



# **The Know-How of Knowledge Interviews**

Capturing Key Knowledge  
in Exit Interviews

**Pam Holloway**

© 2006—AboutPeople and Knowledge Harvesting Inc.

# The Know How of Knowledge Interviews

Introduction .....	3
The Knowledge-Based Exit Interview .....	3
Essential Dos and Don'ts .....	6
Preparing for Knowledge-Focused Exit Interviews .....	9
What to Collect? .....	9
The Best Interviewers .....	10
Pre-Interview Work .....	11
The Interview .....	12
Preparing the Environment.....	12
Keep the End Result or Product in Mind.....	13
How do you know if you collected what you need? .....	13
Common Exit Interview Questions .....	15
Reason for Leaving .....	15
General Expertise.....	15
The Perfect Candidate.....	16
Questions for Eliciting Job Knowledge .....	17
Typical Day-to-Day Activities and Flow.....	17
Resources: People, Documents, Training .....	19
Problems and Challenges .....	17
Teams and Collaborative Work .....	18
Most Important Aspects of the Job.....	18
Joys & Frustrations.....	18
Most Important Skills.....	19
Questions For Leaders & Managers .....	20
Questions for Capturing Knowledge about a Specific Process.....	21
Questions for gaining clarification and stimulating discussion.....	22
Dealing With Difficult People.....	23
Appendix A: Review of Objectives & Deliverables.....	26
Appendix B: Integrating Staffing, Training and Knowledge Management Strategies .	31
About the Author .....	33

# Introduction

The primary focus of this guide is Exit Interviews, in particular how to capture key knowledge from employees who are about to leave the organization. Although the focus is primarily on knowledge capture at exit, the tools and methodology are part of a larger program of knowledge capture that includes not only exit interviews, but entry interviews and expert interviews as well.

## About Exit Interviews

I once heard recruiting expert Nick Corcodilos call exit interviews "The cockroaches of the HR world: No one knows why they exist, no one can justify or eliminate them, and they will likely survive into the third millennium."

Although I agree with Nick on most things, I'm not ready to give up on this one just yet. Sure, there are things we need to do to improve the process, but there's also some real potential here.

What if we used the exit interview opportunity to collect not only the basic HR stuff, but also knowledge about what it takes to do the job? Information that could be used to staff the job, improve the organization, and help incumbents and candidates.

## The Knowledge-Based Exit Interview

How does a knowledge-focused exit interview differ from a traditional exit interview? In a knowledge-focused interview, you may collect the typical HR information, but your primary focus is on knowledge -- knowledge that would be helpful to the next person in the job or to others in the organization with similar roles and responsibilities.

The kinds of questions you'd ask might include:

- What did you do?
- How did you do it?
- Why did you do it?
- What skills and competencies are most critical?

Done correctly, this type of exit interview is a win-win for both the organization and the exiting employee. The questions enable the employee to articulate her unique contributions to the organization, and in doing so, feel better about leaving, and better about the organization.

## **Look Under the Hood**

If you do only one thing to change the way you do exit interviews, it should be to ask the kinds of questions that will get to the heart of what the job is all about and what it takes to do the work. This differs from a job-description-based approach where you identify what you or the interviewee think the job is supposed to be. What you're after isn't what the job description says it is, it's what really happens day-to-day.

For example, in doing exit interviews with Help Desk staff, we found that two of the most important competencies for the job were: 1) the ability to calm an angry customer, satisfy their needs quickly and have them leave happy; and 2) the ability to deal with the high noise and activity level in the work setting -- to be able to think and deal with customers on the phone amidst all the ruckus.

We also learned the tricks people use to deal with the noise and calm angry people. We learned this information by asking employees what frustrated them most, then peeling back the onion once we identified key info.

If we had only asked a simple and straight-forward “What do you do?” type of questions, chances are we wouldn’t have elicited the same type of info.

### **What are the benefits?**

1. Vital knowledge is not lost to the organization when people leave
2. The learning curve of new people joining the organization is shortened
3. The people leaving have a more positive view of the organization
4. You collect quality information relatively quickly and inexpensively

# Essential Dos and Don'ts

## **1. Select carefully and train well the people that are going to be doing the interviews.**

The quality of the results depends on the skills of the interviewer. One of the key skills we want in an interviewer is the ability to recognize cues and then “peel back the onion.” It is difficult, if not impossible, to script out every question, and even if you could, simply going through a list of questions is not an effective way to elicit knowledge.

Interviewing expertise is critical. If you don't have that expertise in-house, look for it externally. Another key interviewer skill is objectivity. As humans we tend to hear what we want to hear. If we are ingrained in the organization, we may not hear the same things someone outside the organization might. External interviewers often do a better job because they are able to be more objective.

## **2. Don't ask people to fill out a 10-page questionnaire and mail it to an anonymous mailbox.**

A sure-fire way to minimize results is to ask people to fill out a questionnaire. This is impersonal, annoying, and highly ineffective. Exit interviews, particularly knowledge-based interviews, work best “live.” Face-to-face is the preferred method. Do it over-the-phone if that's your only choice, but make sure you have an interviewer who is able to be intuitive and read cues over the phone.

## **3. Where emotions are high, give the employee some chill time.**

There are those who argue that you shouldn't bother interviewing employees who aren't leaving voluntarily because the quality of the information may be compromised. In my experience, it isn't that black and white. One of the things you

can do if the separation wasn't voluntary or the employee is emotionally-charged is delay the interview for a couple of months. By this time there's a good chance they will have "chilled" and had an opportunity to reflect on their experience. They're also more likely to have another job which may remove some of the anxiety or negative feelings.

#### **4. Make it about them.**

Most people like talking about themselves. Talking about how one does their job and what they've accomplished can provide key information to the organization and make the person feel good at the same time. Done correctly you may be able to use the exit interview to rejuvenate positive feelings. If the exiting employee feels good about themselves, they'll feel good about the organization.

How do you make them feel good about themselves? Simple, show that you are genuinely interested in and appreciate their contributions.

#### **5. Use the exit interview to build a "parting relationship."**

You want to build a parting relationship, not so much because you don't want to end up in court, but because you never know when you'll cross paths again. You may want to hire this person back some day. Also, it's likely they or someone they know are prospects or customers of your products and services.

#### **6. Use the information and knowledge collected!**

Don't just collect information for the sake of collecting it. Put it to use! Regularly articulate to staff the value of these exercises and demonstrate the importance of the knowledge by putting it to use. Give future participants a reason/incentive to want to contribute.

## **7. Round out the exit interview process by adding the other Two Es -- Entry and Expert.**

One of the paradoxes of knowledge collection is the less you capture knowledge on a regular basis, the more you'll need to worry about at exit. Smart organizations make knowledge capture a regular part of the organizational culture. For example, the UK Post Office uses exit interviews as part of a series of cradle-to-grave interviews to collect knowledge, using a method called 3E. The 3 E's are Entry, Expert, and Exit.

You use Entry Interviews to gather information when employees first join the organization -- when they have "fresh eyes" with new and different perspectives. Expert Interviews are conducted as they develop skills and become subject matter experts. If you incorporate these into your culture, eliciting knowledge at exits will be an expected, and likely as not, a much more productive process.



# Preparing for Knowledge-Focused Exit Interviews

A knowledge-focused exit interview is more than a series of questions asked and answered. The role of the interviewer is critical, because much of the knowledge we aim to capture is implicit knowledge, which by its nature is difficult to articulate. The interviewer must be highly skilled at eliciting information, at guiding and shepherding the interviewee down a path of reflection and thought that ultimately results in the articulation of knowledge. The interviewer must also be credible, and trustworthy and knowledgeable about the subject – at least able to ask intelligent questions.

## What to Collect?

A knowledge-focused exit interview is designed to capture details about the job, the organization, and the person – in particular the key knowledge used in the job, key learnings, key contacts, relationships – anything that might be valuable to the future incumbents of the job, to other people in the organization or to managers and HR personnel.

The types of information to be collected include:

- Information that will aid in the selection of a replacement for the job
- How-to knowledge for use by others in the organization
- Reason for Leaving (and the identification of organizational or “right person right job” details that can be used by management and HR).

## **The Best Interviewers**

Having an effective interviewer is critical. There are several key skills that are important in eliciting information and knowledge. First is building rapport. Another is active listening. Third is the ability to read non-verbal communication and know the difference between a pause, where the person is thinking and has more to say, versus a pause that means, “I’m done, we can move on.” It is also the ability to understand the difference between an unwillingness to share, versus someone who is just having a tough time verbalizing what they know. More importantly, it is having the capability to deal effectively with either situation.

The ability to do several things mentally at the same time is also important. Interviewers must focus, listen, reflect, filter, and refine simultaneously.

Perhaps the most important quality for an interviewer is a genuine interest in the person and what they have to say. Good interviewers have manageable egos. They don’t need to be the center of attention or do all the talking. A good interviewer listens more than talks.

### **Where do you find good interviewers?**

Consider people who are effective communicators and interviewers. Look in the Human Resources department. Consider recruiters or people with a counseling background (especially in-depth process consulting). People with training and education backgrounds often make good interviewers because they typically have the interpersonal skills required and enjoy the interaction. Journalists, fiction writers, and technical writers are also candidates for interviewing, though not all have the necessary people skills.

Note: In Myers-Briggs terminology, some of the best interviewers are typically the NFs (Intuitive, Feeling). Also, the “J” dimension is important for closure.

Interviewers should be able to determine the interviewee’s frame of reference, mental filters, and values. They will use this to build rapport and make the interview process more effective.

## **Pre-Interview Work**

Although it isn’t necessary that the Interviewer be an expert in the subject the Interviewee is discussing, he or she must be able to converse intelligently about the topic. This means having an overall familiarity with the subject area and its associated terminology.

In order to prepare yourself, take steps to collect as much information as you can about the person and the nature of the work. That includes information not only about the job, but also about the work environment and the organization. Study and gain an understanding of both the content area and the person you are interviewing. Look for documents that the expert has authored. Talk to people who work with them. Become as familiar as you can about their area of expertise and how that expertise is used in the organization.

Make a list of content and context-specific questions you will want to ask the expert, either for further clarification or to dig into a particular area a little deeper. Before going to the session, look over materials and try to get an idea of where you think the real nuggets of knowledge are likely to reside.

Try to find out if there are any reasons the expert might not want to share what they know and be prepared to implicitly address these concerns. See section on *How to Deal With Busy or Uncooperative People* for more information.

## **The Interview**

### **Preparing the Environment**

The setting has a significant influence on how effectively your contributor is able to tap into and articulate key knowledge.

The session should be conducted wherever the expert is most comfortable. Ideally, you should work in an open, airy, naturally lit room. Select a room that allows all participants to move around.

Other times, it is effective to go to the expert. This lets them know that you are making a concession, that you recognize the value of their time and want them to be in a comfortable setting.

Having said that, it is critically important that the session take place where the expert will not be distracted by telephones, co-workers or day-to-day work crises.

Environmental comforts are essential. That does not just mean a good chair and a comfortable temperature. The setting must be conducive to the thinking and communication style of the expert. If the person is highly visual, for example, you may need tools for enabling the expert to communicate their information visually (flip chart and markers, for example).

Wherever possible, place the expert on your right. That forces her to look to her left, which stimulates her memory.

## **Keep the End Result or Product in Mind**

Think in terms of the end result or product, which in this case is the knowledge that will improve the organization, make it easier to find a good replacement for the job, or make it easier for the organization to get the work done without the person. This makes it easier to determine when you've collected the necessary information.

One of the things you'll want to do before the interview is understand who's going to use the knowledge collected and how they're likely to use it. This will help you ensure that you capture the most valuable bits.

Where possible, speak to other members of the organization, the manager and HR staff to ensure your questions adequately cover their needs and are appropriate for the experts.

## **How do you know if you collected what you need?**

At the end of the process you want to be able to feel comfortable that you have satisfied these objectives:

- You have a clear understanding of both the knowledge and skills required to do this person's job.
- You have a clear understanding of why this person is leaving. You have captured any organizational issues that need to be communicated to management and HR.

- You have the information needed to effectively describe the job and to choose the best person to fill the position
- You have identified any key knowledge that the organization is in danger of losing (important things this person knows that haven't yet been articulated).

# Common Exit Interview Questions

The next two sections provide a variety of specific interview questions. Shown below are some of the more general ones that are typically used in exit interviews. More in-depth job specific questions are included in the next section.

## Reason for Leaving

1. Why are you leaving?
2. What is it about the new opportunity that you find appealing?
3. What's different about the new opportunity and the job you're leaving?
4. Tell me about you (not the job). What's important to you?
5. What are your strengths and how were they used/not used in the job?
6. What were the most frustrating aspects of the job?
7. How would you change the job to make it better?
8. What did you like about the job?
9. To what extent do you feel you were appreciated for your contributions?
10. Do you respect and have confidence in your supervisor?
11. Do you like the people you work with?

## General Expertise

1. What do you know or know how to do, that you feel is particularly important to the organization? How/why is this important?
2. What do you know that can help other people in the organization?
3. Do people come to you with questions? What kinds of questions?
4. What do you think would happen if you weren't there to answer these questions? Where would people go for answers?
5. Tell me about a particular project that you worked on.
6. What did you do?

7. How did you do it?
8. Why did you do it?

## **The Perfect Candidate**

1. Describe the perfect person for this job.
2. Describe the type of person who would **not** be suited for this job.
3. What kind of technical skills do you think are most important to enable someone to do this job effectively?
4. What kinds of people skills are important for this job?
5. What type of person will fit best in the organizational structure?
6. Is that different from the type of person who is perfect for this job?
7. Do you know anyone (in the organization or externally) that you feel is ideally suited for this job?
8. What would make someone else want this job?



# Questions for Eliciting Job Knowledge

This section includes a variety of questions for eliciting more in-depth and specific job knowledge. The questions cover several different areas:

1. Typical day-to-day activities
2. Problems and Challenges
3. How work is done (collaboratively vs stand-alone)
4. Most important aspects of the job
5. Joys and Frustrations
6. Strengths and Talents
7. Resources used in the job: People, Documents and Training

## Typical Day-to-Day Activities and Flow

1. What are the typical situations or problems you work with?
2. Describe a typical day or week. Where are you? What are you doing? Who else is there? Who do you interface with?
3. What are your goals and objectives for a typical day or week? What is it that you must accomplish? How do you accomplish these goals?
4. Tell me about relationships – 1) with customers, 2) colleagues, 3) managers. Describe a specific situation that illustrates the nature of the relationship(s).

## Problems and Challenges

1. What kinds of out-of-the ordinary incidents occur and how do you respond to them?
2. Describe a day or period of time when nothing seemed to work. What were the problems? What wasn't working? What caused the problem? What were the results? What were you doing? Where were you? Who else was there? What were they doing?

3. How do you solve problems? Do you ask someone for help? Study it for a while? Look for answers in documentation? Jump in and try different approaches?
4. Tell me about a particularly difficult problem and how you went about solving it. Let's take a step-by-step approach, starting with the introduction of the problem. What were you trying to do? What problem were you trying to solve?
5. What did you do first? How did you know to do that?

## **Teams and Collaborative Work**

1. What percentage of your work is done collaboratively? Describe the work and those you collaborate with.
2. What works about the teams? What doesn't work?
3. How do you help each other? Think about a typical week. How do you interface with each other? Do you solve problems together? Share learnings? Do you interact socially?
4. If you could add 2 people to the team, what skills would they have and what would you have them doing?

## **Most Important Aspects of the Job**

1. What do you think are the most important aspects of your job?
2. What must you do well in order to be successful? What kinds of things cause the most damage if you don't do them well?
3. What are the three most important skills or knowledge a new person coming into this job would need to know?

## **Joys & Frustrations**

1. If you could change anything about the job, the environment, the company or the people in order to make this job better, what would it be?
2. What frustrates you most about your job?
3. What do you like best about this job?
4. What would make someone else want this job?

5. What could we change about the job to make it better for both the company and the person in the job?

## **Strengths and Talents**

1. Describe a time when you were “on” or “in the zone” – when everything was working and you were clicking at your job. What were you doing? What kinds of actions did you take? What do you think were the most important personal qualities that enabled you to be so effective? How was this experience different from a “not in the zone” day?
2. What do you think are your best qualities?
3. How often were you able to use these skills and competencies in your job?
4. Describe a job that’s perfectly designed for you – type of company, the people you are working with, where are you (at home, with a group of people, traveling). What does a typical day or week look like? What are you doing?
5. How is your current job different from the one you just described?
6. What other skills do you have that you really feel good about that you wish you'd have had more of an opportunity to use?
7. Write your own want ad. Fill in the blanks. If you need to know about \_\_\_\_\_ or how to do \_\_\_\_\_, I can help.

## **Resources: People, Documents, Training**

1. What tools, resources and relationships do you use to do your job? For example, online information systems, external references, technical support guys, your workmates, supervisor, etc.
2. How do you know to use them?
3. How do you know when to use them?
4. What happens if you don't have access to these resources?
5. What type of training have you received while in the job?
6. What additional types of training would be appropriate for a person in this job?
7. How did you learn to do what you do?

8. What major life experiences contributed to your being able to do what you do so well? (*examples: upbringing, the military, raising kids, volunteer work, diverse background, etc.*)

## Questions For Leaders & Managers

1. If we were going to write a book about your experience in/at/with \_\_\_\_\_, what would be the theme or themes? (in terms of concept, or chapters in the book, maybe just a title)
2. What do you see as your biggest contribution or contributions?
3. As a leader, visionary, architect, what kinds of things did you do/face/learn?
4. Describe a time when you:
  - created a path forward
  - inspired people to do their best
  - provided vision and direction and purpose
  - educated and enlightened
  - picked the right people
  - moved the organization forward
5. How did you know when you were effective?
6. Give an example of an important “lesson learned?”
7. Where do you get your sources of inspiration? (*examples: reading, talking to peers and colleagues, getting out amongst the people?, being alone*)
8. Describe a time when things didn't go well - When you faced difficult problems or things you couldn't control. How did you handle it? What did you learn? In hindsight, would you have done anything differently?
9. What are the 3 most important skills or knowledge a new person coming into this job would need to know?
10. What things are you involved in now or have been involved in recently that you feel need to be documented (i.e. collect the who, what, where info) so that others have background, status, awareness?
11. How did you learn to do what you do? What major life experiences contributed to your being able to do what you do so well? (*examples: upbringing, the military, raising kids, volunteer work, diverse background, etc.*)

12. How do your colleagues describe you? How do those who report to you describe you?

## Questions for Capturing Knowledge about a Specific Process

1. Explain a little bit about the process of \_\_\_\_\_?
  - History
  - How does it fit into the bigger picture?
  - Why is it important?
  - What would happen if it didn't get done? If you weren't here or there wasn't anyone to do what you do?
2. What explicit artifacts do you have / have access to that might help explain the process(es) of what you do? What resources or artifacts do you use in your job?
3. Tell me about a time when you did \_\_\_\_\_ or used \_\_\_\_\_ skill?
  - Typical "day in the life"
  - Describe your role in the project or process and any interfaces with co-workers, customers, vendors, etc.)
  - (At decision making stages in the narrative ask "why did you do that? how did you know to do that?")
4. How did you learn to do what you do?
5. Think about a time when something out of the ordinary happened. Problems, or quirks, how you handled it, what you learned.
6. If you could change the product or process in any way - what would you change?
7. What would make the process better?
8. What would make you more effective?  
(Possible answers - more time, more people, better equipment, more direction, more freedom, more resources (\$\$), fewer hand-offs, etc.)
9. If a new person was put in this job, someone who might not have the skills and experience that you have, what are the 3 most important things they need to know?

## Questions for gaining clarification and stimulating discussion

1. Describe a time when...
2. What's the first thing you do?
3. How do you know to do that?
4. How do you know when to do it?
5. How do you accomplish this work?
6. What does that mean?
7. What do you do next? Why?
8. What usually happens?
9. Can you describe a time, a specific situation, when you performed this action?
10. What happens if something else is done?
11. What would happen if?
12. Tell me more.
13. Who is responsible/involved?
14. What are the interrelationships among decisions?
15. Where are the hand-off points?
16. Is there a specific order of steps or elements?
17. What are some common mistakes or misconceptions?
18. What is the most important thing to remember when you're doing this?
19. What are examples of printed, support materials, documentation, procedures, manuals, instruction sheets, checklists... that are relevant?
20. What rules are involved?
21. Describe how you currently help others learn how to accomplish this work.
22. What are the main obstacles that hinder learners' abilities to meet their goals and objectives?

# Dealing With Difficult People

As an Interviewer, you are likely to face resistance from time to time. In some situations, people volunteer to be interviewed and share their knowledge. In others, they are told to do so. In either case, contributors may have a difficult time communicating what they know.

The first step is to identify the nature of resistance. Do they feel threatened? Are they fearful of losing their job or power? Is it simply a matter of not having the time? Do they see/understand the value of the exercise? Once you know “where the person is coming from,” you can begin to build rapport and overcome the resistance. Here are a few of the common reasons why people might be hesitant to share, and tips for overcoming these obstacles.

<b>SITUATION</b>	<b>WAYS TO OVERCOME</b>
“My knowledge is power. If I give it up, then I’ll lose it.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Give examples (stories) of how others have shared knowledge and personally gained from it.</li><li>▪ Play to their need to "hold on to knowledge" by explaining that you can share knowledge and still have it – it’s not as though you lose it when you give it away.</li><li>▪ Discuss ways sharing knowledge will reward them personally.</li></ul>
“I don’t know what I know.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Because you're dealing with implicit knowledge, you're likely to run into experts who don't fully understand what they know. You'll hear them say things like "I just know" or "I don't know why I do it this way, I just do it."</li><li>▪ People tend to get frustrated when they can't answer your questions, so it's important that elicitors are highly skilled in asking the right questions that will</li></ul>

SITUATION	WAYS TO OVERCOME
	<p>help trigger the knowledge and help experts better understand and communicate it.</p>
<p>“I don’t have time.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The "I don't have time" hesitation is generally based on one or several other things: 1) the importance of the effort has not been fully communicated to the person, and 2) this type of knowledge sharing is not recognized as a part of one's job and time allocated accordingly, or 3) the person doesn't see the payoff - sees bigger payoff from doing their other work.</li> <li>▪ As an elicitor, the best thing you can do is make the process time efficient and make sure that your contributor gets something "out" as well. You probably won't be able to influence the culture change (to one where knowledge sharing is the norm), but you can make a difference in how the expert you're working with feels about the experience.</li> </ul>
<p>“What’s in it for me?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This question comes up so often in Knowledge Management, it has become an acronym. It is called WIIFM (pronounced Wiff-um).</li> <li>▪ How do you deal with the “What’s in it for me question or attitude?” Simple, you answer the question. If there isn’t something in it for the contributor, and you aren’t able to articulate it, you can’t expect stellar results. The eliciting process has to be a win-win for everyone.</li> <li>▪ The answer to the WIIFM question also depends on the person and what’s important to them. What’s important to one person (recognition as an expert for example) may be a negative thing to another person (who might agree to capturing the knowledge so that people leave him alone).</li> <li>▪ Know what motivates and drives the person. Present benefits or personal value add from their perspective.</li> <li>▪ Among the benefits you could suggest depending on</li> </ul>



<b>SITUATION</b>	<b>WAYS TO OVERCOME</b>
	<p>the person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Being recognized as the expert</li> <li>- Positive effect on your career, position in the company.</li> <li>- It's the right thing to do. The greater good.</li> <li>- Keep people from bothering you in the future (asking the same questions over and over).</li> <li>- Financial gain.</li> <li>- If you share what you know, others will share what they know/have with you</li> <li>- Threat/Fear...if you don't do this, this will happen....</li> </ul>

# Appendix A: Review of Objectives & Deliverables

It's important to keep in mind your overall objective or objectives for the exit interview. For example, Eliciting information that will help you 1) better understand the nature of work (the job, interfaces, relationships, dependencies); 2) staff the job (skills and competencies required); and 3) remove barriers and obstacles to success.

With that in mind, the next step is to look at the specific deliverables you are looking to produce. For example:

1. **Job Description/Work Profile** (What does a person in this job do? What are the joys and frustrations?);
2. **Prime Applicant Profile** (What kind of person (what skills and competencies) are needed in this job?);
3. **Training Requirements** (what kind of training or experience is most important and 4) an accounting of the team/mix - who knows what, gaps, how well the mix works.

The following matrix helps organize objectives and deliverables and the questions you use to accomplish each.

What to Capture	Sample Questions	Use / Deliverable
<p>Steady State: Typical day-to-day.</p> <p>Specific Content (the actual activities performed) and context (the situation)</p> <p>+ Relationships/Interfaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the typical situations or problems you work with?</li> <li>• Describe a typical day or week. Where are you? What are you doing? Who else is there? Who do you interface with?</li> <li>• What are your goals and objectives for a typical day or week? What is it that you must accomplish? How do you accomplish these goals?</li> <li>• Tell me about your customers? Describe some of the more memorable ones and the kinds of situations you deal with?</li> </ul>	<p>These questions provide information for the job description / work profile.</p>
<p>Resources Used – Both People and Other</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What tools, resources and relationships do you use to do your job? For example, online information systems, external references, technical support guys, asking your workmates, etc.</li> </ul>	<p>These questions provide information for the job description / work profile as well support system needs (knowledge repositories, for example)</p>
<p>Exception State: Out-of-the-ordinary events and situations.</p> <p>Events and how they are handled (content plus flexibility, adaptive behavior)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kinds of out-of-the ordinary incidents go on and how do you respond to them?</li> <li>• Describe a day or period of time when nothing seemed to work.</li> <li>• What were the problems?</li> <li>• What wasn't working?</li> <li>• What caused the problem?</li> </ul>	<p>These questions help you capture the not so obvious skills and behaviors used in the job.</p> <p>They demonstrate adaptive behavior, the ability to deal with unusual or new situations (which is</p>

What to Capture	Sample Questions	Use / Deliverable
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were the results?</li> <li>• What were you doing?</li> <li>• Where were you?</li> <li>• Who else was there?</li> <li>• What were they doing?</li> <li>• How did it make you feel?</li> </ul>	<p>more the norm than the exception).</p> <p>They demonstrate key problem-solving skills and behaviors.</p>
Problem Solving Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you solve problems? Do you ask someone for help? Study it for awhile? Look for answers in documentation? Jump in and try different approaches?</li> <li>• Tell me about a particularly difficult problem and how you went about solving it. Let's take a step-by-step approach, starting with the introduction of the problem. What were you trying to do? What problem were you trying to solve?</li> </ul>	
Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you work in teams? Describe how the teams are put together. Is there a lead?</li> <li>• What works about the teams? What doesn't work?</li> <li>• How do you help each other? Think about a typical week. How do you interface with each other? Do you solve problems together? Share learnings?</li> <li>• Do you interact socially?</li> </ul>	<p>These questions help you get a picture of how the person feels about working on a team, plus information about how the team structure might be improved.</p>
Most important aspects of the job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think are the most important aspects of your job? (Examples: getting answers quickly, giving accurate advice,</li> </ul>	<p>These questions provide information to be delivered back to the organization as</p>

What to Capture	Sample Questions	Use / Deliverable
	<p>not upsetting the customers, a “can do” attitude).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What must you do well?</li> <li>• What kinds of things cause the most damage if you screw up – like losing an important customer, giving inaccurate information, etc.</li> </ul>	<p>to what the workers feel is most important about the job. Helps the organization see how well they have communicated objectives.</p>
<p>What does the organization measure? What gets rewarded?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What gets measured in the organization (like number of calls per person, number of resolutions, etc.)</li> <li>• Is compensation tied to performance? If yes, describe how.</li> </ul>	<p>Is what’s measured or rewarded the same thing that the employee feels is important about the job?</p>
<p>Joys/Frustrations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you could change anything about the job, the environment, the company or the people in order to make this job better, what would it be?</li> <li>• What frustrates you most about your job?</li> <li>• What do you like best about this job?</li> <li>• What would make someone else want this job?</li> </ul>	<p>These questions provide information for the Job Description / Work Profile and the Prime Applicant Profile.</p>
<p>Most Important Skills and Competencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you could add 2 people to the team, what skills would they have and what would you have them doing?</li> <li>• Describe a time when you were “on” or “in the zone” – when everything was working and you</li> </ul>	<p>These questions provide information on key skills and competencies to be used in job descriptions and work profiles.</p>

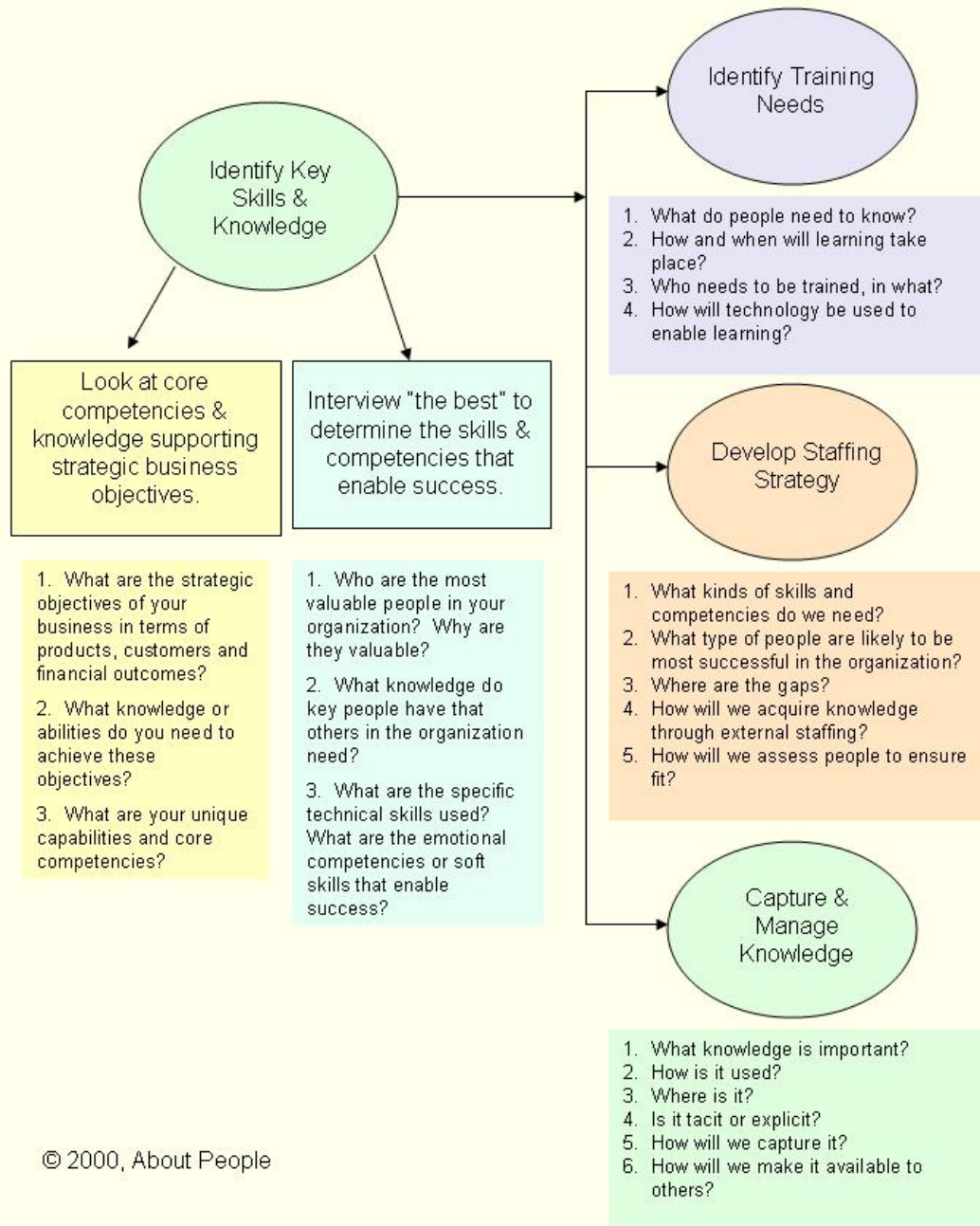
What to Capture	Sample Questions	Use / Deliverable
	<p>were clicking at your job.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were you doing?</li> <li>• What kinds of actions did you take?</li> <li>• What do you think were the most important personal qualities that enabled you to be so effective?</li> <li>• How was this experience different from a “not in the zone” day?</li> </ul>	
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you get (or do you get) the training you need to do your job well?</li> <li>• Describe the type of training you received and the training you feel would be valuable for a person in this job.</li> </ul>	<p>These questions provide information for training requirements</p>
About You	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think are your best qualities?</li> <li>• How often were you able to use these skills and competencies in your job?</li> <li>• Describe a job that’s perfectly designed for you – type of company, the people you are working with, where are you (at home, with a group of people, traveling). What does a typical day or week look like? What are you doing?</li> <li>• How is your current job different from the one you just described?</li> </ul>	<p>These questions provide information on whether people are being fully utilized.</p>

## **Appendix B: Integrating Staffing, Training and Knowledge Management Strategies**

Knowledge collected in interviews can serve a variety of purposes and people. Smart organizations integrate staffing, training and knowledge management strategies and make the most of knowledge collected.

Included on the next page is a brief outline of what an integrated effort might look like.

## Integrating Staffing, Training & Knowledge Management Strategies





# About the Author

## Pam Holloway

Pam Holloway is co-founder of AboutPeople, a unique training and consulting firm specializing in practical business applications of neuroscience, learning theory, organizational behavior and marketing psychology.

AboutPeople partners with Larry Todd Wilson and KHi in the delivery of knowledge harvesting solutions and training.

Pam is an internationally recognized speaker and trainer who has delivered programs across Europe, Asia, Canada and the US. She provides consulting to a variety of companies including Microsoft,

Citigroup and MetLife. In addition to this title, *The Know-How of Knowledge Interviews*, she is the author of *Corporate Learning in the Knowledge Age*, and co-author of *Axis of Influence: How Credibility and Likeability Intersect to Drive Success* and *Face Values: How to Read People and Connect With Them in Less Than 3 Minutes*.

Pam lives in Spokane Washington with her husband Michael Lovas and their dogs, Eva and Woody, and cat Georgia. Contact her at [pam@aboutpeople.com](mailto:pam@aboutpeople.com) 509.465.5599.

