

After the Confession

A great opportunity to gather intelligence is just after they confess.

Negotiations were over. We had ourselves a new car. Chris, the salesman, was clearly relieved he'd made the sale, even though it took several trips (three to be exact) to the boss's office. The atmosphere in his office was now markedly different from just a few moments ago during his pitches. He was more talkative about unrelated things. His body language opened as he leaned forward offering us a plethora of food and drink. Chris was completely unguarded, near slaphappy it seemed. If there was ever a time to find out about the car business, it was now.

So I asked a few innocent, he thought, questions. Just like the kind I'd posed to poachers after they confessed. I figured if they gave up their secrets maybe Chris would "confess" some of his. It was worth a try. Leaning in over his small desk and with a slight smile, I gave a very large sigh. It's an old nonverbal trick conveying whatever just happened was finished. And it worked. He sighed then leaned back in his chair.

"So you like negotiating?" I asked. "Oh yeah, but I only go (counteroffer) three times max. Some guys go seven but that's too much. I'm

no puppet," Chris said, now really confident leaning way back in his swivel chair hands clasped behind his head. I told him I'd always thought the best time to buy a car was during bad weather. You know, does a bored salesman really equal a good deal?

"Sure does," he said showing a huge smile, "for me." He said car salesmen know people believe that, so when "I get a tire kicker during a blizzard they're usually mine. I've sold cars to people who came in for a pamphlet during a storm trying to fake me out. I turn it right around on 'em and they never know it." He said they come in for something free and "leave writing me a check for thousands."

Wow! I could not believe he just gave that up to a perfect stranger. If his phone hadn't rang, he'd given me even more. Probably could have got his hunting spot he was so off-guard.

Obviously, Chris was in a good mood because the pressure was off, he'd sold us. I took advantage of that emotional porthole, right after the sale, to ask about otherwise confidential things. Our post sale conversation was quick, but I found out stuff I wouldn't have known about. Chris probably wouldn't talk so freely had I walked in off the street. The sale "high" caused him to briefly let down.

In an enforcement situation, this emotional window or "post confession interview" presents itself right after the confession. But it's not their high we're taking advantage of it's their conciliatory state. The opening is often short, but we can still exploit it. And that's exactly what Pat Horrie did last year in Illinois.

After five days of surveillance using his personal car as burglar bait, Pat finally caught the guy who'd burglarized numerous cars in a number of state parks. The suspect quickly confessed he'd done all of them, even giving up his accomplice. The cases were wrapped up but Pat wondered how it had all started. Maybe there was some intelligence here he could use and pass on. Maybe he could learn just a little more how burglars really think. He was surprised at the burglar's bizarre reason.

"He called me stupid in front of everybody so I followed him," he told Pat after confessing to eight break-ins. Seems the suspect had a run in with a classmate. So infuriated with being put down in front of others, he followed the guy seven miles after class, on his bike, to a heath

club. He wanted to pay him back right there but figured there were cameras. Inside the car, though, was a state park map, with one circled. He knew his next move.

He and his female accomplice checked the Rock Island State Trail just outside Peoria on several occasions after that day, until they finally ran across the classmate's car. When he went on his walk the burglar said, "I paid 'em back." It was so easy he started hitting other cars over two weeks. He knew there were no cameras in the country and he told Pat "he could see a long way."

Tab Turke, an Illinois detective with Morgan County, does post confession interviews too, even when they don't confess. "I always tried to re-interview the suspect after court where I was unable to get a confession to see why he didn't give it up to me. One was the smell of an officer's cologne/breath they disliked and wanted to get away from and even in one case one suspect had been lied to before by the investigating officer and would never trust the investigating officer again, no matter what he or she said."

An opportunity to learn how criminals operate is right after they confess. Consider exploring these areas after everything is over:

- Things the suspect and (accomplice) talked about when planning it out.
- Was there ever a time when you (the offender) realized I knew what happened?
- When you were lying to me what were you thinking?
- What kind of things did you tell your friends about what you did?
- Why did you finally tell me what really happened?
- What kind of precautions did you take from being caught?
- If you had to do this all over again what would you change?
- What kinds of lies did you plan to tell me?

Talk informally without taking written notes. Just actively listen, remember as much as you can, then write it down later. Better yet, tape-record the post confession interview if your laws allow.

If you have done post confession interviews pass them along to me and I'll include them in a future column.



Post confession interviews often reveal why crimes occurred. This burglar suspect said he started breaking into cars because someone called him names.



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COMMUNICATIONS *Newsfront*

TATTLETALES

He'd been at it for 45 minutes when he realized she wasn't going to confess. Too worried about her friends. "She flat out told me early in the interview that she didn't want to tell me, and asked if she had to," park officer **Ryan Leef** a supervisor with Yukon Territorial Government says. "She was protecting them well."

Ryan had quickly broken her on two other park charges. But the theft she and her friends pulled was a problem. She was hanging on but Ryan didn't give up an easy thing to do because a 45-minute interrogation is a long time. He finally convinced her to cough up two names. There were still more involved and what got her to come completely clean with the names was Ryan's appeal to her conscience:

If my friend were sitting alone in the RCMP interview room, being questioned about something I was involved in, I would feel bad, I would want the officers to know my name so my friend isn't dealing with it alone, I think they are feeling horrible for you right now, and I think they want to help, the only way they can help is if you tell me who they are, I'll call them, and they'll help you and everyone will feel better about this.

Ryan said she shrugged and slumped forward. It was time to get the theft confession:

I talked to my partner before I came here, and he was talking about a theft at Twin Lakes that was very similar, and he told me I should ask you about that, now I don't think you had anything to do with that, unless I'm reading you wrong...

"She was shaking her head before I even finished the sentence," Ryan explained, when she leaned even further saying, "No we had nothing to do with that theft, just Fox Lake." Of course, no theft at Twin Lakes happened. Brilliant.

For those tall game wardens out there, **Kevin Holland** from Montana says he intentionally uses his 6'5" frame as a communications tool. He likes to take control of situations by strategically blocking or facing the sun. "When I want them to feel the pressure, I make 'em squint by putting the sun behind me. If I want to tone it down, the sun's behind me or to the side," Kevin says. Even though he's tall, he says anyone can do it. Even it means standing on a nearby curb, rock, or hillside. "It works, I've been doing it for years," said Kevin.

The poacher eventually told conservation police officer **John Van Zant** he never should have put it in the paper.

"It" was the incriminating photo he gave the outdoors newspaper showing he and his buddy with 25 bass they'd caught in an afternoon. Too bad the limit in Illinois is 6. To get the confession John says he "played up the length limit really big" even though no length limit actually existed.

John was very pragmatic about his approach knowing he had no case unless they told him. And he needed a lot. "First they had to say they were fishing, then in Illinois, then in Fulton County, then to actually catching those 25 fish on the same day," says John. Quite a task but he did it. And he did it by what John calls tapping into his personality.

"Everybody has stuff that works for them. To me it's not making the thing a big deal. That's my personality and it works for me," John stressed. When it was time to give the poachers their "out", John empathized to one of them he hoped he hadn't caught all 25. "Oh no, I would never do that," the poacher replied with wide eyes according to John. "I caught about 15 and he caught the rest."

Another dead-end case solved due to spunk.

Submit your Tales directly to Mr. Baile with your name, agency, and photo if available.

Bits of Communication

Status

People reveal their inner attitudes through body language. Those holding hands with themselves while walking give away they probably command some position of authority in life. An alternate view is preoccupation or contemplation depending on the situational context. Someone who feels they are superior to you may be more difficult to successfully interrogate. To break this gesture shake their hand or give them something.

You people all look alike

The phrase may actually have some weight to it according to Christian Meissner. Meissner, a psychology professor at the University of Texas, says we're 1.5 times more likely to misidentify someone from another race and 1.4 times more likely to correctly identify someone from our own. Researchers saw direct evidence of the "cross-race effect" in the recent Duke Lacrosse assault case. The African American accuser picked out the three white men from photo lineups but later admitted to authorities they all "looked the same."

I did it...No I did it

Two hundred people confessed falsely they had kidnapped Charles Lindbergh's baby in 1953. One of the main ingredients found in voluntary false confession – no external pressure from police – is a craving for attention.

Catsup gets confession

He knew he did it but how was the Illinois officer going to get him to say it. So he ventured a little white lie in the form of a soy sauce ketchup concoction, wrapped in a spent rifle bullet all packaged up in an evidence bag for a nice display at the suspect's kitchen table. When the poacher examined it closely, the CPO remembers him sheepishly asking how much trouble a guy would be in for killing that deer. His confession followed.

Quarterly Quote

Introduce yourself, shake their hand, look them in the eye, linger for just a moment longer, and be sincere.

*- Iowa conservation officer
Burt Walters on being professional*

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