



Getting it Right

Advanced Skills for Auditors

SAMPLE PAGES

Study Guide

Fact and Fiction

All characters and events in ***Getting it Right*** are entirely fictional. Any similarity to real people or organisations is coincidental.

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Introduction

Audits are an essential part of any management system. They are used to determine whether the management system is effectively implemented and meets its objectives.

One of the keys to understanding auditing is remembering you are examining the process, not a person's job performance or skills. To audit quality, environmental or safety systems professionally an auditor will need to use the right people skills.

As an auditor you will deal with a wide range of employees from senior managers to production line staff. These employees will vary in their communication ability, their understanding of the audit process and their understanding of the auditor's job.

You will find employees who understand and support your role and then occasionally you will find employees who are threatened by the audit process, shy, or difficult to deal with.

Your interpersonal skill will enable you to build a co-operative relationship with the auditee and to maximise the effectiveness of the audit.

Your people skills can always be improved. ***Getting It Right*** explains how to make the best use of your people skills in an audit. It begins with *Getting Off To A Good Start* and concludes with *Question Techniques*.

About The Program

Getting It Right is set in an actual work environment with actors playing typical employee roles of auditor and auditee. The video includes comments from real auditors and auditees. The program focuses on interpersonal skills rather than the audit process and findings.

There are two audit scenarios in the video. The first is with a difficult manager, Bill, and we see how Noel, the auditor, uses specific skills to turn the situation into a positive and constructive audit.

The second scenario shows how an auditor, Lesley, deals with three different auditees and uses a range of question techniques to ensure the accuracy and effectiveness of the audit.

Getting Off To A Good Start

Auditees are often apprehensive about an audit. Some are having a bad day, some have had negative experiences with auditors, others feel insecure about the audit process and others find the questioning process confronting.

The challenge in auditing is to get the auditee on side and to work together and it's not always an easy task.

Audits are about finding information on a process. A successful auditor is excellent at using a variety of skilled techniques.

For an audit to be successful it's important that the auditor gets off to a good start. Preparation and familiarising yourself with the process and past audit findings will give you confidence. It also conveys that you are professional and know what you are doing.

From the outset make sure the audit is an open process. The schedule, areas to be audited and scope of the audit should be agreed on by the auditor and the auditee. If the auditee knows the framework of the audit in advance they will be more comfortable and able to contribute more effectively.

Assume auditees have pride in their job and that they want to improve the work procedures.

Approaching an audit with a constructive attitude is important to the success of the audit.

Use the greeting to establish contact with the auditee - smile, shake hands and make eye contact. If you are relaxed then it helps the auditee relax.

Getting Off To A Good Start

Play DVD

Watch Noel and Bill. Observe the techniques Noel, the auditor, uses to get off to a good start.

Points to note

Body language is a strong communication tool. Both the auditees and the auditor unconsciously register the messages sent to each other by each other's body language. An auditor should be professional, confident and relaxed.

A successful auditor uses body language to make the auditee feel comfortable.

Show the auditee that you're listening. Don't fold your arms or turn away from them. Don't point or slump. These body postures can send negative messages such as you are aggressive, uninterested or bored.

Use eye contact with the auditee to let them know you are listening to them and interested in what they have to say.

As well as using your body language effectively, develop an awareness of the auditees body language which tells you how they are feeling.

Auditing is a team process between two people experienced in their respective roles. An auditee should feel confident that they have something to contribute.

Use language appropriate to your auditee. You might be very confident with jargon associated with an audit but it could be confusing to your auditee.

Checkpoint

Think about your own skills for Getting Off To A Good Start.

- Do I always have eye contact or do I get involved in my own thoughts and forget about the auditee.
- Do I fold my arms?
- Do I point?
- Do I find common ground on first meeting?
- Do I find something positive to say about the auditees business area?
- Do I smile?
- Am I creating a feeling of teamwork?
- Have I prepared?
- Have I familiarised myself with the process and past audit findings?

Using the Right Questions and Techniques

Once you have started an audit, your question techniques become important assets.

Accurate information is essential to an auditor, but it is often hard to uncover the facts because the auditee may be reluctant, vague, confusing or verbose. To quickly grasp the facts of a process, a successful auditor uses question techniques effectively.

Question Techniques

1. Closed Questions
2. Open Questions
3. Probing Questions
4. Challenging Questions
5. Reflecting
6. Summarising