

work examining the way in which the system operates at present, whether it is manual, automated, or a mixture of both. Techniques for requirements elicitation include interviews, questionnaires, study of documents, observation of people carrying out day-to-day tasks, and assessment of the current computer system if there is one. Each of these techniques is appropriate in particular situations, but to gather all the information needed, a range of elicitation techniques should be used. In the following section of this chapter we provide illustrations of how the techniques of interviewing and questionnaires might be applied in eliciting requirements for the Wheels case study system.

*Interviews.* Successful elicitation of requirements depends on good communication with clients and users, and one of the most effective ways of achieving good communication is through one-to-one interviews. Ideally, a developer should interview everyone in the client organization, from secretaries and office juniors to bosses and managers. However, in a large business this is clearly not practicable, so it is important that those members of staff who are interviewed are a representative cross-section of the people who will be involved in the new system. In the case of the Wheels system development project, the developer should interview at least the owner of the business, the shop manager and one of the mechanics. The opinions of Wheels' customers should also be canvassed, but it is more appropriate to do this using a questionnaire; this is discussed later in this chapter.

The main purpose of an interview at this stage of the system development process is to elicit the interviewee's views on how the business functions at present, any problems that arise from this and ways in which the interviewee thinks that things could be improved. In order to gather as much relevant information as possible, the interview must be well prepared. It is useful to produce a plan that is given to the interviewee in advance, stating the time and place of the interview, the kind of topics that will be covered and any documents that the interviewee should bring along. Figure 2.1 shows the plan for an interview with Annie Price, the shop manager at Wheels. The interviewer is Simon Davis, a system developer on the Wheels project.

A plan, such as the one in Figure 2.1, helps to put the interviewee at their ease and provides a basic structure for the interview. However, it is important that such a plan should not dominate the process of the interview, as valuable information may be lost if the interviewer sticks rigidly to pre-prepared questions. A good interviewer will direct an interview, but not dominate it and, most importantly, will always be prepared to listen to what the