



FOURTEENTH EDITION

INTERVIEWING

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

CHARLES J. STEWART | WILLIAM B. CASH, JR.

INTERVIEWING

Principles and Practices

FOURTEENTH EDITION

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Charles J. Stewart

Purdue University

William B. Cash, Jr.

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INTERVIEWING: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES, FOURTEENTH EDITION

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*To the memory of William "Bill" Cash, Jr., student,
co-author, and friend*

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Charles J. Stewart

Charles J. “Charlie” Stewart is the former Margaret Church Distinguished Professor of Communication at Purdue University where he taught from 1961 to 2009. He taught undergraduate courses in interviewing and persuasion and graduate courses in such areas as persuasion and social protest, apologetic rhetoric, and extremist rhetoric on the Internet. He received the Charles B. Murphy Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching from Purdue University and the Donald H. Ecroyd Award for Outstanding Teaching in Higher Education from the National Communication Association. He was a Founding Fellow of the Purdue University Teaching Academy. He has written articles, chapters, and books on interviewing, persuasion, and social movements.

Charlie Stewart has been a consultant with organizations such as the Internal Revenue Service, the American Electric Power Company, Libby Foods, the Indiana University School of Dentistry, and the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters. He is currently a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for children.

William B. Cash, Jr.

The late William “Bill” Cash began his work life in his father’s shoe and clothing store in northern Ohio. While still in high school, he began to work in broadcasting and advertising, and this led to bachelor’s and master’s degrees in broadcasting and speech communication at Kent State University. After completing his academic work at Kent State, he joined the speech communication faculty at Eastern Illinois University and began to consult with dozens of companies such as Blaw-Knox, IBM, and Hewitt Associates. Bill took a leave from Eastern Illinois and pursued a PhD in organizational communication under W. Charles Redding. He returned to the faculty at Eastern Illinois and created and taught a course in interviewing.

Bill Cash left college teaching and held positions with Ralston Purina, Detroit Edison, Baxter, and Curtis Mathis, often at the vice president level. After several years in industry, he returned to teaching and took a faculty position at National-Louis University in Chicago. He became the first chair of the College of Management and Business and developed courses in human resources, management, and marketing.

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PREFACE

This fourteenth edition of *Interviewing: Principles and Practices* continues a tradition started with the first edition that appeared in 1974. It focuses on the fundamental principles applicable to all forms of interviewing and to seven specific types of interviewing while incorporating the latest in research, interpersonal communication theory, the uses of technology and social media, the role of ethics in interviewing, and EEO laws that affect employment and performance interviews. While we have included recent research findings and developments, we continue the emphasis on building the interviewing skills of both interviewers and interviewees. Several chapters address the increasing diversity in the United States and our involvement in the global village as they impact the interviews in which we take part.

We have continued our quest to make each edition more reader-friendly by tightening up the writing style, eliminating unnecessary materials and redundancies, making explanations and definitions more precise, reducing the frequency of lists and using a variety of print types to call attention to important words, terms, and concepts. Portions of several chapters have been restructured to take readers through each in a clearer and more natural progression. A list of objectives now appears at the start of each chapter to orient students to the major topics and purposes of the chapter. Notes in the margins provide guidelines, cautions, and observations. Lists of key terms appear at the end of each chapter, and a glossary of important terms is provided at the end of the book.

Changes in the Fourteenth Edition

Each chapter includes new or revised examples and illustrations, student activities, suggested readings, research findings, and an interview that challenges students to apply theory and principles to a realistic interview. In each interview, the parties do some things well and others poorly. We want students to be able to identify strengths and weaknesses and to offer alternatives that would have made the interview more effective for each party.

Major changes include:

- Chapter 1 includes a restructured development of our definition of interviewing to help students understand how it is similar to and different from other forms of interpersonal communication. The emphasis is on a collaborative effort by both parties. There is a more detailed discussion of technology and the interview, including the use of Skype and Webinars.
- Chapter 2 includes new or expanded treatments of intra-personal communication, trust, self-concept, self-identity, self-esteem, self-disclosure, active listening, and the differing notions of place for women and men.
- Chapter 3 includes sharper and fewer words to explain the types of questions and the uses and misuses of questions. It includes a discussion of the

differences of question use and question pitfalls in formal, professional interviews as compared to everyday conversations.

- Chapter 4 includes clearer and expanded explanations of the interview guide and interview schedules. The notion of territoriality is expanded, particularly for men and women.
- Chapter 5 is restructured with strong emphases on studying the interview situation, becoming aware of the relationship of the interviewer and interviewee, and choosing the best location and setting. It includes expanded treatments of the press conference and the broadcast interview.
- Chapter 6 now includes new discussions of qualitative and quantitative interviews, probability and non-probability sampling, convenience sampling, coverage bias, and using monetary and non-monetary incentives to increase participation in surveys. There is an expanded treatment of telephone and cell-phone interviews.
- Chapter 7 has expanded treatments of reaching and attracting qualified applicants, working career/job fairs, selecting staffing firms, using software to scan résumés, the problem of applicants cheating on résumés, the use of standardized tests, and the pluses and minuses of checking applicant use of social media. Other areas of increased emphasis include the atmosphere and setting of the recruiting interview, types of interview parties in chain, team, panel, group, seminar, and board interviews.
- Chapter 8 is restructured and introduces students to the notions of branding that differentiates you from other applicants, proper interview etiquette, and structuring answers using the STAR and PAR methods. It includes more detailed treatments of researching the position and organization, using networking and social media, developing traditional and scannable résumés, and appropriate dress and appearance.
- Chapter 9 places a strong emphasis on approaching the performance review interview as a coaching opportunity. It includes expanded treatments of conforming to EEO laws, selecting appropriate review models, and determining just cause in performance problem interviews.
- Chapter 10 combines in a single chapter the discussions of both the interviewer and interviewee in the persuasive interview for a more cohesive treatment of the persuasive interview. There is an expanded treatment of the ethics of persuasion pertaining to both parties.
- Chapter 11 includes a new emphasis on ethics and the counseling interview that focuses on establishing and maintaining trust, acting in the interviewee's best interests, understanding your limitations, not imposing your beliefs, attitudes, and values on the interviewee, respecting diversity, maintaining relational boundaries, and doing no harm. The treatment of structuring the interview incorporates the "sequential phase model" created by Hartsough, Echterling, and Zarle. This chapter includes an expanded discussion of self-disclosure and its importance to counseling.

- Chapter 12 includes a new emphasis on ethics in the health care interview that focuses on the critical importance of the relationship between health care provider and patient. The focus throughout this chapter is on Patient-Centered Care (PCC). The treatment of self-disclosure is expanded with a strong emphasis on establishing and maintaining trust. A new topic in this chapter is “health literacy” and its effects on information giving and processing.

Chapter Pedagogy

We have included a **sample interview at the end of each chapter**, not as a perfect example of interviewing but to illustrate interviewing types, situations, approaches, and mistakes and to challenge students to distinguish between effective and ineffective interviewing practices. We believe that students learn by applying the research and principles discussed in each chapter to a realistic interview that allows them to detect when interview parties are right on target as well as when they miss the target completely. The **role-playing cases** at the ends of Chapters 5 through 12 provide students with opportunities to design and conduct practice interviews and to observe others’ efforts to employ the principles discussed. **Student activities** at the end of each chapter provide ideas for in- and out-of-class exercises, experiences, and information gathering. We have made many of these less complex and time-consuming. The **up-to-date readings** at the end of each chapter will help students and instructors who are interested in delving more deeply into specific topics, theories, and types of interviews. The glossary provides students with definitions of key words and concepts introduced throughout the text.

Intended Courses

This book is designed for courses in such departments as speech, communication, journalism, business, supervision, education, political science, nursing, criminology, and social work. It is also useful in workshops in various fields. We believe this book is of value to beginning students as well as to seasoned veterans because the principles, research, and techniques are changing rapidly in many fields. We have treated theory and research findings where applicable, but our primary concern is with principles and techniques that can be translated into immediate practice in and out of the classroom.

Ancillary Materials

For the Student

Student’s Online Learning Center (OLC)

The Student’s Online Learning Center Web site that accompanies this text offers a variety of resources for students, including—for each chapter—a chapter summary; an interactive quiz with multiple-choice, fill-in, and/or true/false questions; and flashcards of key terms. Please visit the *Interviewing* OLC at www.mhhe.com/Stewart14e.

For the Instructor

The Instructor's Manual, written by Charles Stewart, Test Bank, and PowerPoint slides are available to instructors on the password-protected Instructor's section of the Online Learning Center Web site.

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An Introduction to Interviewing

Interviews are daily occurrences.

When you participate in an interview, you take part in the most common form of purposeful, planned, and serious communication. It may be formal or informal, minimally or highly structured, simplistic or sophisticated, supportive or threatening, and last for a few minutes or hours. Your purpose may be to give or get information, seek employment or recruit employees, review the behavior of another or of yourself, persuade or be persuaded, counsel or seek counsel. Interviews share characteristics with brief interactions, social conversations, small groups, and presentations, but they differ significantly from each of these communication forms.

The objectives of this chapter are to identify the essential characteristics of interviews, set interviews apart from other types of communication, discuss traditional forms of interviews, and examine the growing role of technology in conducting interviews during the twenty-first century.

The Fundamental Characteristics of Interviews

Two Parties

Dyadic means two parties.

The interview is a dyadic—*two party*—process that typically involves two people such as a reporter and a voter, attorney and client, nurse practitioner and patient, sales representative and customer. An interview may involve more than *two people* but never more than *two parties*. For instance, three college recruiters may be interviewing a prospective student, a computer sales person may be interviewing a husband and wife, or four college students may be interviewing an apartment manager about housing for next semester. In each case, there are *two distinct parties*—an interviewer party and an interviewee party. If there is a single party involved (three students discussing a field project) or three or more parties involved, it is a small group interaction with multiple parties, not an interview.

Purpose

Interviews are structured.

One or both of the two parties must come to an interview with a *predetermined* and *serious purpose*, a characteristic that sets the interview apart from social conversations or informal, unplanned interactions. While conversations and happenstance meetings are rarely organized in advance, interviews must have a degree of planning and structure. Interviewers typically plan openings and closings, select topics, prepare questions, and gather information.



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■ More than two people may be involved in an interview, but never more than two parties—an interviewer party and interviewee party.

Parties exchange and share.

cerns, reactions, and a willingness to take risks entailed in close interpersonal interactions such as interviews.

Communication interactions are not static. Role changes, information exchanges, and revelations of feelings and motives produce reactions and insights that lead to new and unexpected areas. The interview as a *process* is a dynamic, continuing, ongoing, ever-changing interaction of variables with a degree of *system* or *structure*. “Human communicators are always sending and receiving simultaneously. As a result each communicator has the opportunity to change how things are going at any time in the process.”² Like most processes, once an interview commences, we “cannot not communicate.”³ We may do it poorly, but we will communicate something.

Questions

Asking and answering **questions** are important in all interviews. Some interviews, such as market surveys and journalistic interviews, consist entirely of questions and answers. Others, such as recruiting, counseling, and health care, include a mixture of questions and information sharing. And still others, such as sales, training, and performance review, involve strategic questions from both parties designed to obtain or clarify information and to change another person’s way of thinking, feeling, or acting.

Questions play multiple roles in interviews.

Questions are the tools interview parties employ to obtain information, check the accuracy of messages sent and received, verify impressions and assumptions, and provoke feeling or thought. Chapter 3 introduces you to a variety of question types and their uses and misuses.

An interview, then, is an interactional communication process between two parties, at least one of whom has a predetermined and serious purpose, that involves the asking and answering of questions.

With this definition as a guide, determine which of the following interactions constitutes an interview and which does not.

Interactional

An interview is *interactional* because there is *sharing* and *exchanging* of roles, responsibilities, feelings, beliefs, motives, and information. If one party does all of the talking and the other all of the listening, it becomes a speech to an audience of one, not an interview. John Stewart writes that communication is a “continuous, complex collaborative process of verbal and nonverbal meaning-making.”¹ *Collaborative* means a mutual creation and sharing of meanings that come from words and nonverbal signals—touches, hugs, handshakes, and facial expressions—that express interest, concerns,

Exercise #1—What Is and Is Not an Interview?

1. A professor is asking students in her class about the practical applications of games in economics.
2. A volleyball player is meeting with two surgeons about her torn ACL.
3. A reporter is speaking with an eyewitness to a drive-by shooting.
4. Two members of a law firm are discussing how to handle an intellectual properties case.
5. A committee of teachers is reviewing the School Board’s proposal for mandatory student-teacher evaluations of all classes, grades one to twelve.
6. A student is talking to his academic counselor about a grade.
7. A car salesperson is discussing a hybrid model with a husband and wife.
8. An associate runs into his supervisor in the hallway and remembers to ask about getting off early on Friday for a family gathering.
9. A member of a survey research team is making calls to registered voters to learn their attitudes toward a “right to work” law being proposed by the governor.
10. A college recruiter is meeting with a family about a football scholarship for Jack.

Traditional Forms of Interviewing

Our definition of interviewing encompasses a wide variety of interview types, many of which require specialized training and specific abilities. Nearly 30 years ago, Charles Redding, a professor at Purdue University, developed a situational schema of traditional forms of interviewing according to their functions. Let’s use Redding’s schema as a way of introducing the many types and uses of interviewing, both formal and informal.

Information-Giving Interviews

When two parties take part in orienting, training, coaching, instructing, and briefing sessions, they are involved in information-giving interviews, the primary purpose of which is to exchange information as accurately, effectively, and efficiently as possible. Information-giving interviews may seem simple when compared to others—merely transferring facts, data, reports, and opinions from one party to another, but they are deceptively difficult. Because this type is so common and critical in health care interviews, Chapter 12 will discuss the principles, problems, and techniques of information giving.

Information giving is common but difficult.

Information-Gathering Interviews

When two parties take part in surveys, exit interviews, research sessions, investigations, diagnostic sessions, journalistic interviews, and brief requests for information, the interviewer’s primary purpose is to gather accurate, insightful, and useful information through the skillful use of questions, many created and phrased carefully prior to the interview and others created on the spot to probe carefully into interviewee responses, attitudes, and feelings. Chapter 5 discusses the principles and practices of moderately structured informational interviews such as journalistic interviews and investigations.

Information gathering is pervasive in our world.

Chapter 6 introduces you to the principles and practices of highly structured surveys and polls. And Chapter 12 discusses information gathering in the health care setting.

Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interviews, usually consisting of eight to twelve *similar interviewees* and a single interviewer, are designed to focus on a specific issue guided by a set of carefully selected questions. The interactions among interviewees generate a range of information and opinions different from a single interviewee.⁴ Melinda Lewis writes that the focus group interview “taps into human tendencies where attitudes and perceptions are developed through interaction with other people.”⁵

Selection Interviews

The most common form of the selection interview takes place between a recruiter attempting to select the best qualified applicant for a position in an organization and an applicant attempting to attain this position. Another form, the placement interview, occurs when an interviewer is trying to determine the ideal placement of a staff member already a part of the organization. This interview may involve a promotion, a restructuring of an organization, or a reassignment such as from sales to management. Because the selection or employment interview plays such a major role in all of our personal and professional lives, we will focus in detail on the recruiter in Chapter 7 and the applicant in Chapter 8.

Selection is critical in the lives of people and organizations.

Performance Review

When two parties focus on the interviewee’s skills, performance, abilities, or behavior, they take part in scheduled or nonscheduled performance reviews (what once were referred to commonly as the annual or semiannual appraisal interview). The emphasis is on coaching a student, employee, or team member to continue that which is good and to set goals for future performance. Chapter 9 focuses on models for conducting performance reviews and the principles essential for the performance problem interview.

Performance review is essential to employee and employer.

Counseling

If an interviewee has a personal or professional problem, the parties may take part in a counseling interview in which the interviewer strives to help the interviewee attain insights into a problem and possible ways of dealing with this problem. Chapter 11 addresses the principles and practices of conducting and taking part in counseling interviews.

Persuasion

The persuasive interview occurs when one party attempts to alter or reinforce the thinking, feeling, or acting of another party. The sales interview comes immediately to mind, in which one person is trying to sell a product or service to another person. We are involved in one-on-one persuasive interactions on a daily basis. The persuasive interview may be as informal as one friend trying to persuade another friend to attend a concert or as formal as a developer trying to persuade a couple to purchase a lake home. Chapter 10 addresses the highly complex nature of the persuasive interview.

Persuasion is more than selling a product or service.

Technology and Interviewing

Technological developments, beginning with the telephone in 1876 and exploding in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries with electronic media and the Internet, have altered how we conduct and take part in interviews. Parties no longer have to be in the physical presence of one another in a face-to-face encounter but may be ear-to-ear, keyboard-to-keyboard, or screen-to-screen.

The Telephone Interview

Telephone interviews have become so commonplace and irritating that many states and the federal government created “Don’t Call” lists to protect our privacy and sanity. Organizations have turned to the telephone to conduct initial employment screening interviews, fund-raising campaigns, and opinion polls to save time, reduce monetary expenses, and eliminate the time necessary to send staff to numerous locations. They use conference calls to enable several members of an organization to ask questions and hear replies from staff and clients in multiple locations scattered over a wide geographical area. Interviewers and interviewees can talk to several people at one time, answer or clarify questions directly, be heard while responding, and receive immediate feedback.

The telephone interview is convenient and inexpensive.

A major problem with telephone interviews is the lack of “presence” of parties. Hearing a voice is not the same as being able to observe an interviewer’s or interviewee’s appearance, dress, manner, eye contact, face, gestures, and posture. Some studies comparing telephone and face-to-face interviews suggest that the two methods produce similar communicative results, with respondents giving fewer socially acceptable answers over the telephone and preferring the anonymity it provides.⁶ Other studies urge caution in turning too quickly to the telephone. One study found that interviewers do not like telephone interviews, and this attitude may affect how interviewees reply. Another study discovered that fewer interviewees (particularly older ones) prefer the telephone, and this may lower degree of cooperation.⁷ People may feel uneasy about discussing sensitive issues with strangers they cannot see, and it is difficult to make convincing confidentiality guarantees when not face-to-face. On the other hand, interviewees such as job applicants may take the telephone interview, what one source refers to as the “fuzzy slipper” interview, less seriously than a face-to-face interview, perhaps not as an interview at all.⁸ These attitudes may lead to casual dress, speaking manner, and choice of words, including slang and vocal fillers such as “you know,” “know what I mean,” and “you betcha.”

The widespread use of the cell phone has created a new world of “talking,” and we assume some listening, that seemingly takes place everywhere, from dorm rooms, kitchens, and backyards to restrooms, parks, and classrooms. When we walk through our campuses at 7:00 in the morning and see, and hear, students on their cell phones, we wonder whom they are talking to so early in the morning. Only one in ten households now rely solely on a landline phone, and the young and single are the largest group to abandon landlines altogether. Be cautious in relying only on cell phones for conducting and taking part in interviews because they are subject to dropped calls, spotty service, and dead batteries, non-factors with landlines.⁹

The growing sophistication of two-way video technology may reduce the problems and concerns caused by critical nonverbal cues missing from the telephone

interview. Cell phone technology that allows parties to send visual images of one another while they are talking is an important development. Tiny headshots, of course, are far from the presence of face-to-face interviews, but they are a step forward in the electronic interview process.

Not many years ago, we would seek the privacy of a telephone booth when making a personal or business call and take precautions that would prevent us from being overheard. Times have changed, and today there is a growing concern for the **privacy** not only of the interview parties but of those who cannot avoid being part of the interviewing process. Cell phone users, apparently feeling they must talk loud enough for all of us within 75 feet to hear, shout to the person on the other end. You can go to any restaurant, lounge area, or airport boarding area today and hear complete conversations that otherwise would be held behind closed doors to ensure confidentiality. We have heard executives discussing mergers, profit margins, and personnel changes; patients discussing their diagnoses and prescriptions with medical practitioners; and students requesting help with assignments, grade adjustments, and personal problems.

There are ways to avoid irritating the 81 percent of adults in the United States who are bothered by cell phone use in public places.¹⁰ Suggestions include speaking quietly, keeping calls brief, turning away from others, finding a more appropriate location such as a booth, or taking calls without a central focus such as stores or sidewalks. Taking calls in theaters, churches, classrooms, restaurants, and crowded waiting areas such as airports are most irritating.

The Videoconference

Videoconference technology, including the use of Skype, enables interview parties to interact visually over long distances, point-to-point or multiple points, faster, and with less expense. For instance, physicians in New Jersey are using “telepsychiatry” to treat patients more quickly and to counter the national shortage of psychiatrists, particularly child psychiatrists.¹¹ Although this technology would seem to be as good as “being there in person,” there are significant differences from face-to-face interviews.

Since visual cues are limited to the top half or faces of participants, or group shots in the case of multiple-person interview parties, there are fewer nonverbal cues. One result is fewer interruptions that lead to longer and fewer turns by participants. It is more difficult to interact freely and naturally with people on a screen. Perhaps this is why participants provide more negative evaluations of others in the interview who appear to dominate the process. One study showed that interviewers liked the videoconference because they could “unobtrusively take more notes, check their watches, or refer to resumes without disrupting the flow of the interview” or, perhaps, being noticed by the other party. On the other hand, they had trouble “reading nonverbal behaviors such as facial expression, eye contact, and fidgeting” and telling “whether a pause was due to the technology, or the applicant being stumped.” Although a significant majority of interviewers (88%) indicated a willingness to use videoconferencing for interviews, a significant majority (76%) said they preferred face-to-face interviews.¹²

Interviewees in teleconference interviews should be aware of the length of their answers to enhance turn-taking and avoid the appearance of trying to dominate the interview. They, too, can check their lists of questions, take notes, and watch their

Both parties must focus attention on the interaction.

time without being noticed. Above all, interviewees should be aware of the importance of upper-body movement, gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions that will attract favorable and unfavorable attention. With technology, there is no traditional handshake and the interviewee is alone in a room, factors that may generate tension for some. Follow these suggestions for a more effective and enjoyable interview: speak up so you can be heard easily, dress conservatively in solid colors, look at the camera full-face, limit movements, try to forget about the camera, expect some lag time between questions and responses.¹³ One study indicated that applicants in recruiting interviews were more satisfied with their performance in face-to-face interviews when the interviews were less structured and more satisfied with their performance in videoconference interviews when the interviews were highly structured.¹⁴ Since questions in highly structured interviews tend to require shorter answers, interviewees may feel less pressured to determine length and content of answers and turn-taking.

E-Mail

The Internet lacks the nonverbal cues critical in interviews.

With the introduction of the Internet, many interviews went from face-to-face and ear-to-ear to finger-to-finger. It enabled large numbers of people to make inquiries, send and receive information, and discuss problems at any time of the day or night and nearly anywhere in the world. But are these interactions electronic mail rather than interviews? If two parties use the Internet to interact in real time so it is truly an interaction, it meets our definition of an interview. Small video cameras mounted on computers that send live pictures and sound between interview parties make electronic interactions superior to the telephone and ever closer to the face-to-face interview. One obstacle to overcome

is the reluctance of parties to type lengthy answers to questions that they can provide easily in person or over the telephone. The Internet's potential seems unlimited and, as it becomes more visually interactive, it will take on more of the properties of the traditional interview in which both parties not only ask and answer questions but also communicate nonverbally.

Although much emphasis has centered on using e-mail in the employment selection process, the e-mail interview is gaining use in other fields. For instance, physicians are finding the Internet efficient, timely, and effective when interacting with patients; it is a modern-day e-house call.¹⁵ The American Medical Association recently issued guidelines for physician-patient



Mike Harrington/Getty Images

■ *The Internet can provide important information on positions and organizations and background on interviewers and interviewees.*

electronic communications, warning that technology must not replace face-to-face interactions with patients. To ensure privacy and security, some physicians are using voice recognition software.

Studies have focused on the use of e-mail in conducting sophisticated research interviews. The authors indicate that disadvantages such as difficulty in opening interviews (frequent false starts), establishing rapport with interviewees, determining emotional reactions, and translating unusual symbols and acronyms interviewees may use are outweighed by reduced cost and time, wider geographical and individual diversity, enhanced self-disclosure due to a greater degree of anonymity, elimination of interviewer interruptions, ease of probing into answers, ease of transcription of responses, and streamlined data analysis.¹⁶ One researcher concluded, “While a mixed mode interviewing strategy should always be considered when possible, semi-structured e-mail interviewing can be a viable alternative to the face-to-face and telephone interviews, especially when time, financial constraints, or geographical boundaries are barriers to an investigation.”¹⁷

Webinars

So-called webinars are becoming popular for conferences, lectures, training sessions, seminars, and workshops.¹⁸ When a webinar is conducted by a presenter to an audience on the web, it is not an interview but a speech, lecture, or webcast. However, if a webinar becomes more collaborative with questions and answers over a telephone line or voice over technology and there are two distinct parties, it may be an interview. It is more spontaneous and in real time than an e-mail interview.

The Virtual Interview

The meaning of the term “virtual interview” varies according to the organization using it, but it refers most often to a selection interview, real or simulated, that involves some form of electronic means—computers, the Internet, or digital video.¹⁹ Even though an interview may be simulated—make believe—interviewees must take these interviews seriously by paying careful attention to appearance and answering questions correctly, smoothly, and confidently.

Organizations are conducting virtual job fairs because they are cheaper and recruiters need not spend time traveling to locations around the country.²⁰ In the mode of the electronic game, interviewers and applicants may attend in the form of avatars.

ON THE WEB

Learn more about the growing uses of electronic interviews in a variety of settings. Search at least two databases under headings such as telephone interviews, conference calls, and video talk-back. Try search engines such as ComAbstracts (<http://www.cios.org>), Yahoo (<http://www.yahoo.com>), Infoseek (<http://www.infoseek.com>), and ERIC ([\[.indiana.edu/~eric_rec\]\(http://www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec\)\). In which interview settings are electronic interviews most common? What are the advantages and disadvantages of electronic interviews? How will new developments affect electronic interviews in the future? How will the growing use of electronic interviews affect the ways we conduct traditional face-to-face interviews?](http://www</p>
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Organizations report that applicants seem to relax when appearing in the form of an avatar, but they warn that applicants still need to know how to dress, act, and respond. Interviews are conducted in the form of instant-messaging chats.

Some organizations are using virtual job interviews in place of face-to-face interactions in the screening process that may involve hundreds of interviews. One source warns that in this age of the video game, virtual interviews may not be taken 100 percent seriously by one or both parties; it seems like a game instead of reality.²¹ Some sources use an innovative “asynchronous” approach in which the interviewer need not be present in real time. One recommends this approach for marketing, sales, customer service, and other positions that require excellent communication and presentation skills and you need to see them.²²

Wake Forest University has experimented with virtual admissions interviews in which applicants may sit in their living rooms with a webcam, microphone, and Internet and have a distant face-to-face interview with an admissions officer. An admissions officer reports that they can interview students who cannot travel to the Winston-Salem, North Carolina, campus, and “This allows us to have personal contact with every applicant. We can get a sense of who the applicant is beyond academic credentials. The interview helps decide if the student is a good fit for Wake Forest.”²³ Applicants have responded positively, and Wake Forest plans to extend the virtual interview offer to a wider variety of prospective students.

The virtual interview most similar to gaming is being experimented with in the medical profession in which interviews can take place in simulated operating rooms and other selected venues. In one application of this software in London, “most students were positively surprised at the level of realism” achieved for “specific objects.”²⁴ The emphasis at present is on the teaching possibilities of virtual interviews for training physicians and nurses.

Summary

Interviewing is an interactional communication process between two parties, at least one of whom has a predetermined and serious purpose, that involves the asking and answering of questions. This definition encompasses a wide variety of interview settings that require training, preparation, interpersonal skills, flexibility, and a willingness to face risks involved in intimate, person-to-person interactions. Interviewing is a learned skill and art, and perhaps the first hurdle to overcome is the assumption that we do it well because we do it so often. The increasing flexibility of technology is resulting in significant numbers of interviews no longer occurring face-to-face, and this is posing new challenges and concerns.

There is a vast difference between skilled and unskilled interviewers and interviewees, and the skilled ones know that practice makes perfect only if you know what you are practicing. Studies in health care, for example, have revealed that medical students, physicians, and nurses who do not receive formal training in interviewing patients actually become less effective interviewers over time, not more effective.

The first essential step in developing and improving interviewing skills is to understand the deceptively complex interviewing process and its many interacting variables. Chapter 2 explains and illustrates the interviewing process by developing a model step-by-step that contains all of the fundamental elements that interact in each interview.