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TDC Tip

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Motivation v. Manipulation

Watch any cop show on TV and eventually you will see the following scene: A suspect sits alone in a dark, dank interview room. The cop enters and the testosterone is oozing from every pore of his body. Cop asks bad guy a few direct pointed questions to which bad guy responds with lies. Cop raises his voice and intimidates bad guy with (insert your favorite threat here) prison, physical violence, loss of freedom, embarrassment, humiliation.

Fortunately, this is the impression most of our interview subjects have of us. So when they are met with a interviewer who is non-judgmental, understanding, and exhibits exceptional listening skills, they are caught off guard. Some interviewers are naturally good at this and others are not. So what secret do the successful possess?

Arguably the most essential ingredient to any effective interview is rapport. Rapport, as we've discussed extensively in previous tips, means establishing a relationship with someone; agreement, harmony. Getting people to talk to us (especially when they are very much inclined not to want to talk to us) is simply a matter of motivating them to want to do so.

The following are some examples of typical ways to motivate people to talk to us:

- Be non-judgmental
- Be an active listener
- Project an image of open mindedness about his/her involvement in the crime
- Express empathy for the subject's situation in life
- Build trust by paraphrasing what the subject is telling you
- Create an environment that suggests it's "us" (you and the subject), against the system (not you against the subject)
- Provide positive feedback and encouragement, especially for truthfulness

The ultimate goal of any interview is to earn the subject's trust. Once you've earned their trust, it will be easier to motivate them to tell you, "Nothing But The truth."

Remember this too – an interviewer who chooses manipulation over motivation risks not only losing a criminal case in court, but subjects himself to civil liability as well.

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