

THIRD DEGREE COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

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TDC Tip

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How to Conclude the Interview

After we've spent several hours in an interview building rapport, displaying empathy, deploying themes, and eliciting a detailed confession, we're usually mentally and physically exhausted. Let's face it—it's hard work getting someone to tell you the truth. And after the charade of lies, deceit, and games, it can also be very frustrating. The temptation—especially after a suspect confesses—is to tell him what you *really* think of him. After all, you've gotten what you need from him—what can it hurt?

Well, it can hurt plenty. Imagine this scenario: You've completed your suspect interview, obtained a confession, written it all up and are bringing the case to the District Attorney for the filing of a criminal complaint. The reviewing D.A. pours over your meticulously written report and asks you about a particular fact not covered in your report. It is at that moment you realize you failed to ask a critical question, thereby failing to cover that particular element of the crime. The D.A. tells you it's not a big deal, just go back and re-interview the subject on that crucial point. That's when your jaw drops and the egg starts to appear on your face. You can't talk to the subject, because the last time you spoke to him, you told him where to go. There's no way in the world he'll agree to talk to you again.

For this particular case, it's probably too late to salvage things and get the D.A. what she needs to successfully prosecute the matter. But it's not too late for every other case you put together from this day forward. The moral of the story is to end the interview on a positive note—with or without a confession. Regardless of whether the suspect confesses or not, the thing to remember is that you never get to tell him what you really think of him, how you knew he was lying all along, and what his new accommodations in prison will be like. The only thing we get out of that is instant gratification, nothing else. It accomplishes nothing for your victim, the D.A., or your case in court.

So, if the subject does not admit his involvement in a crime and the interview is ending for one reason or another, be sure to thank him for his time and encourage him to keep in touch with you. Our goal is to send him out the door with a positive impression of the experience, one in which he was treated with dignity and respect. Likewise, if a subject has confessed his involvement in a crime, we want to leave him with the exact same impression. We will usually end such an interview by thanking the subject for his honesty and commending him for the courage to be forthcoming. We assure him we'll keep him posted on the developments of our investigation and encourage him to call us with any questions. In this manner, we are attempting to leave him with the best possible impression of us and of the circumstances of the interview.

In the end, our goal is to secure the best possible chances of being able to re-interview the subject in the future. Your case may depend on it. Next month, we'll examine the importance of *rapport* and the ways to both build and destroy it.

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