



The Advisory Alliance 60-Second Email™

When Can You Smack Me Upside the Head?

August 9, 2011

In this month's 60-Second Email™, no, it's not easy. Yes, it is difficult. And anyone who suggests it's not, just doesn't know what they're talking about.

In this month's issue, I give you permission to smack me upside the head (metaphorically speaking, of course) if I ever make it seem or if I ever suggest that leadership is easy.

If you're like me, your inbox is full of newsletters and email articles on leadership and management. Many I don't read, because the author makes the mistake of suggesting that leadership is easy:

"The 5 Easy Leadership Skills to Being a Better Leader, Now"

"The 7 Easy Things Your People Want You To Do"

"10 Easy Steps to Becoming a Great Leader"

Question: Why do writers and consultants have this habit of making it sound like leading others is a simple 1-2-3 process? Connect the dots, and voila, you're a phenom as a leader.

Truth be told, I've not yet met a manager or a leader that I've respected, who's said that leading people is easy or simple. Those that have said it, often have an inflated sense of self, are out of touch with their people, or both.

Most good or aspiring-to-be-good leaders can show you the scars they've sustained because of the leadership mistakes they've made along the way. What impresses me about these leaders is their ability to admit their mistakes without scapegoating (i.e. "I took my best shot, and failed."), coupled with their determination to move forward.

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To quote the author Aldous Huxley (with apologies for the androcentric quality):
"Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him."

So leadership is not easy, irrespective of what popular authors and less-than-popular consultants imply or actually have the audacity to even state.

I've yet to see a simple, easy-to-follow-and-do road map for leadership success, but here are a couple of books I do recommend:

[The Feiner Points of Leadership](#) by Mike Feiner (full disclosure: Mike's a friend and was featured in our [September](#) and [October](#) 2005 *60-Second Email*).

[Leadership without Easy Answers](#) by Ronald Heifetz.

Feiner's book is a great, practical, how-to guide, and Heifetz's book is more theoretical; they'll make for good bookends in your leadership library.

So for anyone who's under pressure these days to deliver results (aren't we all?), and is truly feeling that pressure (ditto), don't worry. You're in good company, with the emphasis on "good".

It's not easy. It *is* difficult. And therein lies the challenge that makes the leadership journey worthwhile.

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Have an example of a great leadership book or article? Or an example of one you wouldn't recommend even to your worst enemy? Share your suggestions and your thoughts with other readers on our [blog](#).

You can access all of our 60-Second Emails™, including the most recent issue, *Why SMART Goals Can Be Dumb*, via this [link](#).



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Thanks for reading, and I always welcome your feedback and ideas.

Best regards,

*David*

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