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Why is the Journalist Secrets training important for auditors?

To survive and thrive in today’s world, it is not just what the auditor knows. Of course, auditors need to be extremely competent, but they also must possess excellent “soft” skills – be memorable, impressive, credible, genuine, trusted and liked. Auditors need to know how to break down barriers and establish common ground among diverse sets of people.

Many management systems auditors have the technical background and some have learned, through years of practical experience, a few of the soft skills--like encouraging people to open up, and managing conversational flow. But clearly, the traditional training focus for auditors has been on the technical rather than the communication side. As the ISO 190011:2002 Standard suggests, “Auditors of management systems should have knowledge and skills in the areas of processes and products to enable them to comprehend the technological context in which the audit is being conducted.”

Interviews are the heart of every audit; they can provide key information to help understand the successes and challenges of systems, businesses, and the clients they serve. In the current economic climate, the most successful auditors are the ones who develop and hone their ‘soft skills’ to better assist companies with cutting management-related costs. The first step to building a successful relationship with client is a solid interview that lays the foundation for understanding and trust.

The challenge for most auditors is that while they acknowledge that the interview and its subtleties rely on a high level of communication skills, until now, there were few choices about how those skills could be acquired and developed. The best interviews do not just happen. They are the result of careful and conscientious preparation on the part of the interviewer and require the application of certain skills to understand the organization, its employees and the processes involved.

What can the Journalist Secrets training do for auditors?

Journalists say that “in an ideal interview your subject talks about 85% of the time and you only 15%”. It is also said “words are everything. They build trust, inspire and show direction. They can hurt and they can help. Words need to be picked over, weighted, combed through, and only used deliberately.”

So, how do we use the 15% of the interviewer’s time during an interview (it is only nine minutes of an hour’s interview) in the most effective way?

The Journalist Secrets training will provide auditors with objective and professional direction to increase their performance, by helping them to enhance what they have and acquire what they need through self-paced learning, practice sessions, and personalized consultations.

Auditors will learn how substance and style can work together to increase the effectiveness and impact of their communication.

What can auditors learn from experts in journalism and communication?

The craft of interviewing has been developed by experts from areas like consulting, human resources, and especially journalism. While the job of a journalist and that of an auditor are not identical, in essence both are trying to procure valuable information from sometimes reticent sources. This craft is more than 300 years old, and there is much for auditors to learn from those who have perfected this art.

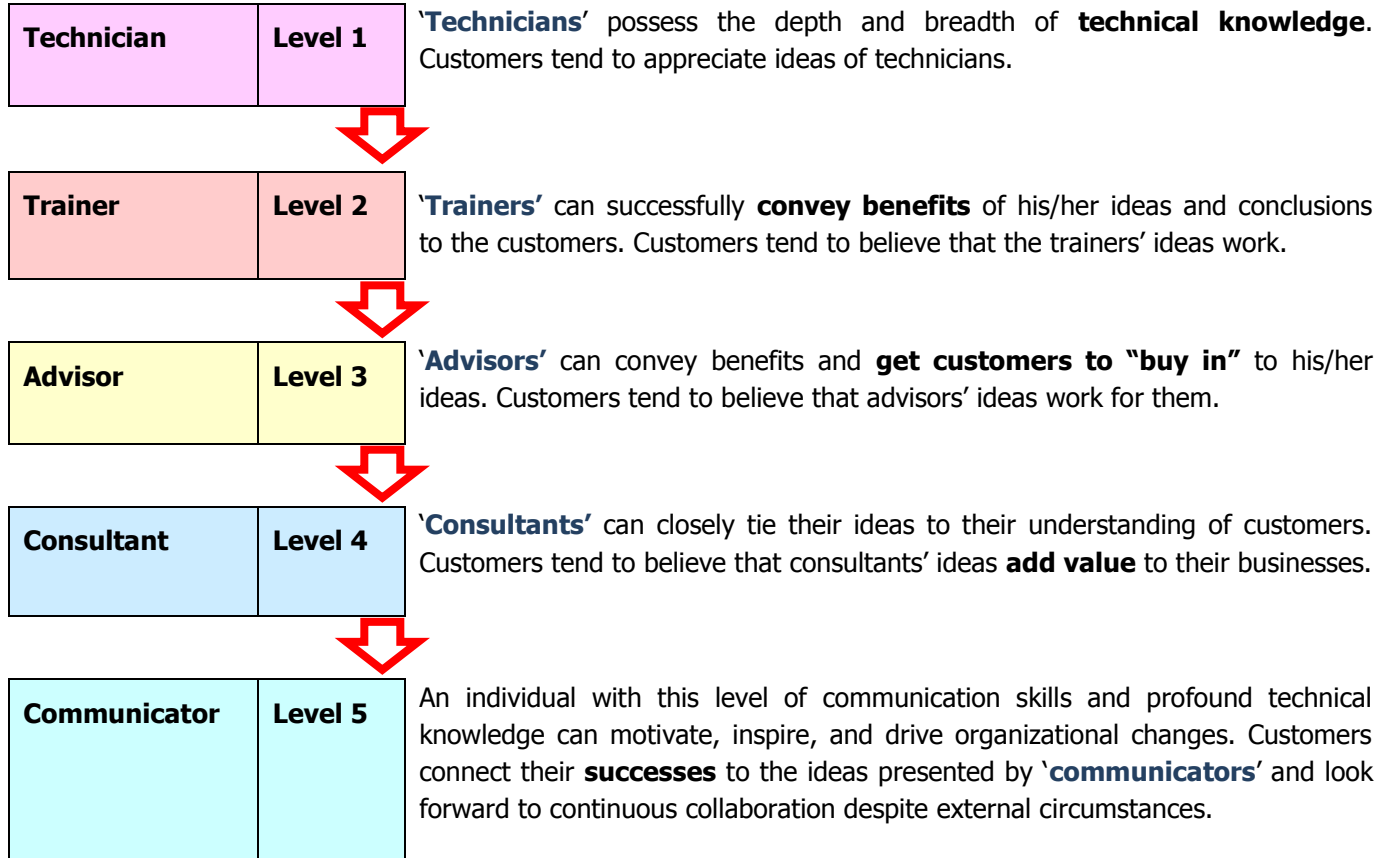
The specific skill-sets required for conducting a successful interview, presenting the audit results, and communicating in written form, can be developed faster and more effectively through several stages of evaluation and training, rather than relying on the experiential model most auditors have employed up till now.

The idea to use journalists’ techniques, tactics, and secrets of communication for audit interviews inspired a collaborative project between auditors of management systems and communication experts*. It has resulted in the development of a process that evaluates the current level of an auditor’s interviewing skills and provides recommendations to move them to the next level.

How does the evaluation system work?

The evaluation is conducted through a multiple-choice questionnaire that covers five areas: organizational, listening, observational and conversational skills, as well as the abilities to inspire confidence and trust. This learning process is based on an evaluation and development of a “core skill set” that helps to differentiate between the five levels of soft skills required for different jobs. The starting point - level 1 of soft skills was identified for professionals who don’t require extensive communication in their work place (e.g. software developers), and the highest - level 5 for professionals who communicate almost all of the time in their work-place (e.g. journalists).

What are the five levels of interviewing skills?



* Examples of communication mastery can be found in journalism and the public relations.

What does the training include?

- Five recorded lectures
- Five multiple choice quizzes
- Specific exercises on listening, observing and dealing with different audit situations

What will be provided after the training?

Certificates of Completion will be awarded only to those who attend the entire course. It includes participation in all five modules and completion of all assignments.

Can I claim this training towards my RABQSA re-certification?

With the Certificate of Completion you can claim 17 learning hours towards your RABQSA Re-certification.

Who created the course and the evaluation system?

Romayne Smith Fullerton, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Journalism at the University of

Western Ontario (Canada). Dr. Smith Fullerton teaches a variety of courses in areas related to print journalism and journalism ethics. Dr. Smith Fullerton frequently appears on CBC Radio One, Newsworld, the National and local media on issues relating to journalism. She is a frequent conference speaker and the recipient of both academic and professional awards. She has authored numerous scholarly and professional publications.

Natalia Scriabina, is the Managing Director of the Quality Professionals' Resource Center (in

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