

**Interview Packet  
for  
Texas Insurance– Application Services  
Transformation  
“Transforming while Performing”**

**Discovering and Leveraging our Rich Heritage Best Practices**

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*ePositiveChange*<sup>SM</sup> Interview Packet – June 2001

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**Summary Forms Due: Wednesday, July 18<sup>th</sup> 2001**

Please submit your summary forms to the **Phase I-Interviews** folder in the Application Services Transition Team shared folder  
[ <\\001-HODCFS21\\WorkTranTeam\\Phase1-Interviews> ]  
on the LAN as soon as they are complete.

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## Questions? Please call Tony Silbert at 847-667-6712

(this page has been provided separately as a leave-behind handout for your interviews)

### Purpose of Interviews

Thank you very much for participating in this information-gathering process. The Application Services group is actively involved in a business transformation that will focus on the design and development of a business client-facing operating model that will accelerate time and results. In this way Application Services will better serve our internal business partners and strengthen the overall Texas Insurance competitive position. To this end, we will be gathering specialized input from colleagues across the organization. These interviews are part of an intense effort to discover our internal best practices and high points, use this rich experience as leverage for the Application Services Transformation, and apply this learning to the development and implementation of our future state operating model. **Additionally, the results of the individual and group IT fact-finding discussions along with information and research on external best practices will be integrated into our design process.**

As part of this process we will look at:

- ❖ What the core factors are that enable success in our organization.
- ❖ What we can learn from our experiences, especially when we examine closely those moments when we have been at our best.
- ❖ What our most effective practices, strengths, or best qualities are -- things that we need to preserve as we transform.
- ❖ What important lessons can we draw from our experiences
- ❖ What kind of organization we want to create in the future; the organization that we and others want to be part of.
- ❖ How our positive past, the best of our experiences, can help us become more daring and innovative as we think about our true potential as an organization.
- ❖ In the context of Texas Insurance what our specific hopes and images for the future for Applications Services.

### Application of Interview Feedback

- All interviews will be reviewed and summarized for thematic content.
- Themes will be shared and discussed based on relevance to the Application Services Transformation.
- At a three-day offsite design session Accelerated Solutions Environment (DesignShop), attended by multiple Texas Insurance participants in August, these themes will be used as a key input in designing the Application Services future state operating model
- An additional output from the DesignShop is an implementation roadmap, which will outline key activities and workstreams to support our new operating model. Interview themes will be applied directly to some of the resulting workstreams and indirectly to many of the other workstreams.

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- All comments from the interviews will be anonymous -- names will not be attached to any of the stories, suggestions, or examples.

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# Overview of Interview Process

**Due: Wednesday, July 18, 2001**

## **Part I - Completing 4-6 Interviews**

- You will be provided a list of 4-6 names of colleagues to interview. You will typically be assigned individuals that you may not interact with on a regular basis – this is a great opportunity to get a fresh perspective.
- The Transition Team will notify your interviewees that they have been selected as participants. Contact your interviewee to schedule the interview and explain that each interview should take approximately one hour to complete.
- Complete your interviews and post your summary forms to the **Phase I-Interviews** folder in the Transition Team Folder as soon as they're completed, but no later than July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2001.
- Assure your interviewees that all comments are anonymous, but not confidential. In other words, stories and quotes will be shared, but no names will be attached to them.
- If you're having difficulty scheduling an interview, please call and we will help you by either supporting scheduling of the interview or providing an alternative interview participant.

## **Part II - Returning the Interview Summaries**

- Please use the space after each question for taking notes during the interviews. (Note-taking is usually very individualized, but we want you to be able to recall your interview to best assure your summarization.)
- It is recommended that you summarize the interview immediately after the interview session. Use the attached 2-page summary template at the end of this guidebook (also attached electronically).
- Be sure to note your name, the date of the interview, the interviewee's organizational group and service date on the summary page.
- Post the electronic summary forms to the **Phase I-Interviews** folder in the Transition Team Folder **no later than July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2001.**

Try to not wait until July 18<sup>th</sup> to send all of the interview summary forms –post them as you complete them.

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## Overview of Interview Process (continued)

**Due: Wednesday, July 18, 2001**

### **Part III – Leveraging the Interviewing Feedback – Next Steps**

- All interview summaries will be reviewed and integrated. In this way we will document major themes to better understand our internal best practices, high point moments and images of the future.
- These internal best practices and ***positive transformation themes*** will be shared and leveraged during the August offsite DesignShop to support the development and implementation of our Application Services operating model. Additionally, the results of the individual and group IT fact-finding discussions along with information and research on external best practices will be integrated into our design process.
- Following the DesignShop the new operating model, the benefits of the new model, the positive transformation themes, and the general timeline for implementation will be shared.
- We will make a special effort to share positive transformation themes with all interview participants in late July.

**Questions? Please call Tony Silbert at 847-667-6712**

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## Tips for Conducting Interviews

- Use the interview question section for script guidelines and note-taking
- Here are some possible questions to use to probe further:
  - ❖ Tell me more.
  - ❖ Why was that important to you?
  - ❖ How did that affect you?
  - ❖ What was your contribution?
  - ❖ How did the organization/ business area/team support you? For example: information systems, leadership, resources, and structures.
  - ❖ How has it changed you?
- Let the interviewee tell his/her story.
- Take notes and listen for great quotes and stories.
- Be genuinely curious about their experiences, thoughts, and feelings.
- Some people will take longer to think about their answers -- allow for silence.
- If somebody doesn't want to, or can't answer any of the interview questions, that's OK, let it go.
- The questions should be used as guidelines, you may choose to not use all the questions, or to adapt the questions to what you find works best for your interviews.
- Allow the interviewee to interpret whether the questions apply to work or to personal situations.

## Tips for Conducting Interviews (continued)

### What to do with Negatives \*:

With the introduction paragraph provided in the interview guide – you can generally get interviewees to identify things at their best. However, people should not feel like they do not have permission to talk about things that need fixing. Depending on your empathic understanding of where the interviewee is, there are several different ways to handle negatives.

- **Postponing:** Say that you would like to make a note of what the person has said and come back to it later. When you get to the question about what he or she would wish for the organization in the future, this is the time to discuss the “negative” data.
- **Listening:** If the person has some real intensity about problems, let him or her express it. If it is the major focus of the person’s energy, you are not going to get any positive data until she or he gets it out. This may mean muddling through quite a bit of organizational negativity, and the biggest threat is that you will take it in and lose your capacity to be appreciative. Keep a caring, and affirmative spirit.
- **Redirecting:** If the person is adamant about dealing with the negative, or if you have listened sufficiently to understand the negative issues being raised, find a way to guide the person back to the positive: “I think I understand a little bit about some of the problems you see (paraphrase a few of the ones you’ve heard), and now I would like to guide us back to looking at what is happening when things are working at their best. Can you think of a time, even the smallest moment, when you saw innovation (for example) at its best?” If the person says it never happened where he or she works, find out if the person has had the experience of something working well in *any* organization or work context.
- **Using Negative Data:** Everything that people find wrong with an organization represents an absence of something that they hold in their minds as an ideal. For example, if the interviewee says something like, “The communication in this organization is terrible”, say to them, “When you say that the communication is terrible, it means that you have some image in your mind about what good communication would look like. Can you describe that for me?” In fact, one could argue that there is no such thing as negative data. Every utterance is conditioned by affirmative images. If the interviewee cannot reframe his or her statement into a positive image, use the negative information and reframe it yourself into a wish or vision statement and then confirm that statement with the interviewee.

\* Adapted from “*Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination*”, Jane Magruder Watkins & Bernard Mohr, 2001.

# Interview Questions (Due: Wednesday, July 18, 2001)

## Sample Opening

I'm (name), thank you for meeting with me and participating in this process of gathering information from colleagues across the organization. These interviews are part of an intense effort to discover our internal best practices in key strategic business areas. These best practices will be leveraged by our Application Services Transformation project to develop our future state operating model. In addition to these interview findings we will be leveraging information related to external best practices and the individual and group IT fact-finding discussions.

This interview is divided into three sections:

- 1) **Celebrating Allstate's Rich Heritage and Past Successes**
- 2) **Carrying Forward What We Value Most**
- 3) **Wake up - it's 2003: Your Vision of a Best-Performing Application Services**

Before we start I would like to explain a little bit about what we are going to do because it may be a little *different* from what you are used to. I am going to ask questions about times when you were at your BEST in your work. You may be more familiar with interviews that ask questions about things that aren't working well - the problems - so we can fix them. In this case, we are going to find out about your work and the organization at its best - the successes - so that we can find out what works and find ways to integrate it into the Application Services Transformation moving forward. This *positive change approach* has been widely researched and proven effective in a variety of situations (i.e., transformation efforts, education, building learning organizations, parenting, athletics, increasing team and organizational effectiveness, health care, etc.). The end result of the interview will help us understand those positive factors, which will increase our vitality, effectiveness, and success going into the future together. Specifically, we are gathering information on what we are calling **Positive Transformation Themes**. In order to surface these themes, the interview questions focus on areas that we believe are critically important to the successful design of our new Application Services operating model:

- Continuous Transformation
- Revolutionary Partnerships
- Innovative and Adaptive Environment

What questions do you have?

Okay, let's begin.

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## **I. Celebrating Allstate's Rich Heritage and Past Successes**

1. *To start I'd like to learn about your beginnings at Allstate. When did you come to the organization and what attracted you to Allstate? What keeps you at Allstate? What sets us apart and makes the difference for you?*
  
2. *In your work at Allstate, you have probably experienced ups and downs, twists and turns. For a moment I would like you to think about a time that stands out to you as a high point at Texas Insurance— a time when you felt energized, passionate about your work and most effective – a time when you were able to accomplish more than you imagined.*
  - Please describe in detail the situation, people involved and what made it a high point experience for you. What actions did you and other take? How did these actions translate into business results?
  
3. *Let's talk about some things you value most -- specifically about yourself and Texas Insurance as an organization.*
  - Without being humble, what do you value most about yourself— as a human being? What are the most important qualities or strengths you bring to Allstate?
  
  - What is it about the nature of the work you do here that you value the most? What is most interesting or meaningful?
  
4. **Continuous Transformation:**  
*Organizations today must continually change and evolve to remain ahead of the competition, and to thrive in this rapidly changing economy and business environment. Organizations that have passion and energy for continual transformation display business excellence and are distinguished from their peers – leading the way and creating their future, instead of reacting to it.*
  - Tell me about a time when you were involved with a significant transformation or change effort; a time where you positively influenced the results. What was

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exciting about the transformation? What did you and others do to make it effective?

5. **Revolutionary Partnerships:**

*The mark of a revolutionary partnership is doing things radically different together. Not only different, but quicker, with a common focus, leveraging each other's diverse strengths. Also, establishing new ways of doing business that are based on trust, mutual respect and a shared vision.*

- Think of a time when you were part of a revolutionary partnership, a time in your life – at work, or in your personal or community life, when you not only met the other person(s) half way, but met and exceeded needs on both sides. Describe the situation in detail. What made it feel radically different? Who was involved? How did you interact differently, what were the outcomes and benefits you experienced?

6. **Innovative and Adaptive Environment:**

"Nature has been learning to adapt for four billion years; maybe we need to pay attention."--- Molecular biologist Stuart Kauffman

*As this is true in nature, it is also true in the business world. An effective environment enables risk-taking, empowers leadership throughout the organization, is agile and thrives on change. These powerful environments are able to balance speed and discipline, are liberating yet standards based, and support growth and innovation.*

- Think of a time when you were in an innovative and adaptive environment. Please describe how the environment supported your success – (i.e., leadership, creativity, tools, recognition, resources, etc.). How did it feel? What were the keys to success? What were some of the significant breakthroughs you achieved? Again, this could be personal community-oriented or work-life based.

## **II. Carrying Forward What We Value Most**

7. *Good organizations know how to “preserve the core” of what they do best and are able to let go of things that are no longer needed. In transforming Application Services, what are **three things** – core strengths, values, qualities, ways of working – you want to see preserved and leveraged moving into the future?*

a.

b.

c.

### **III. Wake up - it's 2003: Your Vision of a Best-Performing Application Services**

8. *Fast forward ... it is now 2003 and we were able to preserve our core strengths and transform Application Services – revolutionary partnerships, continual transformation, innovation and adaptability are the “way we do business”. It is an organization that you want to be part of and others want to join.*

- How would you describe Application Services’ relationships with their business customers? How do **they** work together differently in 2003 to achieve Allstate’s business objectives?
  
- What are **people** doing, how are **you** working together differently in 2003, what was the key to your success and the organization’s success, and how did you get there?
  
- What was the **smallest** change that Applications Services made which had the most significant impact?

**This is the end of the interview, thank you very much for your time. Your input will be summarized and used as input for design of the Application Services Operating Model.**

# Interview Summary Form

Complete and post by **Wednesday, July 18, 2001** to the Application Services Transition Team shared drive - in the Phase I-Interviews folder  
[ \\001-HODCFS21\WorkTranTeam\Phase1-Interviews ]

Save the document with the file name - **Interviewerlastname-interview#.doc** (e.g. Smith-interview3.doc)

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Name of Interviewer (your name):

Date of Interview:

Interviewee's Organizational Division:

Interviewee's Service Date – Year (optional):

**What was the most quotable quote that came out of this interview?**

**What was the most compelling story that came out of this interview? (use as much space as you need)**

**Overall, what was your sense of what was most important to this individual?**

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## Interview Summary Form (Continued)

Due: Wednesday, July 18, 2001

What were the 1 – 3 positive themes that stood out most for you during the interview related to:

### ***Revolutionary Partnerships***

1)

2)

3)

### ***Continuous Transformation***

1)

2)

3)

### ***Innovative and Adaptive Environment***

1)

2)

3)

### ***Carrying Forward What We Value Most***

1)

2)

3)

### ***Vision of the Future***

1)

2)

3)

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