



Want a Confession?

Then ask for it!

**A Successful
Interrogation Tactic**



By Stan B Walters

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In my consulting work I review many, many video taped or even audio taped interviews. Of course there are some great interviews and occasionally some not so good. There are also many cases when the interviewer does an excellent job of controlling the subject through the 5 stress response states and perfectly attacks a subject's deception. One area that always seems to be the biggest challenge for every interviewer is getting the actual confession. The three issues that surround this challenge include knowing when the subject is open to the suggestion of a confession, why they decide to confess and most importantly being asked to confess.

The first step toward getting the confession is recognizing when the subject is intellectually and emotionally ready. One of the two most asked about areas of my classes are the confession signs and spotting deception. "I can see the guy is lying, I just can't get him to confess!" Body language and verbal cues will tell us when our subject is in acceptance. With our limited space here, it would be hard to cover this topic adequately. I classify verbal cues into three sections; punishment statements, third person remarks, and what I call "debt service." Body language signs of acceptance must be accompanied by verbal confirmation of acceptance because body language cues and deception cues overlap and can be easily misdiagnosed.

The second thing every interviewer must consider is why a subject won't confess as well as why they will confess. Subjects, whether victims, witnesses as well as suspects are lying for their own selfish reasons. It may not make sense to the outsider or to the interviewer but each person has their own specific emotional or psychological reason why they choose to lie, when they choose to lie and how they accomplish that goal. Confessions from subjects are also done for selfish reasons. They are not confessing to make you happy (although some will which should immediately make us suspicious as the validity of the confession) but for their

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own personal reasons. The only time a person changes from deception to acceptance is when they in their own mind decide the position of confession is better than the position of deception.

That's what interrogation is all about.

Finally, once all the other parts of the puzzle are in place, the interviewer needs to ask for the confession. We can take the subject up to that point but we also need to tell them what they need to do. In sales or when writing advertising copy, it's time for a "call to action." The buyer or reader of the ad copy is given directions what to do next. We need to do the same for our subject. Two keys for a "call to action" for a confession are very important. First is scarcity and the second is control. The subject must believe that the time for action is fleeting. Nothing motivates people to action unless they think the opportunity to act is vanishing and may not return. Second, they must believe they are not surrendering but maintaining control by acting. "I think you want to straighten this out now don't you?" "I don't believe you want this to get out of hand and allow the rumors to get started."

"I'm afraid that if you don't take care of this now, I won't be able to help you later."

When interviewing a subject, don't forget to ask for the confession. The person knows they need to act but we need to give them the incentive and instructions on how and when to take that first step.

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