

# THE EXCHANGE



## FROM HANDSHAKES TO CONTRACTS

Just a few generations ago, commitments were solidified with a handshake. That very act of joining hands and pumping energy into the other person was the way of signing on the line. Personal and business promises were finalized with palms pressed together and eyes locked upon one another.

Were all promises kept? Of course not. People have been breaking promises since Eve gave the fruit to Adam. Yet our grandparents and great grandparents would talk about the bond that a handshake meant.

What has happened to the handshake? Now we have multi-page documents that most people without a law degree are unable to understand. Are all these written promises kept? Of course not! Now we spend months, even years petitioning the courts to force us to keep our promises.

Something has gone very wrong here. While it may be improbable that we can change the way corporate America conducts big business, we certainly can monitor the way we do business in corporate America. How? We can keep our promises. Here are some guidelines to help:

- Do not make an idle promise. Think it through before you verbalize it. Extroverts are especially challenged here.
- Be specific. Instead of saying, "Don't worry, I'll take care of it," describe exactly what you will do, such as, "I will call the supplier today and open a dialogue to find a solution and get back with you this afternoon." Remember, generalities lead to misunderstandings and perceptions that promises have been broken.

- Make a note of it. When you tell someone you will follow through, use a system of recording that will serve to remind you of your promise.
  - Keep the small promises. Breaking a lunch appointment because something better came along can desensitize you into thinking it's okay to break some promises.
  - Show genuine appreciation when someone keeps a promise with you, no matter how insignificant.
  - Don't make promises that you do not have control over. Telling your child that you will take him skiing this month may get broken if the weather is warm, unless you are willing to fly to Switzerland.
  - Before you go to sleep each night, count your blessings and your kept promises. You'll sleep better.
  - Keep promises to a very important person – you! We think we get away with breaking a promise to ourselves; after all, no one knows...except the individual who motivates us and is responsible for making us a better person.
- January is a typical month to make promises to ourselves as well as being the beginning of a new year for business. Shake some hands. Lock onto some eyes. Mean what you say. Keep your promises.



## What Our Clients Are Saying

"Thanks for your expertise and constructive criticism in getting me 'groomed' for my talk...It sure made a difference. [I] received several compliments and have been asked to give talks on two more topics. "

Mary Duffy, Chattanooga TN

"This type of [sales] training is extremely valuable. Things that I have learned over 15-20 years are all compacted into one place."

Bill Gilbert, Chattanooga TN



## JANUARY 2001

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

THE REPUTATION WITHIN YOU	2
ASK THE EXPERTS	2
TLC EXCEEDS 2000 GIVE BACK	2
LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG	3
WHEN TO MAKE A PROMISE	3
A DREAM VERSUS A PROMISE	4
FEATURED SERVICE	4

**Perform without fail what you resolve.**

*Benjamin Franklin*

### LOOKING AHEAD:

- ♦ The February newsletter will focus on *Enthusiasm & Passion!*
- ♦ Fun-filled retreats for your group



### Quick Tips:

- When you are giving up something (like chocolate), tell everyone.
- When you are striving to get something, tell only those who will support you.

Great minds have purposes, others have wishes.

Washington Irving



To learn more about it, click here!

## THE REPUTATION WITHIN YOU

By Ben Cairns, M.A.

Dr. Nathaniel Brandon once said, "your self-esteem is the reputation you have with yourself." I believe that your reputation is related to the goals that you set for yourself and how you deal with them. Following through on goals lays the foundation of who you are and how you will live your life.

I've done a lot of reading and experimentation with the trial and error method over the years (sometimes the "trial and terror" method!), so perhaps my experiences can save you some time. Here are some pointers for increasing the odds of your success in goal setting:

- List your values. Establish your priorities. Write a personal mission statement. Reveal to yourself who you really are.
- Dare to dream. Write down all of the things that you'd like to do and accomplish in your life. Carefully evaluate your priorities and decide what is most important. Then, list the goals you will achieve.
- For each goal, answer this question in detail: "What are the reasons I MUST accomplish this goal?"
- Make sure you have goals representing all of the major areas of your life (career, personal, spiritual, relationships, financial, physical health, mental/intellectual).
- Get feedback and advice from the people you respect and trust the most. Ask them to support you by holding you accountable for following through.
- Establish a timeline and intermediate milestones so that you can measure and track your progress. Keeping a journal or chart can be very helpful.
- Use daily visualizations to sharpen and deepen your motivation. Include the emotions you will experience with success. Yogi Berra said "nothing succeeds like success!" Get a taste of it and you'll agree.
- Place visual reminders of your goals where you will see them on a daily basis.
- Review your goal list on a regular basis.

Above all, hold yourself absolutely accountable. Remember that each decision point is the litmus test of your personal integrity. Whenever it is uncomfortable to stay the course, congratulate yourself for creating and setting goals that expand your experiences and make you a better person. Build your self-esteem through resolve and accomplishment. The reputation within you depends upon it!



## ASK THE EXPERTS



Dear TLC,  
I have a hard time with my communication goal because I keep slipping back into my old behaviors. My goal is to stop being sarcastic in ways that can hurt people. There are times when I find it all too easy to really "zing" someone else, especially if they are doing something stupid or that bothers me. Once I get started, it just automatically comes back and it seems impossible to stop. What can I do to stop being so sarcastic?  
-Just sign me "Razor Tongue"

Dear Razor,  
Once you get started with your sarcasm it is hard to stop because your old habits are still automatic. What has worked for many of our clients is to adopt a "no exceptions" policy for at least one year so that they can establish new habits. That means that as soon as you catch yourself, you stop immediately. Better yet, don't even start. Think about it like you are quitting smoking. Having just one or two cigarettes starts the relapse into the old pattern. Pretty soon you're right back where you were before, or worse. So, stop completely!

Although there may be times where you are probably in the right and the sarcasm could give you the "one-up," in the long run you'll be better off if you exercise control.

## TLC EXCEEDS 2000 GIVE BACK

You may recall that TLC was awarded Small Business of the Year by the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce. We decided to give back to our community 2000 times in the year 2000. We are thrilled to announce that we were able to reach 84,734 people through our give-back program including:

- Parents through parenting skills workshops
- Police officers through a free seminar
- Public school children through drug awareness programs
- Single adults through a free seminar
- Teachers through free workshops
- Friends of clients through free coaching sessions
- And a host of people through radio and television where we were able to give no-nonsense communication tips

We thank you, our clients, for the privilege of reaching out, lifting up and giving back!

## LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG

By Vincent Ivan Phipps, B.S.

How often do we make promises to keep a secret only to later "let the cat out of the bag"? As you may know, the meaning of this idiom translates to telling something that you are not supposed to.



This idiom originated in the Middle Ages. After the Muslims invaded Southern Europe, they declared eating pork illegal. Even though strict laws prevented the selling or consumption of pork, it was still in high demand. To satisfy the desire for pork without being subjected to severe penalties, pork was sold secretly on the open market by being stuffed and covertly sold in bags. (This is where the expressions *Pig in a Poke* and *Pig in a Sack* came from!)

Peddlers who wanted to make a quick buck would substitute the expensive pig meat with guess what? Cat! Only when a suspicious buyer would open the bag for inspection was it revealed that the content was a cat - and a scam. They literally "let the cat out of the bag."

Start this year off right! Make sure that you follow through on each commitment and remember not to "let the cat out of the bag."

## WHEN TO MAKE A PROMISE

How often have you said to someone, "I give you my word" or "I promise" only to later apologize because your commitment was unfulfilled?

To ensure that your *Talk Is NOT Cheap*, make a promise when:

### 1. You can control the outcome.

Whatever you promise, make sure that it is rooted in your personal accountability instead of being dependent on external circumstances. For example:

- Know your limitations. Do not promise a potential customer a specific delivery date before confirming with your team or the supplier. Instead, promise to get back to him/her with a delivery date.
- Speak for yourself. Unless you have authorized permission to pass along someone else's feelings or comments, comment on what you know you can do and let other people talk for themselves.

- Manage your time. Another way of saying this is "manage yourself." Broken promises are often the result of poor time management. Do not over-commit by overloading your schedule. Sometimes this means telling people "no." If this is hard for you, look at it this way, it is better to make one person happy, than to disappoint two.

### 2. You want the outcome.

The likelihood that you will follow through on a promise is proportional to your desire to fulfill it. For example:

- Be honest. Don't tell your spouse you'll lose 10 pounds next year if you really don't want to. Instead, make promises about changing something that will make you happy.
- Be clear. Instead of saying, "I promise I'm going to get my paper work in on time," state exactly when it will be turned in, then schedule it in your planner.
- Be tenacious. **Giving** your word is perhaps the most admirable thing you can do. **Keeping** your word is perhaps the most commendable! When you make a promise, continue to do whatever is necessary to fulfill your commitment. Don't give up or back out just because things gets a little tough for you.

This is the month we traditionally make resolutions/promises about what we will change or start/stop doing. When giving your word, remember to be slow in making a promise, but fast in keeping it.



### Remember to:

- Be informative when making promises. Include specifics such as amounts, dates, etc.
- Keep your promises in front of you and ask yourself how your current activity is keeping your promise.



To say yes, you have to sweat and roll up your sleeves and plunge both hands into life up to the elbows. It is easy to say no, even if saying no means death.

*Jean Anouilh*

The moment one definitely commits oneself, the Providence moves, too. All sorts of things occur to help that would never otherwise have occurred. A stream of events issues from the decision, raising unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way.

*W.H. Murray*



**My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is Heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions are few, my guide is reliable, my mission is clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, diluted, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of adversity, negotiate ... at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in a maze of mediocrity. I won't give up, shut up, let up, or slow up.**

**Robert Moorehead**

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## A DREAM VERSUS A PROMISE

By Beverly Inman-Ebel, CEO



I was recently privy to a conversation among young people who were sharing their dreams of what they would be, things they would possess, and places they would go. Like most Baby Boomers, these professions of hope spiraled me back to my younger aspirations. My journey into my past eventually found me in the attic rummaging through memory boxes.

I found a letter I had written at age fifteen. It was addressed to me. Some of my admonitions to my older self were general in nature reminding me of my desire to make a difference and to value people. Later, my younger self digressed into some promises that might seem petty, at first glance, to the reader. This fifteen year old girl promised to have a swimming pool in her back yard, never own a station wagon, and own enough property that she could go outside and have the privacy of no one being able to see her.

As I folded the ancient letter and returned it to its yellowed envelope, I smiled. She had kept her promises. As I moved forward in time, I realized she had also promised at the age of 18 to learn to play the piano, put herself through college, and one day own her own business. I felt pride as I again knew she had kept these promises.

I reminisced through the year 1999 when she promised herself that she would change her lifestyle, reduce her weight, and improve her health. The loss of 33 pounds and added energy from daily walks allowed me to bound down the stairs with pride and joy.

As I walked my dog, I came down from the clouds that self-congratulation brings and thought of all the dreams that I did not keep to myself. After all, I was going to hang-glide and move to Denver. I remember standing on the ledge of Lookout Mountain where people lift off for hang gliding and realizing that no force on earth could get me to willingly jump off that ledge.



Then it hit me. Those were dreams; not promises. According to the dictionary, a dream is "a wild fancy or hope." A promise is a pledge or "declaration assuring that one will or will not do something."

Promises made to yourself are very powerful. Perhaps the power comes from the fact that the person you made the declaration to never leaves your side; he or she is always there to remind you. Perhaps the power is derived from the passion you felt when you made it.

What promises have you made to yourself? How successful have you been at keeping them? If you haven't made a promise to yourself in some time, search your soul. Make a promise. Keep that promise. Live your dreams!

## FEATURED SERVICE: RETREAT FOR WOMEN

TLC is proud to present "Pass It On," a weekend retreat created by women, for women. It is a time to reflect on our journey in life, to assess where we are now and where we want to be, and to share the wisdom and insights we have gained with other women in order to "Pass It On."

Reserve your weekend today:

- February 16 – 18, 2001
- March 9-11, 2001
- April 6-8, 2001
- April 27-29, 2001

The cost is \$295 per woman or \$255 for a friend registering with you. This includes all events, lodging at Spring Creek Retreat, meals, gratuity, and materials. Check, Visa or MC accepted. Call 1-888-BECAUSE for reservations or a brochure. Visit [www.springcreekretreat.com](http://www.springcreekretreat.com) for a virtual tour of a great get-away spot.

TLC establishes long-term relationships with our clients. If we have helped you or if you believe our approach to change would work for someone you know, please communicate with us by email [[tlc@talklisten.com](mailto:tlc@talklisten.com)] or phone [1-888-232-2873]. We work with individuals and groups on the following subject areas: attitude, listening, body language, voice, leadership, compliments and corrections, behavioral style, teamwork, effective meetings, public speaking, accent reduction and much more!