



The Advisory Alliance 60-Second Email™

What's Your Story? Why Should Anyone Care?

January 31, 2011

In this month's 60-Second Email™, we offer guidance on how to ensure your career security during a leadership transition.

For many of us, 2010 did, and 2011 will, involve a change in leadership. We either did get, or we will get, a new boss.

And with any change in leadership, there's an attendant change in security. To varying degrees, the new boss is an unknown entity. Sure, we may know something about him/her. But what will it mean for me personally, as one of his/her direct reports? Am I safe? Will I be safe?

Very important questions to ask, and more importantly, to have a confident answer of "Yes, of course."

Here's how to ensure, as best as possible, your own safety during a leadership transition.

First, let's take care of the obvious: You have to perform. If you haven't performed in the past, you're vulnerable. Pure and simple. And new leaders don't like excuses for why you haven't. Moreover, it makes you look weak if provide them.

Now to the topic at hand: Have your story ready. Keep it short, to the point, and impressive. Focus on 3 parts:

- 1 - My history with this organization.
- 2 - My responsibilities and accountabilities throughout that history.
- 3 - My impact, with a greater focus on the recent history in my current role.



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You should be able to tell this story in 1 - 2 minutes. And you should know the key points you want to stress, particularly the third part, your impact.

So for Part 1, provide a quick overview and timeline of your career path to date:

"I joined ABC Organization in 2005, as [title]. Since then, I have been promoted to [list successive roles]..." or "Since then, I have taken on [list various projects, assignments, etc. if you've not been promoted since joining]."

Part 2: Enumerate your key responsibilities and accountabilities for each role you've had:

"As [title], I was responsible for [A], and ensured that we achieved [Y]. As [next role in your career with the organization], I was responsible for [B], and made sure we accomplished [Z]..." And so on.

Part 3: Note your major accomplishments in your roles:

"Some of the success I'm most proud about is that I was able to / under my leadership, the team was able to / I helped [name of direct report] achieve /..."

The key here is to be specific and to the point. Think of it as a mental highlighter pen. What are your key accomplishments since you joined the organization, and particularly in the last 12 months? This is no time for modesty. Sure, don't be a boor about it. But from my experience coaching executives and managers, many err on the side of modesty or simply haven't taken proper stock of their impact.

So why is knowing your story so critical during a leadership transition?

At some point, your new boss will be asking others and you about you. As in, your new boss asks his/her peer, "Pat, you know David Harper. What's he like? What's he done for our organization?"

If your colleagues were asked these questions, could they provide the support you need to ensure your continued employment and career path?



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If you were asked these questions right now, could you? And could you do it without the "um's", or "uh's", or the meandering that bosses often find to be a sign of poor focus: "If David can't clearly tell me what he's done for this organization, what does that tell me about David?"

So have your story ready, ready to tell at anytime. You never know when that new boss of yours will drop by and say, "Hey David, do you have a few minutes?"

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How have you prepared yourself during leadership transitions? What recommendations do you have for fellow readers? 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, *Do You Lead Like a Dopey Parent?* via this [link](#).

Until next month,

*David*

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