

A Win/Win Story

By: Janet Stacey

Sarah had just experienced her first layoff from work. Like most people, she was anxious about her future. She had a background in healthcare information technology (IT), which is a unique specialty in the healthcare field. This caused her to be concerned about her options. Sarah had IT experience with medical practices and centers, as well as a medical software company.

Sarah began her job search by going to the web to search for agencies. This is where she found TLK Healthcare. When she called TLK, she spoke with Richard, one of TLK's experienced recruiters. "Right away, Richard was able to calm my anxieties. He was reassuring and quick on his feet. He immediately outlined the next steps for me and scheduled a face-to-face interview that same day,"

describes Sarah. Sarah and Richard talked several times a day. According to Sarah, "Richard was so thorough in his assessment and his follow up was outstanding. At times, he made me feel like he was only working for me." Sarah knew Richard was working hand-in-hand with her.

Richard assessed Sarah's skills, as well as her personality and goals. Because he had knowledge about Sarah's field, he immediately made contact with April, the owner of a medical billing service, as a potential resource for discovering opportunities for Sarah. April and Sarah are both experienced in medical office softwares. In fact, April's company was a re-seller of the medical software product from the company where Sarah had previously worked. Per Richard,

"By knowing the specifics of April's business and her products and services, I was able to match Sarah talents to opportunities in the community." In fact, the "match" happened almost instantaneously. April had been thinking of hiring someone who could train her company's customers (medical practices). She interviewed Sarah and within two days, Sarah was hired. "I was so impressed with Sarah's technical abilities, but more importantly, we had personalities that went well together. I knew she was a great match for our needs and our company culture."

So what do Sarah and April think? Sarah was only unemployed for 3 days and April found the right person without struggling through hundreds of resumes.



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Welcome to the premiere issue of TLK People Connections. Every three months, you will receive a copy of this newsletter full of valuable information and tips for achieving HR and employee excellence.



In This Issue:

The Culture Shock

Latecomer Employees

The Employee Interview

Health Outlook

Words to Live By

Urban Legends

A Win | Win Story

The Culture Shock

By: Tami Kyle

Do the words "I heard it through the grapevine" conjure up memories of an old song, or maybe a dancing raisins television commercial?

For many of us, gossiping is another day at the office. It seems to have an unavoidable presence in all workplaces. It can wind through an office like an anaconda, creating non-productivity, bad employee morale and animosity. So, what do you do when gossip runs rampant in your office?

Here's some ways to help you "curb the gossip" in your office:

psst!

Critical Task #1: Define gossip for yourself (the leader) and for the organization. Literally look up the definition in Webster's Dictionary. TLK has the following definition: *GOSSIP (v): To say or listen to anything about another person without their knowledge. GOSSIP (n): Anything that is said about another person without their knowledge.* Here are some examples of what is considered gossip at TLK: "Tattletaling" to the boss without intention of furthering a solution or speaking to co-workers about something someone else has done to upset us. A great example of gossip that can undermine our teamwork is when describing someone's tendencies. Such as, "He always takes a long lunch," or "Don't worry, that's just how she is."

Critical Task #2: The boss has to be the first to personally confront gossip head on. Before initiating a no gossip policy, practice "developing the muscle" in your personal and professional life for several months.

Your staff will notice the change and you will earn the right to roll out the no gossip policy. Notice when you find yourself in situations where you are initiating or listening to gossip. Take interest in areas where you feel drawn or unable to resist gossip. Please note that labeling gossip as "good" or "bad" will not get you closer to a solution. Noticing when, where and how gossip affects your life from a vantage point of interest and desire to transition will yield the greatest results.

Critical Task #3: Roll out the policy. Add it to your handbook and kick it off in a meeting. Clearly define what gossip is to your staff and stick to it. This policy should be as solid as your dress code or your policy for calling in sick. At TLK, gossip is incorporated in our handbook in the Culture section. Instead of making it a rule with consequences, it is part of a statement of who we are, helping to define our team and organization. Every candidate for employment is

story continued on next page



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Do You Have a "Latecomer" Employee?

By: Tami Kyle

The following seven (7) steps offer a suggested approach for addressing the "latecomer:"

1. Ask the employee what time they understand they are to be at work.
2. Determine whether the employee believes they are following the policy. Be prepared to be shocked – they have probably created a solid justification in their mind – they may even deny that they are late.
3. Make it clear that they are not following the policy for being at work on time and clearly define what it would take for them to meet your expectation. You may need to define what "on time" means by using a specific clock at the office and then making sure that clock keeps correct time going forward.
4. Clearly define the consequences, if they continue to be late.
5. Once the expectations and consequences are defined, ask the employee if anything will prevent them from being on time going forward and then, shut up.
6. This is typically the point where managers tend to try to "fix" the situation for the employee. Instead of "fixing," try this statement instead: "That really sounds like a tough situation and I'm sorry to hear you are dealing with that. However, I still need you here at 8 am, so is that something you can commit to solving by Monday?" Be open to a short-term negotiation, if it gets both of you to the agreed upon expectation in the time frame needed by the organization.
7. Be persistent – One instance of letting a "latecomer" slide can result in being at Step 1 all over again!

Culture Shock, continued from page 1

made aware of the policy and how we approach gossip as a team. New hires are coached on the policy as it relates to our culture, just as they would be trained on the phone system.

Critical Task #4: Create a Gossip Game with your team to play for a month or so. Remember to avoid the stigma of "good" or "bad" to help make it safe for the team to explore what this change means to them by creating an environment where they can discuss whether situations are gossip or not.

Have everyone bring up situations in every meeting and discuss whether it is gossip and come up with alternatives and solutions as a team. Your entire team will develop a different relationship to gossip and your interoffice relationships will reap the benefits.

Critical Task #5: Confront gossip at EVERY turn. If you ever let it slip, your gossip policy is no longer a policy. After a few months of being on hyper-alert, the culture will transition and all staff members can feel assured that no one will talk about them outside of their presence.

The Employee Interview

By: Tami Kyle

Interviews can be a bit intimidating for both the interviewer and interviewee. One very important thing to consider during the interview process is that you are filling the role of both buyer and seller. It is important to sell your practice to the potential candidate by giving them



accurate and adequate information, while presenting your practice in a good light. The easiest way to accomplish this is to provide a comfortable, professional setting and to be prepared in advance. Some important points to consider:

- If interviewing in your work area, remove clutter and confidential information. Although this sounds very basic, it is important to allow a few "pre-interview" moments for housekeeping.
- The candidate's chair should be comfortable and the ideal setting will allow you to sit at a 90 degree angle, where either of you may comfortably face away from each other at will. Across the desk interviewing can make it more challenging to establish rapport and create openness.
- Plan your time in advance to allow for the least amount of distractions. Avoid phone calls and interruptions. It is amazing how many candidates express disinterest in a position because the potential employer

was unable to commit uninterrupted time to their interview. • Open the interview by establishing rapport with the candidate. Begin by putting them at ease, mentioning a strength that caught your eye. Avoid the usual "weather" initiators.

- Be sure to explain your hiring process to the candidate, so that they can know what to expect from you going forward.
- Be sensitive to the candidate. They may not have interviewed for a new job in a long time or may never have participated in a formal interview at all. The best candidate for the position and your culture may not always be the best interviewer.
- Utilize open-ended questions, which encourage detailed responses that give you much more information. (i.e. "What did you like at your previous job?" and "Tell me about your responsibilities.")
- Avoid using "Why," which can be perceived as threatening regardless of intention. ("Why did you leave your last job?" versus "What were your reasons for leaving?")
- Finally, have fun and get to know the candidate.

Urban Legends

By: Tami Kyle

Is there a "LAW" that requires breaks and/or lunches?

Despite the fact the State of Texas has no "law, rule, statute" requiring an employer to give breaks for smoking, rest or meals, this "urban legend" has found its way into the employee handbooks and HR policies and procedures of many organizations.

From a liability standpoint, an employer has the responsibility to provide a safe environment for their workforce. However, it is completely an employer's choice whether to provide meal breaks or other breaks to employees.

Although breaks are not "the law," as many of your employees might believe, it may still be advantageous for the employer to provide breaks for productivity, retention and safety reasons. From a retention standpoint, any changes to current policies in regards to employee breaks should be made gradually and give consideration to balancing employee needs with the needs of the organization.

Healthy Outlook

Did you know...?

By: Carrie Riley

- In the 18th century, chocolate was used as a medicine and believed to cure a stomach ache.
- Grapes explode when heated in the microwave.
- Ketchup was sold in the 1830's as medicine.
- Seaweed is used to thicken ice cream.
- Chewing gum, while peeling onions, will keep you from crying.

Words to Live By:

"It's not the years in your life, but the life in your years that counts!"

—Adlai Stevenson

"Be open to a short-term negotiation, if it gets both of you to the agreed upon expectation."