

Master the Art of Leading SME Witnesses

Adapted from the LinkedIn article “Leading the Witness: Interview Tactics to Draw Out Details from SMEs”

Apply these sample questions in your next subject matter expert (SME) interview!

Ask Targeted Questions

- Walk me through the step-by-step process a user follows to [accomplish goal].
- What are the key features or capabilities our solution offers to improve [user need]?
- What specific [metrics, data, requirements, etc.] do you look for when evaluating [solution, process, etc]?

Double Back on Hazy Answers

- You mentioned [brief summary], but could you provide more details on [specific aspect]?
- To make sure I fully understand, could you drill down deeper into how [vague topic] works?
- Let’s pause on [unclear point]. Can you clarify exactly what you mean by [term or phrase]?

Rephrase Jargon

- In plain terms, can you explain what [technical term] is and why it matters here?
- When you say [jargon], do you mean [layperson’s rephrase]? Help me understand that better.

Validate Completeness

- I’ve documented [high-level summary]. What key points am I missing?
- To make sure I have this right – I’ve covered [core topics]. What else does the user need to know?
- Before we wrap up, what haven’t we touched on yet regarding [subject]? Anything else I should capture?

Keep this tip sheet handy and try incorporating 1-2 techniques into each SME interview. You’ll be eliciting comprehensive insights in no time!