



slack

VARIETY PACK

Episode 19: Oust Pack

Speaker 1: You are listening to the Slack ...

Speaker 2: Variety Pack.

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Speaker 1: Hello and welcome to the Slack Variety Pack, episode 19. On this episode, we've got a story about a race car driver, another one about prepping for your next job interview and of all things, a story about a real life exorcist. What do these stories have in common? It's all about getting to the bare bones and throwing out the niceties in order to get through work. Like in our first story, most of us who've ever been managers or bosses can relate to what our next guest is talking about. Sometimes we have to confront the people in the office who can be difficult to work with and make that hard call.

Speaker 3: You never know how much junk you've got until you move.

Speaker 4: Point to something you wish would disappear.

Speaker 3: Would it be possible to ... it's gone.

Speaker 4: All you have to do is point.

Speaker 5: Maybe you've heard of these guys? 1-800-GOT-JUNK is the world's largest residential junk removal company and one of the driving forces behind the company's growth was Cameron Herold. In fact, he's built three hundred million dollar businesses and he's the author of the book Double Double, a Guide to Doubling your Company's Revenue and Profit. It's probably safe to say that Cameron Herold knows a thing or two about running a successful business and what's the most important thing that he's learned from running those businesses?

CameronHerold: Everyone kind of recognizes that there's usually someone in their organization whose not getting results and they've known it for a long time or there's someone in their organization that's horrible to be around or frustrating and we spend time with those people.

Speaker 5: Now, Cameron has some pretty simple advice for what to do about those people. I'm going to warn you, it may seem counter intuitive. It's definitely controversial and it's probably not for everyone.

CameronHerold: I had a mentor years ago who pulled me aside and asked if there's anyone I knew I had to fire and I said, "Yeah, there's this one guy," and he asked how long I'd known and I said for probably six months and that tends to be about the number. It tends to be three to six months we've known we should fire

someone and he challenged me to take him out of the company that day at noon.

Speaker 5: That's exactly what Cameron Herold did and now he wants you to follow the same advice. That's right. Cameron Herold wants you to find someone in your company who you know shouldn't be there anymore and he thinks you should fire them today by noon. But here's the interesting part, he doesn't want you to do it to be mean or cruel. He thinks that taking decisive action with an employee who isn't working out is actually the kindest, most compassionate thing that you can do.

CameronHerold: Yeah, the compassionate side of it really is understanding that usually in that three to six months period that you know you're going to be firing somebody, that person knows that they're going to get fired as well and it just keeps dragging on. Every day we end up beating them up emotionally. We remove them from meetings. We pick on them. We tell them all the areas that they're screwing up constantly. We kind of keep rationalizing all the reasons why we want to fire them but we don't actually make that decision so at the end of the day, we're really crushing the spirit of a human being and that's wrong. I think it's often better to just move that decision up a lot faster and set them free.

Speaker 5: See, for Cameron Herold, firing someone isn't punitive. It really is about setting them free. Still, even when we know that firing someone is the right thing to do for everyone involved, we often still don't do it. Why?

CameronHerold: You know, often it's someone that we like, we hired them. At the end of the day, if we think that we actually did recruit and hire everyone whose working for us, so at some point we liked them and it's really hard to then go back on that. Either to be introspective and realize we made a mistake or you know, we might like them as a human and we think we're hurting them but the reality is, we're hurting them more by keeping them than we are by setting them free and letting them go work somewhere else.

Speaker 5: According to Cameron, if you don't act, you're not just hurting the employee, you're hurting your business. He says that the cost of keeping the wrong person in a job that they're not the right fit for is fifteen times their annual salary. Now, if you're still not sure that this is truly a compassionate approach, there is a second part to Cameron's process. See, just as important as firing someone, hey, maybe even more important is what you do after. Let's go back to that story that he was telling a minute ago about that mentor who first challenged him to fire that employee by noon.

CameronHerold: But he also challenged me to make sure that I mentored him until he was back on his feet and to ensure that I treated him in the way he really wanted to be treated. I think often we forget that people are human and we know we have to let them go but then we somehow put up a barrier and we forget that when

they leave, they're really in shock and it's really our job to help them out and to help them transition.

Speaker 5: Cameron believes strongly that you have an obligation to help someone you fire with their transition. It's why he believes this is truly a compassionate solution even if it doesn't necessarily appear that way. Still, you may be wondering how often this actually happens. You know, are there really that many employees out there that need to be set free today by noon? Listen to this, it's Cameron speaking to a room full of marketing leaders at Hubspot's annual Inbound conference in Boston this past fall.

CameronHerold: I'm going to ask you all a question. If you know that you have at least one more employees in your company who should be fired because of results or values, I'd like you to stand up. Stay standing, just look around the room. If you know you have one or more people in your company that should be fired because of results or values, take a look around the room.

Speaker 5: Here's the fascinating part, over half of the room is standing at a conference full of strangers and Cameron says this is normal.

CameronHerold: It's typically at least half the room will stand up and saying, "Yes." You know, if I got a couple drinks into everybody, I could probably get eighty percent of the room standing up and again, it's mostly because we don't work hard enough at getting the wrong people out of the company or we feel bad or we make all the excuses as to why it can't happen. If that negative person quits, yes, they're out of the company but everyone's walking around going, "You're just such a lazy CEO or entrepreneur that you never made the decision. Why didn't you, if you're such a great key exec, why didn't you get them out?" Yeah, they're still gone but it makes you look like you're in a worse position than if you'd actually been proactive.

Speaker 5: His method may not work for everyone. You may think he's crazy but Cameron Herold believes in it passionately. He wants you to get the wrong people out of your company. He wants you to remember that the cost of keeping the wrong person is fifteen times their annual salary but perhaps most importantly, he wants you to remember that sometimes the kindest thing you can do to someone whose not the right fit is to help them move on. Really, his request to you is pretty darn simple.

CameronHerold: Here's what I ask of you, when you get back to your offices on Monday at noon, I'd like you to set them free. If you don't do it Monday at noon, every day you get ready for work going forward when you're looking in the mirror in the morning, I want you to ask yourself what it takes to actually set these people free.

Speaker 5: So, how do you know if you're that person? The staff member with the target on her back? The person that needs to be fired? First of all, you do know. Like a

love affair running on fumes, like a remorseful big ticket purchase, like setting atop a roller coaster seconds before the drop you just know something is not sitting right. Our guts may be gross, but they don't lie. However, there are some tangible tells you should look out for at the office. You are no longer asked for your input. You have fewer tasks and perks.

Your cubicle is moved to the parking lot and your office maid is a bearded hobo that also thinks you're not right for the job. You feel out of the loop and you no longer joke with your once friendly boss. When you make, "Oh geeze, I'm going to get fired jokes," no one laughs. No one. And worse? You've had meetings and been warned, twice. Being fired can be devastating. The first thing to do is remember, it's only business and you're probably bound for better things.

It has nothing to do with your lovely heart, maybe your hair but not your heart. It's just not a fit. The second thing to do if your gut tells you it's coming is to beat them to the punch. Go out in grace and save that awkward meeting. Lastly, steal some pens before leaving. This is a time honored tradition and will make you feel just a little bit better.

- Speaker 1: Slack, bring yourself to work.
- Speaker 3: Channel change, need for speed channel.
- Speaker 6: Despite decades of trying to crack through that glass ceiling, gender stereotypes are still a problem in the workplace and when that workplace is in a male dominated professional sport, the odds are stacked even higher. Our next guest has beat those odds and for her, it took more than leaning in. She believes that for women to excel, they have to throw out all those preconceived notions of what women should do because nice girls don't win races.
- Speaker 7: Landauer out in front of Concord by four tenths of a second already. What a great race. The unheralded driver, an unknown entering the Force Race at Motor Mile Speedway. Everyone will know her name by the end of this one, Julia Landauer.
- Speaker 6: Julia Landauer is a NASCAR track champ and the first female in her division to make it to the top of the podium. She earned her Bachelor of Science from Stanford University and she also appeared in the 26th season of the reality TV series, Survivor but being in the driver seat is her real passion.
- Julia Landauer: When you're a driver whose in the zone and you're hearing the roar of the engine and you're operating on a subconscious level with the car and the racetrack, it's intoxicating. It's well know within racing that when you master a corner and you get within an inch of the wall as you're exiting the turn, it's better than sex. It is so satisfying to do something exceptionally well that people don't give you the credit of being able to do at all.

Speaker 6: Julia's thirst for the fast pace started young. Her parents enrolled her and her siblings in go kart racing as a means to spend more quality time together.

Julia Landauer: After my first race when I was ten, I was hooked. Going fast, being able to feel the G forces through the corners, being able to pass people and then do well in races and I won my first go kart race a couple races in and just that high of winning is so addicting. You just have to keep going after it, so yeah, I knew by the time I was twelve I wanted to pursue it professionally.

Speaker 6: Go kart racing evolved into automobile racing. Julia got a special license to compete in a car at thirteen. Car racing is one of the few, non gender segregated sports. Men and women compete head to head but the presence of female drivers on the circuit is few and far between. Julia embraces that anomaly.

Julia Landauer: We just have to be comfortable breaking rules, whether that's the rules of society or other types of rules. I mean, I think that's kind of the mentality I have for most of what I do.

Speaker 7: Not missing a beat, Landauer back to the back bumper of Cocrum. She may have given him a shot in the apex of the corner. Peering beneath the sixteen in turn number one, Cocrum doesn't give her much room.

Speaker 6: But Julia wasn't a natural born rule breaker. It came from her upbringing. Her parents raised her, her sister and her younger brother with the same expectations.

Julia Landauer: It was almost like a gender neutral approach to parenting and it means that you know, my sister and I are really tough and it also means my brother is a very good and emotional guy. It's been really worthwhile and very cool.

Speaker 6: Saying that her parents raised her and her sister to be tough is a bit of an understatement. Julia's dad was especially influential.

Julia Landauer: The way I learned how to be aggressive was one of the go kart races when I was fourteen, it was a national go kart race and I was really good in practice and qualifying but not in the race as much. I was just kind of not beyond edge and my dad woke me up early the morning of the second day of races and just grabbed me by the shoulders and screamed, "You need to rip their livers out," and went on as to how these boys were all upset that I was faster than them and so I needed to be just as angry and aggressive and go after them.

When I was eleven, I blamed my dad left and right for changes he made to the go kart and how they didn't help me and I ended up near the back and I was yelling at him and he looked down at me and said, "___ you." As an eleven year old, hearing that from your father, it was just like, whoa, I did something really wrong. He told me that regardless of if he had done something inherently wrong

to me or if I made a mistake in what I wanted changed, when it's me and the go kart out there, that's it and I have to make it work.

Speaker 6: You might consider Steve Landauer's tactics inappropriate, maybe extreme but Julia would disagree. According to her, he was building up her confidence to win races and it's working. She wouldn't be where she is now without his guidance.

Speaker 7: Cocrum will give no quarter to Landauer and Landauer is ratcheting up the pressure. The assault continues through turn number two, she is all over the back [inaudible 00:15:27] of Cocrum.

Speaker 6: Julia has learned that to rise to the top, she had to break the gender stereotypes that she thinks typically hold women back in male dominated industries, like professional racing. She has a list of grievances.

Julia Landauer: Niceness is a very passive trait and not enough to make anyone thrive. Women aren't aggressive and if women are aggressive that's a really bad thing but you need to be aggressive to go after your goals. Another assumption is that women take the victim role almost or maybe don't take responsibility for their actions because that's imposed by society and so, how to fight back and actually show that you can stand up for yourself, that's a big one. The last one is and the one that I find most personally offensive is that women are fragile and there's this idea that women are emotionally and physically fragile and we're not. If people don't treat us like we can handle it, then we're not going to be able to improve. Communities won't improve, businesses won't improve. It's a domino effect.

Speaker 6: Julia learned to give her best by shedding this notion of fragility and surrounding herself with colleagues who didn't buy into that either.

Julia Landauer: My team owner is not afraid to hurt my feelings and he knows that we're going to be the best if I get the most critical feedback. He will be the first one to tell me when I do something really well, but he'll also be the first one to tell me that I was a dumb ass and should have done something differently. The first race of the season I was stuck in second place and just couldn't make the pass on the first place guy and my team owner grabbed a headset in the middle of the race and just started yelling at me, "Julia, you're not ready to make the pass. You need to get up right next to him, set up and then pass him," and you know, he just wasn't afraid. Treating me as just another racer made me improve so well, it's been really liberating to have someone just treat me like everyone else.

Speaker 6: Is Julia too aggressive in her pursuit of her goals? Perhaps or maybe it's just the right amount of aggression, the kind that taught her how to win races and keep winning.

Speaker 7: White flag is in the air, the advantage continues to swell. It's up to 1.5 seconds. Julia Landauer is coasting to her first win in her first career start on Motor Mile

Speedway. What a race. Julia Landauer out of turn four, she'll see the checkered flag first. Your winner.

- Speaker 6: For you racing enthusiasts, some great news. After capturing the NASCAR Limited Sportsman Championship at Motor Mile last year, Julia Landauer is joining the BMR lineup in the NASCAR K&N Pro Series for 2016.
- Speaker 1: Slack, helping teams work better.
- Speaker 3: Channel change, big interview channel.
- Speaker 5: What's the strangest interview question you've been asked?
- Speaker 8: Strangest interview question I've ever been asked is what's my favorite movie.
- Speaker 5: What did you say?
- Speaker 8: I said Young Frankenstein and I realized I was talking to someone who was way too young to even know what that was. I didn't get the job.
- Speaker 9: We'd like to have you put the suit on and see what you can do. I was auditioning to be a mascot.
- Speaker 10: It was to be a host of a food show. They were dancing around questions, "Do I like to travel? Do I like to do this or that?" I was like, "Sure, I like to do all that stuff." Then there was a slight pause and then the woman said, "Would you drink horse semen?"
- Speaker 11: What's the strangest job question? What superhero would you be? I have been asked that one, that was a bit weird.
- Speaker 12: Are you single? For real. Coincidentally, I didn't get the job.
- Speaker 6: The theme for this episode is about throwing out the niceties. If you've been in the middle of a job interview recently, you'll realize the people conducting the interviews have done just that. Now they'll drill you with strange questions that have nothing to do with the job at all. Are they being jerks or is there a method to this HR madness?
- Speaker 13: We're a small organization, Miss Spencer. We find that getting along with people is pretty important. Do you think you can do that?
- Speaker 14: Oh yes, I think I can.
- Speaker 13: Fine. We'll see you Monday.

- Speaker 5: Oh, if job interviews were that easy today. Instead, you're more likely to face questions like this.
- Speaker 15: Who would win in a fight between Spiderman and Superman?
- Speaker 16: How many jellybeans can fit inside a 747?
- Speaker 15: Why are man hole covers round?
- Speaker 5: Yup, these are real job interview questions from huge companies. Crazy right? Maybe not. If these questions seem illogical, you might be a little surprised to know they are all about logic and today, you need to be prepared for these no matter what your interviewing for. Scott Dobrowski, of the online career site, Glass Door says this line of questioning started about fifteen years ago with Google's hiring process and since then, it's spread to countless corporations outside of the tech industry. You're really not safe anywhere.
- Scott Dobrowski: But the purpose of these bizarre questions is for an employer to test a candidate's critical thinking skills, how they think on the spot and also how they problem solve and what they want are employees who know how to tackle business challenges without being directed always or without a previous road map in front of them. A famous question that Google asks is, "How many cows are in Canada?" Jet Blue asks, "How many quarters would you need to reach the height of the Empire State Building," and then a great question at Dell, "What songs best describe your work ethic?" What all these questions have in common is they're all very open ended questions. However, each company is asking these questions for very different reasons.
- Speaker 5: Wait, there's actually a difference between describing a song or guessing how many cows are out there and it depends on which workplace it is?
- Scott Dobrowski: If you ask someone, as Spirit Airlines did to describe the color yellow to someone whose blind, that is not necessarily important for someone who is a telemarketer for instance, or someone who crunches data a lot. That's not the right bizarre question, however, describe the color yellow to someone whose blind, if you ask that of a flight attendant, or someone in customer service, that actually is very relevant because what you're touching on is asking the to communicate something that's a very sensitive situation to someone. That's important for that skillset.
- Speaker 5: The question about all these questions is how do we answer them and it seems like no one can. Describe the color yellow to someone whose blind?
- Speaker 17: Oh my goodness ...
- Speaker 18: Warm. Warm.

Speaker 19: Just imagine light.

Speaker 20: When you pee, that's what it looks like.

Speaker 5: Estimate how many windows there are in New York?

Speaker 21: A billion.

Speaker 22: Oh, it's fifty trillion.

Speaker 20: I'd like to say I don't give a ____.

Speaker 5: Daniel Levitan is a neuroscientist, a university Dean and the author of the bestselling book, *The Organized Mind, Thinking Straight in the Age of Information Overload*.

Daniel Levitan : The point of the question isn't to get an answer per se, it's to see the chain of reasoning. My favorite example of this is kind of well known in the tech community which is how many piano tuners do you think there are in Chicago? Answer the question for me now in real time, displaying your assumptions as you go. You might say things like, "The first thing I need to know is the population of Chicago," and maybe you don't know that but you estimate it. It's the reasoning process. How do you approach estimating? Right?

For that you might say, "I know it's not as big as New York and New York probably has ten million people, and it's not as small as San Francisco which I happen to know only has seven hundred and fifty thousand, so I don't know. I'm going to guess that Chicago has two million people." Then you might say, "How many piano tuners are there?" "I don't know but I can estimate how many pianos there are. There's probably pianos in hospitals and institutions and schools and thinks like that and then just sort of based on my own experience of walking around the neighborhood, maybe one out of fifty people has a piano."

Now you work that out from the population of two million and you figure out how many pianos there have to be and then you make some other assumptions. How many times a year does a person get their piano tuned? I don't know, once a year. Again, we're looking at order of magnitude effects, so people aren't getting their pianos tuned ten times a year probably. Then, how long does it take a piano tuner to tune a piano? Maybe two hours and then there's transportation time to get from house to another, so maybe you get three or four pianos done in a day. You work all this out, you figure forty hour week, two weeks vacation a year. You come up with a number.

Speaker 5: Uh, wow? But we're not going to tell you that number just yet. Scott from Glass Door reminds me there's always an answer, no matter how bizarre the question.

Daniel Levitan : The worst answer you can give is, "I don't know," or just a one word response.

Speaker 5: Keep your thinking caps on because these open interview questions are not going away anytime soon.

Daniel Levitan : This is not just a fad. I think innovation is moving at such a rapid pace that these forward thinking companies are going to have to stay a step ahead of the competitors meaning they're going to have to find people who can solve problems and questions that have never been posed before.

Speaker 5: Oh, and I promised the answer right? Here's the man himself.

Daniel Levitan : The number might be somewhere around seventy five or a hundred piano tuners but again, the point isn't how many there are, it's how are you able to adjust your thinking to a problem that has so many unknowns.

Speaker 5: Now that you're armed with how to answer one of these questions, run with this. How many clowns can you fit in a city bus if they're not wearing their floppy shoes? Best of luck.

Speaker 1: Slack variety pack. Tell us your weird job interview question. Tweet us @SlackHQ.

Speaker 3: Channel change, very scary channel.

Speaker 6: You know who can be real jerks, the kind that can hold you back? Spiritual entities. You heard me. One woman's job is to get rid of these jerks for you so you can get back to functioning at your optimal best.

Rachel Stavis: Yes, I pull entities out of people's bodies. That is what people normally call demons.

Speaker 23: Her name is Rachel Stavis and yeah, she knows what you're thinking. Dressed in jeans, a sweater adorned with a big heart and at least one semi visible tattoo, she's certainly not your grandparent's exorcist. She meets me at the side gate then leads me into her backyard guest house, designed she says to create a one way vortex so the demons she removes from people can go and never come back.

Rachel Stavis: You know, I never meant it to be a business. I had no interest in making it a business. I've been a writer most of my life and I do pretty well. I think it just sort of happened because once I could do it, people started coming and then through that, people shared that with other people and so now it's actually so many people now that I have waiting lists.

Speaker 23: Yeah, she still has a day job, Stavis is a writer. A few novels and credit as the woman who created Laura Croft Tomb Raider's back story but this exorcism thing, to her, this is no game. Rachel says she could always see demons and

entities even as a child and for a time, she was able to push it away. But after a major trauma happened to her as an adult, it all just came flooding back.

Rachel Stavis: You know when you go through Los Angeles there's a homeless man screaming at nobody on the street, like I could see who he was screaming at. It was everywhere and I was like, this is too much. I can't do it and it would not go away. No matter what, I could not push it away this time. I had to kind of accept that if it's here, I'm supposed to do something with this and once I accepted that, it started to regulate a bit. You don't want to take it everywhere so for example, if you're like in a spin class or you were in the theater or wherever, the last thing you want to do is know everybody has entities because what are you going to do? You're not going to go up to people and be like, "Hey, so by the way, just so you know, you got this. You need an exorcism?"

Speaker 23: No, you don't need a zoning permit to perform exorcisms in Los Angeles. She currently charges about a hundred and fifty dollars for the procedure and says she could even ask for more. Rachel doesn't advertise, there's no reason too frankly and I mean, where would you put an ad anyway? A Catholic Church bulletin night work but they're kind of the competition. Stavis says there's such a need for what she does, she could actually be working twenty four seven.

Rachel Stavis: I've had emergency ones at night and all kinds of stuff.

Speaker 23: This may be a new age practice where the demons are a form of energy but showing people she's on the side of the angels doesn't hurt so one of the walls is decorated with a lot of mainstream, religious icons. The client this afternoon is actress, Christina Kleeb who coincidentally, was in the 2007 remake of Halloween. Rachel's pretty much a self taught exorcist. She tells me there's no manual for what she does and it feels a little like a mixture of various cultural traditions.

Rachel Stavis: All right, so I'm going to sit with you for a minute and I'm just going to tell you what to expect and what's going on.

Christina: Okay.

Speaker 23: Kleeb is told to lay down on a covered mattress and close her eyes. There's an incantation Rachel gives to summon various masters, teachers and spirit guides to help with the cleansing.

Rachel Stavis: I ask you to protect the body and spirit during this cleansing but not the entities and energies that do not belong to the body or spirit.

Speaker 23: She lights some herbs on fire and it gives the air kind of an oily, gift shop feel. Then, Rachel picks up a shaker and we are off. She says she's guided by the entities only she can see. Kneeling beside her client, she uses her hands to pull them out, almost like she's weeding a garden. There are even moments when

she inhales the presence and blows it away. As it continues, Kleebs breathing becomes more intense. It's clear she is going through some kind of emotional process. Her hands clench and unclench and she starts to cry.

But there's none of that Hollywood stuff happening. No one's head spins around and no one throws up although Rachel says that has happened in the past. The lights don't flicker. Nothing falls off the walls although when the wind gently blew the door shut earlier, Rachel kind of tried to blame that one on the spirits. It all feels quite soothing considering there's a demon being banished. I do raise an eyebrow towards the end when an ornate dagger appears but it's carefully pressed to Kleebs feet then used to cut the ethereal ties over the body before it's put safely away.

Finally, a Tibetan gong sounds and we are done. There are more conversations about how the client will feel in the days ahead and the whole event takes about an hour. But I'm struck by how intimate the whole process is. It was like being a fly on the wall for a deeply, deeply personal therapy session, much of which I've chosen to leave out here for obvious reasons. Still, the end result according to Kleebs is great.

Christina: I felt like I released a lot of stuff and yeah, I bet you twenty years of therapy wouldn't release that much abandonment, fear, anger.

Speaker 23: Now to some, this may be the perfect example of the placebo effect. You feel better because you think you've been helped. Stavis says it's fine. You can look at it that way but it's the end result that matters.

Rachel Stavis: Whether you believe in it or you don't, it's helping people. So to me, from what I've seen, I know it's not placebo effect but from somebody who can't see what I see, that's a good perspective. This is who I am and if people can't handle that, then that's fine but I'm not going to keep myself a secret. Like if managers can't handle that or people you do business with can't handle that or your friends can't handle that or just people off the street are like, "What a weird girl," fine. Good. But I needed to be me.

Speaker 1: You've reached the end of episode nineteen. The don't jerk us around pack. Want to listen to one of these stories again or share a story with a friend? You can. Go to soundcloud.com/slacksingleservings. For more information about this podcast, go to slack.com/varietypack. Subscribe to this podcast on iTunes or Stitcher. Thank you for listening.

Speaker 2: Slack variety pack.

Speaker 4: All kinds of teams use Slack to do amazing things.