

THIRD DEGREE COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

December 2009

TDC Tip

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Recruiting An NBA Star – Asking The Right Questions

Recently, we were approached by the front office staff from an NBA Team to provide some specialized training to their scouts. This particular team wanted to reverse a trend that has become all too common with many professional sports teams today – troubled athletes. In particular, they wanted to build a team that consisted not only of quality “players” but of quality “people” as well. Fans will not be supportive of a team for long if its players are getting into trouble with drugs, gambling, domestic violence, and other mishaps during their off time.

In preparing to meet with these managers and scouts, we did some research on what they were already doing to reverse this trend. The results were amazingly similar to the Background Investigation process used by many law enforcement agencies today. They conduct numerous interviews not only with the prospective recruit athletes, but also with friends, family, coaches, teachers, and employers. Our job was to help improve the quality of these interviews.

We focussed primarily on two main areas: the quality of questions being asked and detecting deception in the responses. This “TDC Tip” will focus on some of the insights we gave them on the types of questions they might consider using.

Asking the Right Questions

- **Yes/No Questions:** Questions prompting a yes or no response are limited in their usefulness. While we won't go as far as to suggest *never* using these sorts of questions, we will suggest that asking open ended questions will yield much more useful and plentiful information.
 - Instead of asking, “Have you ever used alcohol or drugs?”
 - A better question might be, “Tell us about your history of alcohol and drug use.”
 - Instead of, “Do you have any history of financial trouble?”
 - Better: “Tell us about your debt/money management philosophy.”
 - Instead of, “Have you ever engaged in illegal or questionable sexual conduct?”
 - Better: “Tell us about your sexual fantasies”
 - Or: “Tell us about any unusual sexual conduct you've ever engaged in.”
- **Elimination Questions:** These are very helpful in determining the level of the subject's veracity.
 - Have you been previously questioned by LE agency where you were not under arrest?
 - Would you be willing to take a lie detector test regarding the truthfulness of the information you've provided us?
 - What do you think the results of that test would be?
 - Have you told anyone that you had anything to do with _____ ?
 - Did you ask for advice from anyone about what you should do/say at this interview?

- **Bait Questions:** Using bait like questions are very useful in elevating a subject's anxiety level in order to prompt him to tell the truth.
 - BAIT Question: Would there be any reason someone would say...
 - ...you stole money from them?
 - ...you have a drug/alcohol problem?
 - ...you were physically abusive in a romantic relationship?
 - ...you were not a team player?
 - ...you are irresponsible with money?
 - ...you have trouble respecting authority?

These are just a few examples that the rest of us would do well to remember applying in our own investigative interviews.

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