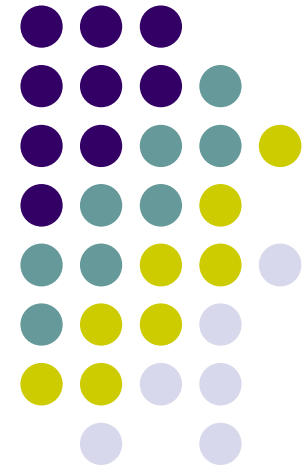


# Observing Decision-Maker Behavior and the Office Environment

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# Major Topics

- Observation
- Sampling
- Recording observation
- Office environment
- STROBE
- Applying STROBE



# Observation (Why?)



- Observation provides insight on what organizational members actually do
- Gain information about decision makers and their environments that is unavailable through any other method
- Helps to confirm what has been found through other methods

# How to Observe Decision Makers Activities:



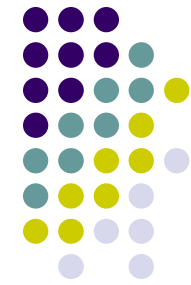
- Guidelines
  - Decide what is to be observed (activities)
  - Decide the level of concreteness of the activities
  - Create categories that adequately capture key activities
  - Prepare appropriate scales, checklists, or other materials for observation
  - Decide when to observe

# Basic Approaches



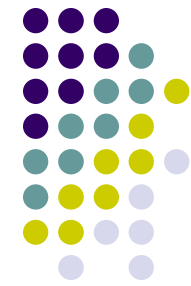
- Two basic approaches to observation are
  - Time sampling
  - Event sampling

# Time Sampling



- Observing at specific time intervals
- Advantages
  - Reducing bias from random observing
  - View of activities that occur frequently
- Disadvantages
  - Gathering data gradually that may not give the entire picture
  - Rare or infrequent data may not be represented

# Event Sampling



- Sampling a single event  
(e.g. Board meeting/Training session)
- Advantages
  - Observe behavior as it clarify
  - Observe an important event
- Disadvantages
  - Takes a great deal of time
  - Misses representative sample of frequent decisions

**Final Conclusion for the analyst is to combine both the sampling methods**

# Body Language



- It is important to observe body language
  - Difficult to do correctly
  - Varies across cultures

# Recording Observations



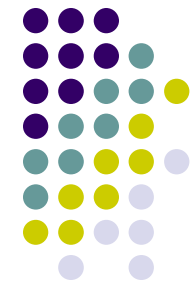
- Systematic techniques for recording observations include
  - Adjective pairs
  - Category systems
  - Checklists
  - Scales
  - Field notes
  - Play scripts

# Adjective Pairs



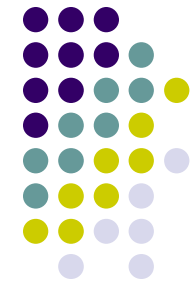
- A popular way to record behavior
- Use adjectives like
  - decisive/indecisive
  - confident/not confident
  - Assertive (forceful) /unassertive
  - calm/excited
  - Articulate (expressive) /inarticulate
  - self-started/unmotivated

# Category Systems



- Determine activities before observations
- Count times behavior occurs
- Category examples
  - Instructs subordinates
  - Questions superior
  - Opens mail
  - Reads external information
  - Processes own information

# Analyst's Play script



- Involves observing the decision-makers behavior and recording their actions using a series of action verbs
- Examples
  - talking
  - sampling
  - matching
  - deciding

# STROBE



- **STR**uctured **OB**servati**ON** of the **E**nvironment
- A technique for observing the decision maker's environment

# STROBE



- Provides a standard methodology and classification for the analysis of the elements that influence decision making
- Other analysts can apply the same framework to the same organization
- Limits analysis to the organization as it exists during the current life cycle stage

# STROBE Elements



- Analyzes seven environmental elements
  - Office location
  - Placement of the decision maker's desk
  - Stationary office equipment
  - Props
  - External objects
  - Office lighting and color
  - Clothing

# Office Location



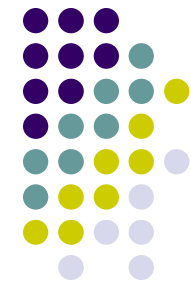
- Accessible offices
  - Main corridors, open door
    - Major traffic flow area
    - Increase interaction frequency and informal messages
- Inaccessible offices
  - May view the organization differently
    - Drift apart from others in objectives

# Placement of the Decision Maker's Desk

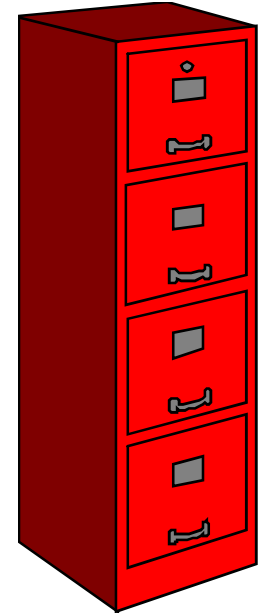


- Visitors in a tight space, back to wall, large expanse behind desk
  - Indicates maximum power position
- Desk facing the wall, chair at side
  - Encourages participation
  - Equal exchanges

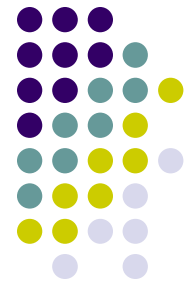
# Stationary Office Equipment



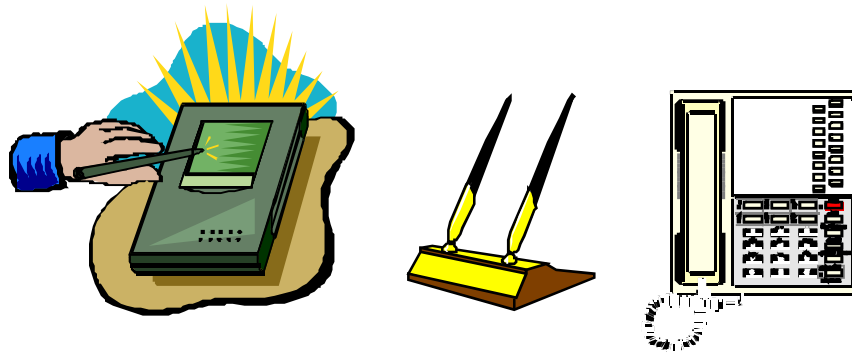
- File cabinets and bookshelves
  - ✓ If not present, person stores few items of information personally
  - ✓ If an abundance, person stores and values information



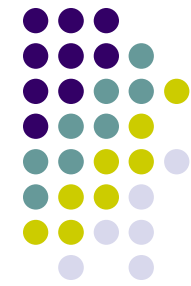
# Props



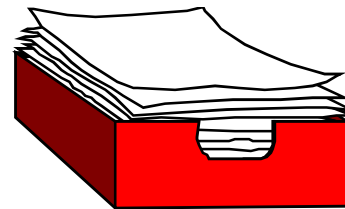
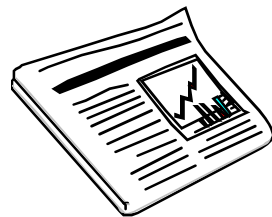
- Calculators
- Personal computers
- Pens, pencils, and rulers
  - If present, person processes data personally



# Trade Journals and Newspapers



- Trade journals or newspapers present
  - indicate the person values outside information
- Company reports, memos, policy handbooks
  - indicate the person values internal information



# Office Lighting and Color



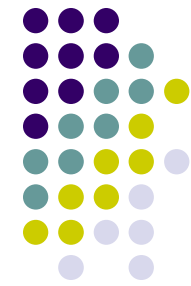
- Warm, incandescent lighting indicates
  - A tendency toward more personal communication
  - More informal communication
- Brightly lit, bright colors
  - Indicates more formal communications (memos, reports)

# Clothing



- Male
  - Formal 3 piece suit - maximum authority
  - Casual dressing (sport jacket/slacks) - more participative decision making
- Female
  - Skirted suit - maximum authority
  - Dress, less formal

# Applying STROBE



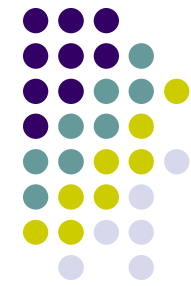
- Applying STROBE includes
  - Analysis of photographs
  - Checklists
  - Anecdotal (subjective/unreliable) list with symbols
  - Observation/narrative comparison

# Analysis of Photographs

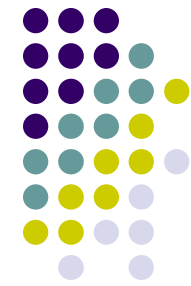


- Advantages
  - Helpful when visits are limited by time, distance, or expense
  - Analyst may focus on pertinent elements
  - May do a side-by-side comparison
  - Photograph may supply details missed in person
  - May be put onto Web for team member viewing

# Drawbacks to Photographs



- Limited to what they can take in
- May be posed, changing the environment of the decision maker

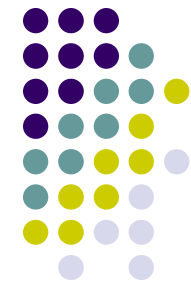


# Checklist/Likert Scale

- Five-point Likert-type scales related to STROBE

|   |   |   |                                  |   |
|---|---|---|----------------------------------|---|
| Office houses many pieces of equipment used for storing information |   |   |                                  |   |
| No storage cabinets in office                                       |   |   | Four or more cabinets or shelves |   |
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4                                | 5 |

# Anecdotal List With Symbols



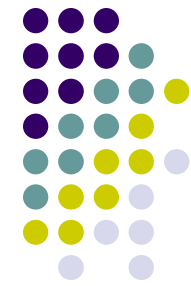
- Five symbols used to evaluate how observation of the elements of STROBE compared with interview results

# Anecdotal List With Symbols



- Five symbols
  - A checkmark, the narrative is confirmed
  - An “X” means the narrative is reversed
  - An oval or eye-shaped symbol serves as a cue to look further
  - A square means observation modifies the narrative
  - A circle means narrative is supplemented by observation

# Observation/Narrative Comparison



- The least structured method
- If analyst is aware of the elements and they are consciously observed, valuable insights can be gained