BEST PRACTICE
Interviewing Skills

A software tester will use interviewing skills for many different purposes. The obvious one is interviewing an individual for the job of a software tester, or to be assigned to a specific software project. However, interviewing skills are also used for gathering data for test purposes. The tester may interview a user/customer to better understand how their job is performed, the tester may need to interview project development personnel to understand the structure and function of the software systems, and a tester may need to interview a subject matter expert such as an auditor to better understand the attributes of an effective system of internal control.

The primary purpose of interviewing is fact-finding. A second purpose is to convey information to the individual being interviewed. Interviewing involves oral communication, it involves listening skills, and it involves fact-finding. Oral communication and listening skills have previously been discussed in this section.

Fact-finding is a process of identifying facts which is a statement of a condition. In other words, a fact is some attribute of a condition that is agreed by involved parties to be correct. A fact could be the result of a test.

A finding is identifying a difference between what is and what should be. To obtain a finding you must know what the condition of an event should be. It is for this reason we talk about testable requirements which pre-define what the processing result should be.

If a processing result should be that individuals are paid time and a half over 40 hours of work, and a test result showed that individuals were not paid time and a half over 40 hours, that would be a fact. The finding would be the difference meaning that people should have been paid time and a half but they were not paid time and a half.

When documenting a finding it should include:

- A fact – tells why the difference between what is and what should be is significant.
- Cause – tells the reasons for the deviation. Identification is necessary as a basis for corrective action.
- Significance – how important the difference is in the context of the testing assignment.

References

Guide – CSTE Common Body Of Knowledge, V6.1