

For Permanent & Positive Change

# The Exchange

FEATURED TOPIC: TAKE BUSINESS SERIOUSLY RATHER THAN YOURSELF

## Is It Your Business or Busyness?

In business, there is a lot of busyness. Seldom is the busyness the serious matters that will make a noticeable difference in your performance or results.

To start taking your business seriously, plan your time. Be sure to include personal contact, strategic planning updates, and action items to accomplish. Plan your work and work your plan. Plan your busyness so it doesn't become your business.

Make a quick list of all the busyness you have occupied your mind and time with today. Bet you cannot remember all of it because it was too mundane and unimportant to take up brain space. So what are the reasons you let it take up space in your calendar?

Time management is really self-management. We do not have control over time. There are sixty minutes in every hour and there is nothing we can do to control or change it. We do have control over ourselves and what we do with those sixty minutes.

Find sixty minutes today to make a plan and then follow it. Your busyness will be replaced with genuine business. Now that is something to take seriously! ❖

## Making a Second Chance Stance!

Vincent Ivan Phipps

How are you doing on those resolutions you made two months ago? Have you slipped back into your old habits already, or are you advancing toward your new goals?

Either way, you've got a chance to make a second chance stance. You can decide to give yourself a new stance or outlook anytime, not just in January!

Three years ago, I thought I was living the right life. I was single, had a great job, nice home, and traveled. I lived for the moment and had few regrets. A near fatal accident when I broke my neck taught me the importance of planning ahead. More importantly, I got a chance to make a second chance stance!

Regardless of where you are right now with the current level of success in your life, follow these tips I learned to make the most of tomorrow by maximizing today:

**1. Give yourself status checks instead of deadlines.** Deadlines are limiting. It seems like we only use them when we get close to them. Instead of looking at your goals quarterly or yearly, look at them weekly. This will keep you more accountable and on track.

**2. Ask more questions.** Ask clients and customers what more you can do to make them happier. Ask your department what are the areas where you can improve. Before your performance reviews, ask your supervisor what advice can be given to make you better at your job. Ask your family what they'd like to see you do more.

**3. Live for Today and Plan for Tomorrow.** For every plan or idea, have a back-up plan. Give yourself retirement options. Invest in different ideas. Create separate accounts for vacations, education, and home, instead of one account for everything.

**4. Invest in Yourself.** Acquire another certification. Learn a new language and practice by going to that culture's restaurants. Read one book a quarter.

Second chances bring the opportunity to create changes in lives. Remember to create, plan, and execute. Put the emphasis on execute. It is better to move slowly in the general direction of your goal than to have a perfect path and stand still.

The best thing about second chances is that you know how to do it differently the second time. Make your second chance stance, today!

"Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there." -Will Rogers ❖

## What Our Clients Are Saying

"By the way, I really enjoyed Therese's article in this month's newsletter about "Dialect Interference." It gave me a good laugh and I can definitely relate. I love the sentence you asked her to say. I'm afraid I'm as guilty as she is in my pronunciation. I guess I'm a G.R.I.T.S. girl too!"

Sharon King, Chattanooga, TN

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Ten-Minute Genius	2
Avoid the Rat Race	2
Dear TLC,	2
Discovering Decisions	3
Featured Service	4
Happy Birthday!	4
CEO CORNER	5

### Looking Forward

Our next issue will focus on Ask and You Shall Receive.

### Looking Back

You might also be interested in our January 2008 edition: [Cultural Diversity](#) or read other [previous issues of The Exchange](#).

*"The pressure to compete, the fear somebody else will make the splash first, creates a frenzied environment in which a blizzard of information is presented and serious questions may not be raised."*

Carl Bernstein

## For Permanent & Positive Change

### Ten-Minute Genius

Have you ever said something stupid? Well, maybe it wasn't quite that bad, but you wish you could have taken it back. Perhaps a customer or your manager asked you a question and you just didn't quite have it together.

What do you do when that happens? Most people beat themselves up pretty badly. They rehearse in their mind what they should have said. We are all geniuses ten minutes later.

An obvious solution is to not allow the mouth to begin until the brain kicks in. You can buy time by saying something like:

Let me look that up.  
I'll check my records on that.  
I want to give that some thought before I respond.

You can also ask some clarifying questions to give you more input, and perhaps more importantly, more time to think.

Regardless of what you do, give yourself a break afterwards. If you were less than perfect, get over yourself. People are usually their own worst critic. Refrain from berating yourself in front of others. When your brain does kick in, give the better information. The person will most likely appreciate the update and will remember the last thing you did, not the one ten minutes ago.

Everyone makes mistakes. If a mistake becomes a pattern, change the pattern. Otherwise, look back just long enough to make corrective action and move on. Don't take yourself so seriously. Otherwise, you'll really get the big head ten minutes later. ❖

### Avoid the Rat Race

Those who take their business and themselves too seriously can get caught up in the rat race. What do rats and their racing have to do with taking yourself too seriously? Stay out of the rat race and you'll find out.

Rat racing is not really a sport. This term originally dates back to 17th Century France, a time when there was a plague of rats in Europe. The French word, "ras," means "race or competition of the feet." The rodents have a vile reputation for scurrying relentlessly, especially when they are in close quarters around other rats.

Often the rats have no destination or idea of where they are going, yet seem to be racing each other. If you've ever seen a group of rats frantically crawling over, under, and around each other, you noticed that

very few of them were concerned with finesse or style. Their only purpose was to get to wherever they were going.

People who take their jobs and roles too seriously often seem the same way. As you hope to be more civilized than those rodent residents, slow down, laugh, relax and enjoy this moment instead of viciously hurrying to the next. As we put ourselves in the rat race, I wonder if rats refer to their behavior in hurried moments as the "human race." ❖

### Dear TLC,

I have a question on how much is too much. When does my obsession with being a loner become too much to handle? Our office has its share of pranksters and fun-loving people. They go out after hours. They dress up for the holidays. They also take full advantage of exercising creativity during causal Fridays. I was transferred to this department and feel like a wet blanket. I don't celebrate anything. I have never accepted an invitation to go out and I dress traditionally.

People "vibe" off of each other's energy here. I feel as if I'm too serious. What can be done to loosen me up?

-Wound too tight

### Dear Wound,

Everyone has his comfort zones. It is good that you are aware of yours. Working with a new group can be a challenge. Take gradual steps to expand your zone of comfort. Accept an invitation. Tell them you have a prior commitment and you can only stay for a while. They'll be so shocked you accepted that they will be fine. On casual day, wear a sport's shirt or clothing with color. The clearance rack in most department stores has several inexpensive options. Practice having at least one non-work related conversation every day for a couple of minutes. A great question to start off with is, "So what do you do for fun when you are away from work?" After a while, others will get more comfortable with you and you'll begin to expand your comfort zone and loosen up.

### Quick Tips

- ✓ Forgive yourself and hold on to the lesson.
- ✓ Laugh so hard you still feel it after the moment has passed.
- ✓ Check your progress often. Seeing movement builds anticipation.

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*"Men are convinced of your arguments, your sincerity, and the seriousness of your efforts only by your death."*

Albert Camus

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*"Take events in your life seriously, take work seriously, but don't take yourself seriously, or you'll become affected, pompous and boring."*

Shelley Duvall

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*"Do not take life too seriously. You will never get out of it alive."*

Elbert Hubbard

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## For Permanent & Positive Change

### Discovering Decisions

Dalton Roberts

*Editor's note: Our gratitude to Dalton Roberts, columnist, song writer and Mayor Emeritus of Hamilton County, Tennessee, for his permission to reprint this article from his "My Sunday Journal," IPS Features, 2-10-08. We always enjoy Dalton's articles and we hope you will also enjoy this one.*

Eric Butterworth reminded me of Norman Vincent Peale (one of my heroes) when I first came across his writings. Over the years I bought some of his books and each one gifted me with at least one idea that lodged in my mind and would not go away. In ***The Universe is Calling*** the idea that got me was, "Don't try to make a decision. Your need is to discover a decision."

So many of the business management books talk about being "a decisive manager" and the dangers of procrastination until one gets the feeling their success lies in being a decision-making machine. My experience is almost the opposite. I find that ***the worst decisions are made when we feel like we must make a decision.***

Why is this true? I think it is because a feeling of franticness is no basis for a sound decision. When we feel we ***must*** make a decision, we probably shouldn't.

The first question to ask ourselves in a moment of panic when we feel we must act, is ***what brought on this feeling of franticness?*** The place to look for the answer is within the feeling itself.

Ask yourself, ***How much fear is in this feeling? Where does this fear come from? What triggered it?*** Once we remove fear from a decision-making process, the chances of making a sound decision multiply.

Another thing Eric's words point up is that in ***discovering a decision, intuition is activated.***

To sense this for yourself, get quiet and say to yourself, "I must make a decision" and notice how your brain only responds. Now say, "I must discover a decision" and notice how your whole being settles into that thought.

What's going on here? ***You are activating your intuition.*** The two "kivker words" in these two statements are "make" and "discover." Make denotes effort and stress and "discover" stirs up excitement, energy and fun.

Speaking of fun, we need to work a little fun into our decision-making times. It may seem that seriousness is called for but seriousness constipates the mind, body and soul. When someone tells you, "Get serious!" always smile and keep smiling until the serious feeling fades.

I took a self-development course one time and they had what they called "the seriousness exercise." It convinced me to avoid seriousness except where lightheadedness would be considered rude, unpatriotic or inconsiderate.

You may say, "Oh, but how can you not be serious about sickness, divorce, death and some of the grim realities of life?" My response is that no reality is grim. It may be necessary and bring some unhappy feelings but look at it as necessary, not grim. Death is necessary or we would overpopulate Earth. We'd have to give up sex and, my friends, that would be grim.

***The worst decisions we will ever make will be when we feel grim about the situation we are trying to decide upon.*** If we feel we must "make" (manufacture) a decision we will tend toward grimness. If we see that ***good decisions are discovered,*** we touch the situation with creativity and even a little playfulness.

I once taught a college course in creativity and reviewed the research to discover the most effective way to activate our creativity is playfulness. It sounds silly but it's only silly if we are too serious.

When we are discovering a decision, we feel ourselves reaching out with our whole being, rather than just our minds. We feel the tentacles of our creativity pulling in ideas from all directions. We tap into joyous energy.

While I hope some of these ideas will help you discover the decisions you wish to make, you will find that discovering a decision is easier to do than to describe. There are no automatic formulae for creativity. The fun lies in discovering what works for you.

Discover! ❖

#### Remember To

- ✓ Laugh now if it will be funny later.
- ✓ Remain flexible during challenging times.
- ✓ Ask for options to make decision making easier.

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*"It is not so important to be serious as it is to be serious about the important things. The monkey wears an expression of seriousness which would do credit to any college student, but the monkey is serious because he itches."*

Robert M. Hutchins

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*"Drop the idea that you are Atlas carrying the world on your shoulders. The world would go on even without you. Don't take yourself so seriously."*

Norman Vincent Peale

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*"When we can begin to take our failures seriously, it means we are ceasing to be afraid of them. It is of immense importance to learn to laugh at ourselves."*

Katherine Mansfield

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## For Permanent & Positive Change

### Featured Service: Murder in the Mountains

Therese Padgett

A “who-done-it” that’s better than a board game or even a dinner mystery party, **Murder in the Mountains**, created by the staff of TLC, is a day and a half of total fun and relaxation for your team of eight to ten members. One of our early participants declared at the end, “Wow! I haven’t been so relaxed and had so much fun in a long time! I was able to forget all the stress in my life: to really get out of myself and into character!”

Your team will arrive at beautiful [Spring Creek Retreat](#) in the afternoon one day in mid-week. Shortly after arrival, you will be assigned a character role and provided with limited information about yourself, one other character and something that another character knows about you from your past. Next, you will select a costume from a variety that will be provided. Everyone will gather (in costume, of course) for a cocktail party at 6:00 pm, mix and mingle and get to know one another as the characters in the mystery. The “it” happens at dinner and the investigation is off and running to discover just who done it!

Who do I think did it? How do I find out for sure? What do others think? How did they find that out? Does it collaborate with what I have discovered? Who knows? Maybe I did it! No! It has to have been Pat ... or Terry ... or Blair?

It will take all night and half of the next day to discover just who done it. In the mean time, there will be “out of character” time to relax and have casual conversations around a fire or to take a walk in the lovely woods along the creek bank and in the meadow. What a wonderful way to not take yourself so seriously!

To find out more about this great opportunity for your team, **Murder in the Mountains**, call TLC today: 1-888-BECAUSE (because you always communicate!) or 423-622-TALK. ❖

### Happy Birthday!

TLC wishes a **Happy Birthday** to clients celebrating in March:

- » Vanessa Spann
- » Dennis Anderson
- » Mark Chaffin
- » Joseph Crossley
- » Lavinia Johnston
- » Dennis McClean
- » Marie Nichols
- » Nicole Johnson
- » Darren Helms
- » Michaela Driver
- » Brandon Cleghorn
- » McArthur Jones
- » Janet Kimball
- » Jerry Watkins
- » David Way
- » Gus Hopper
- » Michelle Makuch
- » Shelly Smith
- » Sherri Flynn
- » Ridley Kinsey
- » Byron Lichter
- » George Shaw
- » David Shattles
- » Sheila Dormann

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*“If you can get humor and seriousness at the same time, you’ve created a special little thing, and that’s what I’m looking for, because if you get pompous, you lose everything.”*

Paul Simon

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*“Man is most nearly himself when he achieves the seriousness of a child at play.”*

Heraclitus

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*“An adventure is only an inconvenience, rightly considered.”*

G. K. Chesterton

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## For Permanent & Positive Change

### CEO Corner

Beverly Inman-Ebel

#### “Some Serious Fun”

At TLC, we take business seriously by caring for our clients, keeping in touch, and guiding them to permanent and positive change. We do not, however, take ourselves too seriously. This is a place of some serious fun.

Vincent Phipps is a particularly fun fellow. Years ago he was quite the ladies' man. One day he offered to make the bank deposit for the Office Manager while he was out. Two hours later, he received a call from the bank while he was with a client. When asked what the call was about, the woman replied that it was about the bank deposit he had made. Vincent was with this client for three hours and the bank had called three times. Just before I called the bank manager with obvious concern, Vincent finished with his client and called the woman at the bank. As it turns out, it had nothing to do with the deposit. She wanted to date him!

Following this history of his affect on women, he often dated multiple women at the same time. Our Office Manager could tell you all of their names until cell phones became prominent. Once, we were taking the whole staff to Spring Creek Retreat for a two-day outing. (It is such a remote location that cell phones and pagers do not work there to this day.) We decided to play a trick on Vincent because we knew he had problems telling women 'no.' At the staff meeting the day before the retreat, I casually mentioned that a new cell tower had been built so their phones would work. Vincent's face fell like a biscuit that had been sitting on the counter for a week. Two women were going to be calling his cell and he felt safe because he could later tell them his cell was out of range. Someone started laughing and the gig was up.

This is all in the past because Vincent found the woman of his dreams several years ago and married her last October. We all attended the wedding and celebrated their happiness. His first day back at work, he looked completely devastated. He wouldn't talk about it until I got there. Then he sadly told us that the honeymoon had been a complete disaster. They fought over religion, money, and future plans. All I could do was give him a hug and tell him that everything would work out. He accepted the hug and then exclaimed, "Got 'cha back!"

So we don't take ourselves too seriously around here. It is survival to laugh. My father taught me years ago that people cannot laugh at you if you are laughing with them. Laughter is jogging of the soul, according to Norm Cousins, columnist and author. My philosophy is that if it is going to make a good story later, go ahead and laugh now.

May you find reasons to laugh. When you make a mistake, get over it. When people tease you, find the joy in the moment. Remember, it really is not about you. Laugh. Live your dreams!

P.S. By the way, there is a quarter taped to my office door. After the above-mentioned scare he gave us, I told him, "You really got my goat." He, the King of Idioms, looked confused and said that was not an idiom. I bet him a quarter it was. The fun continues. ❖

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*"It is good to have money and the things that money can buy, but it's good too, to check up once in a while and make sure you haven't lost the things money can't buy."*

George Lorimer

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*"Don't take yourself too seriously. And don't be too serious about not taking yourself too seriously."*

Howard Ogden

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*"Humorists can never start to take themselves seriously. It's literary suicide."*

Erma Bombeck

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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 e-mail [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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