

PROPER INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

This scenario depicts an accurate approach to managing an investigative interview. As before, the Complainant is withholding information; and, is not specific about her complaint. She is also not telling the truth about what is really happening. The real issue is her performance as opposed to an issue of discrimination.

THE CAST

Tracy The employee making the complaint. In her late 20's. Caucasian. She is frequently late to work and remiss in her duties. Many times, she must be reminded of her duties by her supervisor.

Paula People Services Rep. 30-40. She conducts the interview with Tracy.

Alex People Services Rep. 30-40. Minority. He is a third-party observer who takes notes while Paula interviews Tracy.

Announcer Male or female. Sets the stage and reinforces key points.

CONTEMPORARY MUSIC UP.

Fade up from black into WS/MS angles of Paula and Alex greeting Tracy. Tracy appears to be nervous and a little on her guard. Paula is carrying an employee information packet, Series 15, as well as Tracy's complaint file folder.

Announcer

Successful investigators create a comfortable atmosphere for the interviewee. The process begins by making an appropriate, professional introduction.

Let's see how Paula better handles her greeting with Tracy this time around.

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Paula
(warmly)

Hi Tracy. I'm Paula Scott. I'll be conducting the investigation of your complaint.

Tracy

Hello.

Paula

I'd also like to introduce Alex Jones...who's working with me today.

Alex extends his hand to Tracy.

Alex

Pleased to meet you, Tracy.

Tracy

Same here.

Paula

Alex will basically be taking notes so I can give you my full attention...and concentrate on listening to what you have to say. Okay?

Tracy

Okay.

Paula
(upbeat and friendly)

Why don't we move to a private room where we can talk more openly.

Tracy nods in agreement as Paula and Alex lead her through the corridors of United headquarters. Sound fades down and under the Announcer as he/she sets the stage. Paula, Alex and Tracy continue to ad lib chit-chat

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dialogue as they walk.

Announcer

When investigating a complaint, you are responsible for effectively managing the expectations of the employee who initiated the complaint. That means, you must make a clear effort to explain United Airlines' role in investigating and resolving the complaint.

In addition, you must also make sure that the employee making the complaint clearly understands the procedures that you must follow in order to fairly evaluate the complaint.

Watch closely to see how Paula skillfully handles the investigative interview with Tracy.

Sound fades back up into dialogue between Paula, Alex and Tracy as they enter their meeting room

Paula
(pleasantly)

Please have a seat, Tracy.

Both Tracy and Paula ease into seats at the round table as Alex closes the door to the room and then joins them at the table.

Tracy

Thank you.

Paula proceeds in a professional manner, maintaining eye contact with Tracy, who is listening intently.

Paula

Before we begin, Tracy...I want you to know that we take all complaints seriously at United Airlines. We believe that all employees have the right to come to work in an environment that's free from harassment and discrimination...and one that supports our corporate values.

It takes a lot of courage to come forward with an issue.

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Our goal is to conduct a prompt, thorough and objective investigation. Do you have any questions before we start?

Tracy

No.

Tracy adjusts her posture and sits up straight in her chair.

Paula

Tracy, it's important that you maintain confidentiality about what we discuss here today. I'm sure you can understand that we need to protect everyone's privacy, including yours.

Tracy nods in agreement.

Paula (cont'd.)

So, it's very important that you not talk to anyone about what we discuss. Okay?

Tracy

All right.

Paula

I also want to assure you that we will speak only to those people who may have information that will assist us in investigating your complaint.

Tracy
(cautiously)

Okay.

Paula glances at Alex, then back to Tracy.

Paula

Also, do you understand that anyone who files a complaint in an investigation is protected against retaliation?

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Tracy
(*unsure*)

I guess so.

Paula

If, at any time, you think anyone is retaliating against you, please come to me, any supervisor or anyone in the People Division immediately...so we can address the situation. Okay?

Tracy

Okay.

Paula

Tracy, are you familiar with United's Zero Tolerance philosophy?

Tracy

Yes. I've heard about it.

Paula

Then, do you understand that any form of harassment or discrimination will not be tolerated at United Airlines?

Tracy

Yeah.

Paula

Okay.

Paula opens her folder to review Tracy's complaint.

Paula (cont'd.)

Tracy...specifically...your complaint states that you're being discriminated against by your supervisor, Kevin.

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Please tell me on what basis do you think you're being discriminated against?

Tracy
(*Shrugging her shoulders*)

I think he treats me different because I'm a woman.

Paula

How does he treat you differently?

Tracy

Just the way he talks to me and looks at me.

Paula

What exact words does he say or what exactly does he do to make you feel this way?

Tracy

Well, it just seems like as a supervisor, he doesn't treat me right.

Paula

When you say "as a supervisor, he doesn't treat you right," can you be more specific?

Tracy
(*fidgeting in her seat*)

Well, I don't know. Things at work just don't seem fair.

Paula
(*with sensitivity*)

What "things" are happening that are causing you to feel that it's unfair?

Tracy

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Like, I get all of the rotten work assignments.

Paula

What work assignments are those?

Tracy scrunches her face in disgust.

Tracy

You know...sweeping gates and working the pit...stuff like that.

Paula

Who else in your area gets those assignments?

Tracy

I don't know. It seems like it's only me.

Paula

Is it only you or does it just "seem like" it's only you?

Tracy

I can't speak for others in my work group, but I know it's happening to me!

Paula

Well, tell me...how are work assignments are delegated?

Tracy slouches in her chair.

Tracy

Well, like I said...the men get all the good assignments
...and I get all the crappy ones.

Paula

(curiously)

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Can you tell me what the good assignments are?

Tracy
(hedgingly)

Uhm, I can't think of any right now.

Paula

Are there other women in your area?

Tracy

Yeah.

Paula

How many?

Tracy

3 or 4.

Paula

In your opinion, how are they treated by Kevin?

Tracy
(looking down at the table)

I'd rather not say. You'd have to ask them.

Paula

Okay. What are their names?

Tracy
(hesitantly)

Susan Johnson...Janice Baker...and, Kelly Foreman.

Alex notes each name, then nods to Paula to continue.

Paula

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Tracy, help me get a clearer picture of why you feel this way. Tell me, specifically, what have you observed or experienced in your area that makes you feel you're being treated differently?

Tracy
(defiantly)

Well, I know I'm being treated differently. I can't speak for anyone else...and, I really can't talk about it anymore. I've said too much already.

Paula
(coaching for an answer)

Tracy, we need your help. There may be others in the workplace who feel the way you do.

Tracy glances up at Paula.

You've decided to come forward...which takes a lot of courage. And, you've come this far...now, in order to address your complaint, we need to get to the facts.

We need your cooperation to do this...and, it's your responsibility to cooperate in a company investigation.

Do you understand?

Tracy
(sheepishly)

I guess so.

Paula
(coaxingly)

Good. Then, can you tell me, specifically...why do you think you're being treated differently than men in your department?

Tracy

Well, I just don't think Kevin likes me. He's always harassing

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me.

Paula

What do you mean when you say he's harassing you?

Tracy

(loosening up)

Well, like yesterday...he asked me to put away supplies after briefing. He doesn't ask any of the men to put away supplies.

Paula

What else?

Tracy

(freely)

I don't know...just that he's always on my back about something. My performance...or coming in late. No one else is treated this way!

Paula

(inquisitively)

Why do you think he's always critiquing your performance?

Tracy

(mockingly, then with contempt)

He says I need to improve...that I take too long with the assignments I'm given. But, I do the same as everyone else in my area. He's been on my case since I've been in this department!

Paula

How long has that been?

Tracy

About two years.

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Paula

Have you talked with Kevin or anyone else about your concerns?

Tracy

No. It won't help. I don't trust anyone at United. Besides, I didn't think anyone would believe me.

Paula

(sincerely, without smiling)

Well, as I told you earlier...we take all complaints seriously. And, that's why we're having this conversation.

Tracy eyes dart away from looking at Paula.

Paula (cont'd.)

We need to gather more information. That means, we may need to talk with some of your co-workers as well as Kevin in order to complete the investigation.

Tracy

(nervously)

Are you going to use my name when you talk to the other people?

Paula

(comfortingly)

We'll be mindful of not disclosing your name, but once we share the nature of the complaint...they may be able to identify you.

Tracy

Oh, great!

Paula

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Tracy, it's important for you remember that United has a strict policy against retaliation.

Again...if, at any time, you feel like someone may be retaliating against you because you filed this complaint, please let one of us or a supervisor know immediately. Okay?

Tracy

Okay.

Paula
(reassuredly)

Thank you for cooperating, Tracy. It will be helpful for the investigation.

Tracy

Okay. I hope so.

Paula

Tracy, we can't guarantee the outcome will be what you want...but, tell me how you'd like to see this resolved?

Tracy

I just want Kevin to stop harassing me. I want to be treated like everyone else in my department.

Paula

Okay. Is there anything else you want to share with us...or any questions before we close the meeting?

Tracy

No. I don't think so.

Paula pulls a form from her file and hands it to Tracy.

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Paula

Okay, then... In order to be very sure we've captured all of your issues, we need you to complete this questionnaire which recaps what you've shared with us today.

Tracy takes the form and reviews it as Paula talks.

Paula

Be as specific as you can when answering the questions on the form. And, in your own words, write down exactly what you just told us.

Tracy

Should I fill it out now?

Paula

We'd like for you to...while it's fresh in your mind...but if you'd rather take it home and bring it back tomorrow morning...that's fine, too.

Tracy begins to fill out the form. EFFECT time lapse where Tracy hands completed form back to Paula.

Paula

Once again, Tracy...we'd like to reiterate the importance of maintaining confidentiality about our discussion here today.

This will help protect the integrity of the investigation.

Tracy

Okay.

Paula pulls another form from her folder and hands it to Tracy.

Paula

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I just need you to sign a statement of confidentiality to make sure you understand your obligation.

Tracy reviews the document, then signs it and hands it back to Paula.

Paula

We'll keep you informed about the status of the investigation.

Tracy

Okay.

Paula

We may need to speak with you again before closing the investigation...in case we need more information.

Tracy

Sure.

Paula

Remember, you're protected against retaliation...so please contact one of us immediately if you encounter any problems. Okay?

Tracy

Okay.

Paula

And, if anyone approaches you and tries to discuss with you anything related to this investigation...tell them it's a confidential matter and you're not at liberty to talk about it.

Tracy

All right.

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Paula and Alex both stand up, followed by Tracy. Alex moves to open the door. Paula pulls an employee information packet from her folder to hand to Tracy.

Paula

Thank you, Tracy. Here's a packet which gives you information about United's values and our zero tolerance philosophy. Feel free to call Alex or me if you have any questions or concerns.

Tracy

Okay. Thanks.

Paula

Here's my card.

Paula hands Tracy a card as Alex pulls a card from his pocket.

Alex

And, here's mine. We'll be in touch!

Paula shakes hands with Tracy, followed by Alex. Tracy exits the room.

Dip to black, then back up into recapping montage of clips from within the scene.

DISSOLVE TO GRAPHIC summation of key points to remember.

Announcer

As you've just seen, Paula and Alex demonstrated an effective approach for handling an investigative interview.

As you conduct your investigations, keep in mind the key steps they used to complete the interview successfully:

*Build graphic recap of key points. Headline:
The Successful Investigation Approach*

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Announcer

- Open the meeting with a confident statement that details company expectations and procedures for conducting an investigation.
 - Spend time setting the parameters for a proper investigation.
 - Provide an Employee information booklet, containing United Airlines Policy on Harassment and Discrimination, to the employee who is making the complaint.
 - Ask appropriate, open-ended questions that begin with general topics and gradually shift to focus on specific issues.
 - Take notes with the expectation of subpoena and legal involvement.
 - Avoid promises of confidentiality by the company.
 - Handle the investigation of the complaint in a timely manner.
 - Maintain a neutral, open, honest and organized disposition.
- and
- Establish a proper closure to the meeting, leaving the door open for future contact with the interviewee.

By following these steps, you can make sure that each and every investigation is handled in accordance with United Airlines standards.

MUSIC UP.

Fade to black.

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