

FAMILY READINESS INTERVIEW

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Rationale:

I am a big advocate, we probably all are, of Dave Pollack's thesis- to ENTER WELL you need to LEAVE WELL! Having served overseas and not in the home office until now, I never saw the people (from the home office side) who for whatever reason had to return home within their first term because they didn't tie up the loose ends and prepare their people-who left behind in a good way. I had one EOT in the first 6 months when I was working in the Member Care Dept. where this was a strong underpinning theme. It made me very sad. I had another opportunity to abort the same scenario from happening again. It was with a Mom who was leaving young adult kids behind without enough of a support community to sustain them in her absence; she was almost their entire support structure up until 2 months before she left.

I began to think of how we could intervene to stave off this problem when the idea of the Readiness Interview came to life. There is most often a goodly amount of time between a candidate's coming through SIM START¹ and the blowing of the "Code 1263"² horn. ***If the candidate has his/her consciousness raised on the issues of closing well at an early point in the journey overseas he/she usually can navigate it well.***

SIM was gracious enough to allow me a pilot group which made this need obvious. And, so, into the present we continue to do this with the SIM START candidates.

How the interview proceeds:

I usually explain that THIS interview differs from the two you have already had in that it is **FOR YOU**. It helps you, the candidate, think through your leaving process. You are part of a family, part of a community, maybe on a ministry team at church or a ball team or work in partnership...***but you live in community. It is a system. What you do/or don't do affects the whole.***

Like a mobile over a baby's crib, if we yanked one figure to the side, the whole mobile would skew and not rotate very well. One figure changing positions makes the rest change positions too. If the change is sudden, it will feel surprising, stressful and painful to the other figures.

¹ SIM START was the applicant screening event

² When a worker leaves for their assignment, we celebrate a "Code 1263" moment at the SIM USA chapel from Psalm 126:3 "The Lord has done great things for us, as we are filled with joy."

In a similar vein, your leaving to go overseas, following your passion and calling leaves a big hole. It is painful to experience that 'hole' -more or less so depending on the degree of attachment and intimacy in relationships you leave behind.

SO, in this interview we want to help you think about your '360'! Let's take a look around at all your relationships and think of what a closure would entail. Good closures take time, so we start early. Some relationships are broken or hurting. We'd want to see you repair those. Some are dependent. Is there a way we could gently transfer some of that dependence to another (ie some one we are discipling who would feel the gap deeply). And so the questions begin.

Tell us about your **parents**- Living? Supportive of your vision/mission? Believers? In good health? Are you the only child? Do you have power of attorney for your parents? Are you in a healthy relationship with your parents? If not, there may need to be some coaching as to how this relationship could be deepened and healed.

How can we communicate about entering the mission journey? We'd ideally involve them, inform them and share the excitement with them as the journey progresses...and so with all the relationships.

What about your **siblings**? Are they supportive? Believers? What is your relationship with them like? Do you see them often? Spend time together? Do you think any family members would visit you on the field? How would you plan a good-bye with them?

Tell us about your **work**? Do you own your own business or have partners? How would the handover look? Have you told your boss you are considering missions (ie, one day would be leaving)? Do you think they would be supportive if you told them? What would your strategy be for presenting this idea to your boss and time frame? (ie., I could interview and train my replacement) Is there a possibility for going part-time as I near departure?

What about **ministries where you are a key player**? Do you lead the worship in the Worship Group? How could you bring another person along to slide into your role? What about discipling ministries? Are you working with youth? Would there be a natural endpoint you could work towards to close and handover to another mentor? How could you be a continuing influence in their lives for the kingdom from afar?

Another area we have begun to inquire about are the **children's particulars**. Do any of your children have birth handicaps or show signs of developmental delays (preschool) or do they have an IEP in their school at present? Do they have any medical problems that will need to be considered in field placement? Developmental, educational and medical issues figure into the plan for the whole family, so we want to be on board with the parents from the first application and not become aware at a later time to the disservice of all.

A big pain reliever for the hole we leave is **staying connected; but, we need to do this in a balanced way**. If we are so connected with a community back home, we don't have the time and energy for learning a new language and culture and growing a new community on the field. Proactively, thinking together with family and friends as to how we can stay connected albeit at a different level. Is needful. Maybe not daily calls or emails, but following a blog, a skype call at an appointed time every 2 weeks, etc. It is good to be proactive in bringing this up so when the transition time comes before leaving and your thoughts and energy become so taken up with packing and final things that those closest to you won't get lost in the shuffle. They know there is a plan in place to retain the relationship.

Stepping into the emotional realm of goodbyes:

It is best NOT to ignore the pain loved ones and friends are feeling as you are talking about and working towards departing. They are feeling it: "Will I ever see my grandchildren again? Who will be here at Christmas with us? What if you get sick? How can we keep in touch?" And so many more questions arise for them. ***They may be glad for you, but they are sad for them. A question like: "How are you feeling about my leaving?" is proactively opening the door to that pain and entering in.*** Accepting their sadness and a bit of grieving together is in order. Making a plan together to stay in touch, share special new memories, and inviting certain ones to visit you on the field in the future. You are working towards a new normal in your relationships that will be healthy and life-giving. Not a good idea to have a rotten ending that leaves you depressed and sorrowing just about the time you get off the plane in your new home country. You want to launch well to land well!

My colleague had another wonderful suggestion:

Engage a small praying community of friends very early in your acceptance (post SIM START) from your church that will journey "with you" as you do RDM, travel around to speak at churches, go to MTI or CIT or CMDA for trainings pre-field.

This is your intimate support group at the home church that “gets you” best. This is the group that will follow you and pray for you and inform the rest of the church body of your ministry. This is the group that you will come back home to on HA and that will help you, educate you as to changes and walk with you as you transition back into the home culture. You may have been BLUE at home, but you went to live in a Yellow country and now have returned GREEN! But as they have followed your journey they are bit more green themselves!

We give the candidates the **CRAFT handout (adding a “c” in front of RAFT - standing for CELEBRATION!)** and explain about the Reconciliation, Affirmation, Farewell, and Transition phases of a good closure.

Most candidates truly appreciate this new awareness of how impacting on their relationships their leaving the country for a long time can be. I think it leaves them with a sense of I feel KNOWN and understood. This mission cares that I don't depart with a sense that the fabric of all my connections here at home has been roughly torn. We are scratching in a place that they didn't even know they had an itch, and it feels good!

We usually have 2 people doing this interview for 30 minutes with a single person and 45 minutes with an adult. This usually suffices, but occasionally does not.

Family Readiness Interview

Date: _____ **Interviewers:** _____

Applicant Name(s): _____

Kids & ages: _____

Overview:

PARENTS: Believing / Supportive of missions / Responsive

SIBLINGS:

GOODBYES:

SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES: (Senior Parents / Family Decisions)

MINISTRIES: Handover plan

WORK: Talked w/ boss / plan for transition out

CHILDREN: IEP, Special Ed, ADD/ADHD, Medical issues?

COMMENTS: Issues of concern

RECOMMENDATIONS: CRAFT/ Support Grp/ Balance Social (5/15/50/150)