

THE EXCHANGE

This issue's featured subject is "Interviewing."

ALWAYS CHECK THE REFERENCES

Ben Cairns, M.A.

There are many horror stories about people who were hired without a background or reference check. Let's say you are one of the employers who exercise due diligence before making the final offer and inking the employment agreement. How do you go about being fair, legal, and thorough? Here are some quick tips that have worked well for many of our clients when making a reference check:

- ❑ Identify yourself and the reason for the call.
- ❑ Ask if this is a convenient time to talk for ten or fifteen minutes.
- ❑ Be specific about who gave the reference and what kind of position they are applying for.
- ❑ Ask "What" and "How" questions to cast a wide "information net". These questions are intentionally broad in order to allow room for any type of answer, positive or negative. Also, if you get too specific, you might cross the line on legality (see the article in this newsletter, "Illegal in Most States.")

Here are some examples of questions that you might ask about a Jane Doe applicant:

- ❑ "What can you tell me about Jane Doe?"
- ❑ "How do you describe Jane's interpersonal skills on the job?"
- ❑ "What are Jane's greatest strengths/weaknesses?"
- ❑ "What considerations should I have?"
- ❑ "What would be some important questions for me to ask Jane?"
- ❑ "What do I need to know about Jane Doe



that I haven't asked?"

- ❑ "If you had the opportunity, would you rehire Jane?"
- ❑ "What else would you like to tell me about Jane Doe?"

An old favorite reference question is, "If we gathered all of Jane's coworkers, friends, and family in one room and asked them to name just two words that best describe her, what would those two words be?"

Remember that many people take longer to formulate a response or begin talking than others. Make sure that you offer enough of a pause after you have asked a question. Also, a pause after the other person has offered a short response often leads to their volunteering additional information without you having to ask another question.

Take notes. Listen carefully to the "response lag". A long pause can indicate either thoughtful consideration or that the person may be defensive. If they seem reluctant to answer a question, be sensitive to the possibility that there is something that they may not be willing or able to share. And, that could be significant.

Follow up with references as soon as you get them. Whether or not they are expecting your call tells you if the applicant keeps important people in the loop. The reference call may be the most important call you make. Remember, it is important to make that call before you hire anyone!



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LOOKING AHEAD:

- ♦ The July issue of The Exchange will focus on Speaking Up.

LOOKING BACK:

- ♦ For previous editions of The Exchange, go to our [back issues](#).
- ♦ Re-read the [06/2001](#) edition: Interviewing Skills.

What Our Clients Are Saying

"This is a great newsletter. I have forwarded it to several people."
Carolyn Roberts, Atlanta GA

"As usual, I loved your newsletter this month. Keep up the great work... you may not realize how many people's lives you positively impact."
Michael Warren, Atlanta GA

Hold yourself for a higher standard than anyone else expects of you.

Henry Ward Beecher



It's not who you are that holds you back. It's who you think you're not.

Anonymous

You block your dream when you allow your fear to grow bigger than than your faith.

Mary Manin Morrissey

If we all did the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astound ourselves.

Thomas Alva Edison



To learn more about it, click here!

BUTTERFLIES IN THE STOMACH

Vincent Ivan Phipps, B.S.



Remember the last time you had to sit and be interviewed? Were you nervous? If so, you probably had a weird tingling in your stomach that we commonly call "butterflies in your stomach."

Of course, you know that when you get this feeling you really do not have butterflies in your stomach. So where could this saying have come from? This feeling is actually a gastric condition caused by acids in the stomach. The human body is amazing in how the brain controls different physiological mechanisms when the body is under extreme emotional stress. When you experience strong fear, the nervous system signals many muscles to be ready to act. The "butterflies" are small muscle spasms that surround and control the stomach. This is what causes the "flapping butterfly" sensation. Often we strive to ignore this feeling, but, at a subconscious level, our brains are fully aware of our bodies response.

Here are some suggestions on how to control those butterflies that like to take wing during interviews:

- ❑ Use the Public and Private Attitude Plan (see the First Deposit of Talk Is NOT Cheap!)
- ❑ Eat or drink something prior to the interview. The acids will be less severe if they have food to digest rather than eating away freely at your stomach lining.
- ❑ Smile and talk slower. Your body can fool your brain into thinking you are more relaxed than you really are. If you send the right messages of control to the brain, the brain will be convinced that you are calmer than you are and the butterflies will go away.

Some people are very qualified, but do not interview well due to nervousness. As an interviewer, you could inadvertently miss hiring the right person just because they were nervous and had a poor interview. If your position allows you to be on the other side of an interview, here are some things you can do to help the interview progress more smoothly:

- ❑ Adapt to the interviewee's style of communication. If they are blunt and bottom-line, emulate that. If they are more

friendly and sociable, be more friendly and sociable in return.

- ❑ Use appropriate body language and tone of voice to model the behavior you prefer to see.
- ❑ Take notes if they are talking freely. Ask open-ended questions if they are too quiet. Remember that we have all experienced the feeling of "butterflies in the stomach." Do what you can to control them in yourself and to help those butterflies fly away when you are the one interviewing someone else!

ILLEGAL IN MOST STATES



Interview questions about:

- ❑ Age (especially over-age questions)
- ❑ Years since graduation from high school
- ❑ Marital status or marital plans
- ❑ Children or plans to have children
- ❑ Ages of children
- ❑ Spouse's occupation
- ❑ Religion
- ❑ National origin
- ❑ Sexual orientation
- ❑ Disability (It is okay only to ask if the interviewee can perform the duties of the job that you describe.)
- ❑ Political affiliations

THE EXCHANGE IS SHORTER THIS SUMMER!

At TLC, we are focusing on our clients, sales, and our own internal balance. For these reasons, this summer, June through August, The Exchange will be a little shorter, giving our contributing authors more time for what is important in life. We hope you will enjoy the shorter version as we have saved the featured articles that you tell us are most important to you. We will return to the normal length this September.



CEO CORNER: "Enter Viewing"

By Beverly Inman-Ebel, MA CCC-SLP



I believe I have been on both sides of interviews as much as anyone I know. As an interviewee, I meet potential customers who have decision-making power. When I succeed in that interview, I become the interviewer and meet the

client(s) for initial assessments.

Through two decades of completing this cycle, I have re-named the process. Because of the power of visuals, I call it "enter viewing." Even before I enter, I begin viewing the environment and people I see along the way. I can sense the culture of the organization long before I engage in the first discussion.

What might the viewing tell me? I look at the cleanliness that give me hints about the pride the workers feel. As I pass through corridors, I note the orderliness of the offices that helps me to understand their time management. I observe how individuals decorate or refrain from decorating their cubicles to let me know how much they feel they own their space.

And those are just the things or objects. People engaged in conversation reveal the atmosphere in which they conduct their work. A caught phrase exposes whether the words are task related, office gossip, or a fragment of a genuine conversation between two caring souls.

When I enter the room of the person that is conducting or receiving the interview, I notice whether the arrangement of furniture is conducive for conversation, as well as whether the individual takes advantage of the space to create warmth or distance. I watch gestures and facial expressions to reveal the emotion behind the words. Sometimes the vocal tone will alert me to information not spoken by the words.

I assume that the other person is also "enter viewing" me. I hope they are. I walk with purpose from the moment I exit my car,

and immediately own the space that surrounds where I sit. I take up maximum space as I get into my listening posture. I realize I am here to learn regardless of whether I am the interviewee or the interviewer. I learn more than others may realize or intend.

When you go to work tomorrow, I hope you will "enter-view" your surroundings and the people you meet along the way. The information you gather will truly help you to be a better employee, supervisor, manager, or leader. We become so satiated within what is familiar that we become dangerously close to becoming unacquainted with it. Come to think of it, "enter-view" when you go home tonight. Look. Listen. Learn. Live your dreams!

FEATURED SERVICES

Receive TLC Training through Telephone Conference Call

Our popular program, "Success Over Stress," or "S.O.S.," has been condensed for a convenient and powerful one-hour teleconference. S.O.S. will be offered as follows:

- Thursday, June 19 at 4 p.m. EDT
- Friday, June 27 at 12 noon EDT

Learn about the physical and chemical changes that your body experiences under stress and how to spot them before damage is done. Know what you can do to release the stress and live a more peaceful life at work and home. The cost is just \$25 and credit cards or company purchase orders are accepted. Enrollment is limited in order to give you an opportunity to ask questions and receive answers that will positively change your life.

To enroll, call TLC at **1-888-BECAUSE** or email us at tlc@talklisten.com.

Intuitive Interviewing

Receive TLC's newest creative program through seminar or coaching. Intuitive Interviewing helps you to uncover the qualities you are looking for in an applicant. Help reduce turnover by finding the right person.



Remember to:

If you are the interviewer:

- Follow up with references.
- Avoid asking questions that are illegal.
- "Enter-view" your surroundings.

If you are the interviewee:

- Help to calm butterflies in your stomach by eating and drinking something prior to the interview.
- Smile and talk slower to fool your body into thinking you are relaxed.
- "Enter-view" your surroundings.

You cannot help but learn more as you take the world into your hands. Take it up reverently, for it is an old piece of clay, with millions of thumbprints on it.

John Updike

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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] 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!