



Continuous Improvement Toolkit

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Interviews

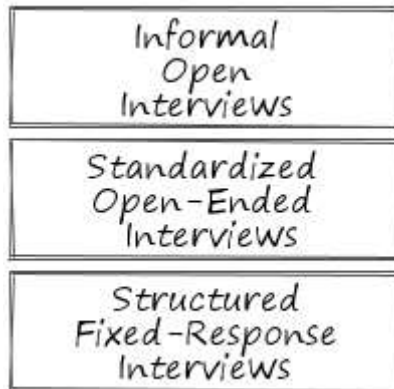
An **interview** is a technique used to understand the experiences of others (customers, employees, etc.). It takes the form of a conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee. It is often conducted in an informal and natural way where the respondent can freely express his/her opinion in his/her own words. Although interviews can be used to obtain almost any information, information is still based on personal opinion and not based on facts.



Interviews are often used to learn about the product or service from the customer's perspective. They are also used in project management and improvement initiatives to learn what is important or confusing to the customers or employees. They are commonly used in journalism and media reporting, when screening candidates for employment, and when measuring the employee satisfaction level during organizational transformation or on employee exit.

Interviews can be undertaken through different media. Face-to-face meetings are the most common, however, telephone, email and online meetings are also possible and can be effective. Forms and questionnaires are often used to capture data, and are filled in by the interviewer instead of respondents. Note taking, audiotapes and computer audio programs are also used to capture the data. In many cases, interviews are combined with direct observation to obtain more accurate and meaningful data.

Interviews can range from informal open interviews, to standardized open-ended interviews, to structured fixed-response interviews. **Open interviews** allow a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting the information from



the interviewee, whereas **structured interviews** are performed by using a well-designed questionnaire that forces the respondent to choose answers from among the same set of alternatives. While this approach is more expensive, more focused questions can be asked and data can be more easily analyzed and compared.

How to Conduct an Interview:

Although it seems quite easy to conduct an interview, you need to have some skills and experience to make a good one. The following points can serve as a guide to conduct an interview:

- Start by clearly define the purpose of the interview.
- Identify the target respondents for the interview.
- Prepare a list of questions prior the interview.
- Decide the type of interview you will use.

- Decide the data capturing method: forms, questionnaires, taking notes, etc.
- Contact the respondents before the interview.
- Do a pilot interview to refine the questions and the interview process.
- Conduct the interview at the scheduled time and date.
- Let the questions structure the conversation, but adapt to the discussion as needed.
- Take notes or record the interview in order to capture the conversation.
- Listen, don't interrupt, make the participant feel comfortable and be respectful of boundaries.
- Before completing, ask the respondent for additional input or comments.
- Take time to document important ideas and findings soon after completing the interview.
- Process then analyze the data.

Further Information:

- You should be able to establish a rapport with the interviewee in order for him to be open and talk freely.
- The interviewer may clarify questions or ask follow-up questions on the spot to further probe for meaningful data.
- A test prior the interview will assure better data and avoid wasting time and money.
- Sometimes, interviews are used to validate data collected previously by other survey methods.

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