), you may need to get permission from their management to be given the time for the interview
- Prepare some starting questions ahead of time with a clear topic & goal for each interview
- Introduce yourself to the person(s) being interviewed, and tell them which group or organization you work for
- If you are allowed, tell the person being interviewed what you are investigating (and why)
- Check that the person being interviewed has experience in the function (they could just be filling in for the day)
- Make sure the person being interviewed has time on the day of the interview (conditions may have changed for them, that day)
- Let the person being interviewed finish their answers, don't rush them
- Write down any words or descriptions you are not familiar with and confirm you understand the usage of the term or description
- Ask follow-up questions, as needed, to complete a topic
- If describing a sequence of activities, make sure you have the sequence correct (read back the order of the actions that were described to you)
- If describing a specific problem, try to get the interviewer to estimate how often (%) the problem has occurred recently
- Ask for collaborating data (or where to find the data), so as not to be focused on only anecdotal information, and confirm how long ago a problem was observed (if too far in the past, the original problem may have been resolved)
- Ask who else you should talk to, or who might have useful data on the topic
- Type up your interview notes, immediately following each interview
- If two people were taking notes, get together and reach consensus on what you both heard during the interview
- If possible, send your typed interview notes back to the person you interviewed, to see if they agree with what you documented (or any conclusions you may have drawn); this also can help with planning the next steps