



# The Advisory Alliance 60-Second Email™

## ***Is Failure Truly Not an Option?***

*November 30, 2009*

*In this month's 60-Second Email™, we look at why education is so important to nation-wide succession planning.*

"If an educated work force is the nation's human capital, business is seeing a lot of subprime these days."

- from *An Educated Workforce*, Wall Street Journal, November 23, 2009

Recently the Wall Street Journal invited top CEOs and policy makers to Washington to discuss critical issues facing the United States. According to John Chambers, Chairman and CEO of Cisco Systems, and a Co-Chair of the assembled task force on Education:

"As we [the CEOs] went through the discussion today, it was a unanimous vote that [education] needs to be the top national priority - way above the economy, health care, energy or the environment."

Given where the economy is these days, and in light of the recent vociferous debates on health care, energy, and the environment, that's quite a statement.

But unfortunately, it's not surprising. In the last couple of years, I for one have heard increasing frustration from employers regarding the quality of talent in the labor pool. In a nutshell, many candidates just aren't prepared for the demands of work these days.

Now, full stop - the recent recession certainly has provided a sudden and unusual increase in the quantity of qualified talent in the labor pool. But this is a one-time blip up. This won't last forever. (Let's hope not. If it does, we'll have more extensive, systemic problems to deal with).

If we take a long-term nation-wide view of succession planning, what are we doing to ensure that the younger, less experienced talent in the labor pool will ultimately be capable and able to replace the more experienced talent that eventually will retire and leave the workforce?

Can we honestly say that a country can remain, in the long run, an economic superpower if it does not lead in the education of its citizens?



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Successful global companies will always invest where the best talent is. To do otherwise, is a losing proposition. This is particularly so today when companies are depending on the capability, drive, and versatility of its leaders, managers, and employees.

Consider your own organization as a microcosm of a nation. How long could it remain viable with second-rate talent? How long would customers tolerate it? And where is it currently getting its next generation of great leaders and managers? From inside? From outside? How successful is it in each? And why?

Human beings have this chronic tendency to deal with the urgent at the expense of what may be less urgent but equally, if not more, important. My major concern is that by the time education becomes an urgent national issue (aren't we there already?), it will be too late to stem the impact. Change will take generations, and our global economy moves at a much faster pace.

Businesses will continue to vote with their feet, and set up operations in regions with work-ready talent. Those people who are skilled and educated will be the most mobile and sought after. They will go where the jobs are. Those who are under-educated and under-skilled will not be mobile and will be left behind. It will be a knowledge-based meritocracy that will yield serious and dire socio-economic consequences.

I welcome your thoughts on what a forward-thinking nation and its business leaders should do to accelerate the education and capability of its citizens. Please click [here](#), join the conversation, and post your comments on our blog.

You can access all of our 60-Second Emails (TM), including last month's issue, "Now More than Ever, Offer One Hand to Shake and One Throat to Squeeze" via this link:

<http://www.advisoryalliance.com/newsletter.php>

Best regards,

*David*

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