



## The Advisory Alliance 60-Second Email™

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### ***But What Does "Be More Strategic" Really Mean?***

*October 28, 2010*

*In this month's 60-Second Email™, we suggest an easy way for both leaders and their employees to start being more strategic.*

One of the consistent themes we've seen in our leadership development and coaching work throughout these tough economic times is the need for (and felt pressure by) leaders and managers to "be more strategic".

Often the request/demand will come in the form of a conversation with one's boss, in which she/he will say at some point, "David, you simply need to be more strategic." Ideally, my boss would elaborate on what that actually means or looks like in terms of focus or leader behavior. But oftentimes, there's no elaboration, which is unfortunate.

The recipient of the request is often left confused, but unwilling to say so, lest he/she disappoint the boss or appear anything less than uber-competent.

In many respects, asking someone to "be more strategic", is a bit like asking someone, "How long is a piece of string?"

It's too vague, and it assumes the other person knows your intent.

Instead of asking your direct reports to be more strategic, instead ask them what they think 3 of *your* primary objectives are. If they are to be truly strategic, they must, at minimum, know how to support your objectives and your success (assuming that you too are properly focused on all things strategic).

Depending on the level of trust and candor you've established with your team, have them submit their answers with or without attribution. And let them know you're not going to "ding" them for getting it wrong...(and you won't, will you.)



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The purpose of this exercise is several-fold:

- 1) It requires you, as a leader, to have clear objectives.
- 2) It will reveal the extent to which you have been effective in communicating those objectives.
- 3) It forms a foundation upon which you can discuss how your people can "be more strategic". It gives them a context in which they can determine what they should do as a strategic leader.

And by helping them refer back to superordinate goals, by design you are challenging them to think more strategically.

The next challenge, of course, is getting them to *act* more strategically. Once again, a good place to start is with your objectives, and getting them to think what they must *do* and *achieve* if you, and hence their team/department/company (depending on the size of your organization), is to succeed.

If you are not currently a leader with direct reports, but instead report to a leader, why not have a meeting with him/her to confirm you know what the primary objectives are. Doing so would certainly be strategic.

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Do you know a strategic leader? Are you one? What do strategic leaders do that's different? Share your insights and examples with other readers on our [blog](#).

You can access all of our 60-Second Emails (TM), including the most recent issue, *Are You Paying the Price for Your Slow Burn?*, via this [link](#).

Until next month,

**David**

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