

# THE EXCHANGE

## INTERVIEWING FOR SUCCESS

By Ben Cairns, M.A.



In today's highly competitive job market you want to make sure that you make the right hiring decisions. Hiring and firing workers is costly, so savings will result from hiring the right person the first time. Questions are an integral part of that process. Asking the right questions at the right times opens up the candidate, gets the right information, and helps you to make the right choice.

Once your candidates have passed the first hurdle of qualification by resume and credentials, it's time to prepare for the interviews. Make a list of questions that will help you assess the ability of the candidates to do the job. If you use your same list of questions during each interview, you'll be able to compare responses.

Because you have a list of great questions, it may be tempting to ask several questions in a row. Resist that temptation! *Ask only one at a time.* Next to the number of the question, write down some key words and phrases to help you recall what was said.

Ask open questions beginning with "How" or "What" to get more information. After asking your how and what questions, focus in on specifics. Make sure that you provide the "setup" information before you actually ask the question.

Because candidates practice responses, you may want to go beyond that first level by asking "What else?" several times to get to the unrehearsed answers. For those of you who have had TLC training, you'll recognize this as a great place to use the "TripleProbe." Be gently persistent to get a better understanding of the candidate.

One common mistake that interviewers make is to start talking if the candidate does

not respond fast enough. Remember that it takes time to think of a response, especially if the answer is candid! Be patient. You can also use the "Power of the Pause" to get the other person to talk. Most people don't like silence, so if you pause long enough, they are more likely to start talking. You can keep them talking and relax them by smiling and making friendly facial expressions that express interest.

Challenge your candidates by setting the stage with a difficult work scenario similar to one that may actually occur. Ask them to describe how they would act. You can ask them to elaborate. Depending on the situation, you may also pose "what if" questions. This type of approach is good for getting a sense of the candidate's skill level, experience, people skills, creativity, flexibility, values, and priorities.

Pay attention to body language and voice. Some nervousness is normal. Look for sudden changes in their body language as you ask questions and as they respond. If you sense that the body language and the answers are not saying the same thing, probe around that issue with additional how/what questions.

Remember to allow enough time for the candidate to ask questions about your company. The interview is a two-way business meeting; each party is assessing the other to find the best match.

Make sure to check the references. You have to be careful about what questions are both acceptable and give you the background information you need. Some questions that have worked well for others include: "So, what would you like to tell me about (the candidate)?" "If you had the chance, would you hire this person back?" "If you could change just one thing about (the candidate), what would it be?"

It is a good idea to get your current people

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## What Our Clients Are Saying

"You've no idea how much of an attitude infusion your e-mail messages are! Thank you so much for your reminders, insights, and quotes."

Kathy Cline-Doten, Atlanta GA

"Thanks for being there for me when I needed you."

Doug Manggrum, Atlanta GA



## JUNE 2001

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### LOOKING AHEAD:

- ◆ **Conflict resolution is the focus of July's newsletter**
- ◆ **Go whitewater rafting with TLC**



## QUICK TIPS:

- When you are being interviewed, ask a few questions. This shows interest and seriousness in the job offering.
- When you are conducting an interview, give the person your undivided attention.

The closest to perfection a person comes is when he fills out a job application form.

Stanley J. Randall



To learn more about it, click here!

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to meet with or help interview the candidate. This fosters a sense of connectedness as well as giving you an avenue to see the candidate through different eyes. If there are any reservations on the part of your staff, it is better to hear them early. Also, ask for staff input on your list of questions!

## INNER-VIEW THE INTERVIEW

By Vincent Ivan Phipps, B.S.



After reviewing someone's resume, looking at their experience and credentials, and progressing to the face to face meeting, it can still be tough to know if you are making the best choice. We recommend taking an inner-view of the interview.

An inner-view is looking at the person's individual traits and what their behavioral style can bring to your team. This involves matching their natural working style with the job responsibilities. For example:

- If the job requires a lot of customer interaction, make sure they have a pleasant speaking style and are personable. The people-oriented extrovert, or "High I" communication style works nicely here!
- If the job has routine and tedious responsibilities, make sure the person has a disposition for this type of job. Although any job can become monotonous, some people prefer only subtle changes. The steady, or "S" style is a good match.
- If the job requires the person to work under pressure or continuously meet deadlines, choose someone who enjoys the fast pace and makes quick decisions. The dominant extroverted style "D" will enjoy task skills.
- If the job requires someone with an eye for the fine points or a fact checker, select someone who likes to scan for meticulous details. The highly compliant "C" fits the bill.

Ideally, every company wants a super employee that is capable of being all things. Realistically, these employees are rare. That's what makes them so valuable when they are found. Before your next interview, create a series of "What if" or "How would you handle..." questions. Keep them consistent

between interviews to compare answers. During your next interview, take the time to conduct an inner-view. It could enhance your outlook!

For more information on behavioral styles, read section 4 in "Talk Is NOT Cheap!" by our CEO, Beverly Inman-Ebel.

## ASK THE EXPERTS



Dear TLC,

I received a promotion that requires me to speak in public. I am good at my job but I get cold feet when I have to do presentations.

I have had this fear for as long as I can remember. I have seen your TLC speakers and you all are terrific! What advice can you give me so I can speak better during presentations to better represent my company and myself?  
-Cold Feet

Dear Cold,

First of all, congratulations on your promotion!

Second, nervousness associated with public speaking is a combination of different things: excessive energy, fear of messing up, need for acceptance, fear of looking or sounding silly, etc. (Am I making you feel better yet?) If you gain control over those feelings, you gain control over yourself. Here are some tips that can help:

### Before the speech:

- Practice! Practice! Practice! The more you do it, the easier it will get.
- Visit the location before your speech to familiarize yourself with the location and room set up.
- Arrive early and greet attendees. Familiar faces are easier to talk to.

### During the speech:

- Move around. Remember this equation: MOTION = EMOTION!
- Look the audience in the eye, establish the human connection.
- Smile. Look relaxed even if your stomach says otherwise (Fake it until you make it!).

Apply these tips and hopefully the warmth you establish with your audience will also warm your feet! For additional information about how to become a better public speaker, contact us at 1-888-BECAUSE, or visit our website: [www.talklisten.com](http://www.talklisten.com) and look for our training module: *Y.E.S. You, the Effective Speaker!*

## EATING HUMBLE PIE



What is **Humble Pie**? The meaning is enlightening so let's start with the pie's main ingredient, humility!

If you have heard of this idiom, "*having to eat humble pie*," you know it means to lower your pride and/or ego. Its origin dates back to the Middle Ages when eating *umble* pie was something people really did. The word *umble* comes from Latin meaning *lumbulus* or *loin*. *Umble pie* was an inexpensive meal consisting of fatty remains of meat. Because it was cheap to prepare in large portions, it could provide food for many people for a few days.

Due to unfortunate circumstances, when the well-to-do had to cut back on eating lavish meals to eating less expensive and not as fancy foods, they would prepare a batch of *umble pies*. As word spread that a once prominent family was subjected to eating the food of commoners, it was said they were humbled. Over time the word *humble* was substituted for *umble* and people started calling *umble pie* "*humble pie*" because of what it symbolized.

Eating *humble pie* sometimes is a good thing. Remember that by having even a small slice of *humble pie*, you can keep your foot out of your mouth!

## PREPARING FOR THE BIG DAY

Your company has just posted a job opportunity that excites you. From the description, you know you really want this job. Your resume is ready to go and you have been scheduled for that all-important interview. Every time you think about it, your stomach knots up into a ball. You're an experienced professional, so the butterflies may take you by surprise. What can you do to prepare yourself for the big day?

- Talk to someone in that department to gain understanding of the culture.
- Think of examples in your experiences that match with the skill-set outlined in the posting.
- Determine which characteristics you possess that will be an asset for this job.
- Verbalize (don't just think about it) what contributions you can make to the success of this position.
- Hold an interview with yourself in front of a full-length mirror.
- Practice answering some questions making sure that you do answer the question without over-talking the subject.

- Think positively!
- Visualize yourself in that position every time you think about it.
- Create 2-3 questions to ask the interviewer.
- Repeatedly affirm, such as, "I am very relaxed and confident during the interview."
- Eat healthy food and get a good night's rest the night before.

Most importantly, remember that before you can get others to believe in you, you must believe in yourself!

## GETTING THEM TO RELAX

How many times have you interviewed someone who was sitting very formally, stammering out an answer while red blotches spread across their neck? You realize that they are nervous, but many times these nervous behaviors make it more difficult for you to assess their ability. You may overlook an inadequate response because you chock it up to nerves. Their nervousness may even encourage you to think that they really want the job and would be thrilled to work for you. That can be flattering, even to a healthy ego.

Take the first five to ten minutes of the interview to get them to relax. There are numerous things you can do including:

- Join them in the seating area rather than conducting the interview behind your desk of authority.
- Begin the conversation with a generic social topic such as the weather, traffic, a hobby or pastime you enjoy.
- Model a relaxed body posture by leaning back into your chair with your legs casually crossed.
- Tilt your head to look less intimidating.
- Smile.
- Use an occasional casual gesture such as touching your face with your hand or scratching your ear or arm.
- Hold the interview in a neutral territory such as a small conference room.
- Go for a short walk with them as you talk.

By striving to relax the interviewee, the process will be less painful for both of you and you'll get to know the person better. Remember, 85% of people who don't stay with the job leave because they are uncomfortable with the people, not the task.



## During an Interview Remember to . . .

- Use **StartProbes (How/What)**.
- Be comfortable with **pauses**.
- Demonstrate an **open posture**.

## Questions that are Illegal in Most States:

- **Age (under-age and over-age questions)**
- **If they have children or have plans to have children**
- **Ages of children**
- **Years of graduation**
- **Marital status or marital plans**
- **What their spouse does for a living**
- **Religion**
- **National origin**
- **Sexual orientation**
- **If they have any kind of disability (you can only ask if they can perform the duties of the job that you describe)**
- **Political affiliations**



**Hire the best people and then delegate.**  
*Carol A. Taber*

**The person who knows how will always have a job. The person who knows why will always be his boss.**  
*Diane Ravitch*

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## EXCEPTIONAL EXITS

By Beverly Inman-Ebel, CEO



Good employees leave. Bad employees leave. While one may cause a sense of great loss and the other relief, both should have something in common...an

exceptional exit interview.

Never will an individual be more candid than on their way out. Even if they have an axe to grind, we can learn from the message. In the last two decades I've been told I was too tough, too calm, too spontaneous, and too controlling. I found agreement with each person, and worked to become better by being tough yet fair, planning in advance, and sharing the decision making process with the team.

Sometimes we think we know the reason the person chose to leave: a new mother decides to take on that role full-time; a spouse gets transferred out of state; the competitive job market makes a financial offer your company cannot match; they didn't fit in with the work team; or they hit the proverbial promotional ceiling. Even if you know, listening to them teaches you how to be a better leader. You have a wonderful opportunity to learn from someone who knows the job, knows you, and knows there will be no consequence from talking about feelings.

A great opening question is, "What are the reasons that caused you to decide to leave?" Every time they give you a reason, come back with, "What else?" I find the depth of understanding comes from the third or fourth reason. Be comfortable with pauses because they may need time to think that deeply. After all, most people are satisfied with receiving only one reason.

Other helpful questions are, "What did you like about the job?" and "What needs to change about this job?" Again, remember to

respond with, "What else?"

If your company is large, you probably have someone from Human Resources to conduct the exit interview. That's safe for all involved, yet there is nothing quite like getting the information and the feelings first hand.

I've lost many more good people than bad. I'm not even convinced I've ever had a "bad" employee. Frequently, the exit interview ends with watery eyes and a hug. Good, bad, or in-between, I have grown from each exit interview. The tougher they are, the more important it is to have them. My best friend frequently tells me that, "Only your best friend will tell you there's a booger in your nose." I disagree. An exiting employee will also tell you. Sometimes, knowing is the only way to come clean. There is only one way to exit and that is to interview. Ask, listen, improve, and live your dreams!

## NATIONAL VICE-PRESIDENT TITLE FOR OUR CEO

On June 9, 2001 in Detroit, Beverly Inman-Ebel was inducted as the National Vice-President of Membership for the National Association of Women Business Owners. We thought you might want to know!!



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!

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