



# The Advisory Alliance 60-Second Email™

## **Why Getting Buy-in Isn't Enough** **August 28, 2008**

*In this month's 60-Second Email™, we share why getting buy-in is never enough if you truly want to have a sustained impact for whatever initiative you're leading.*

So there I was, 20 years ago, standing at the alter. It was the end of April in Savannah, and it was warm and humid (go figure). And I was sweating like a human sprinkler. I had visions of teeny tiny men in equally small barrels going over the waterfalls off my forehead. Obviously it wasn't just the heat that led to the call-the-Guinness Book-people amount of perspiration. This was an important decision I was making, publicly. It was a big deal. And as I looked at my wife-to-be, the one overarching question I had was: Did I make sure to get enough buy-in from her?

Okay that last part was a complete lie. (The rest was true, including the thoughts about tiny men in barrels.) But I put forward the part about "buy-in" to make the point of how ludicrous it sounds and is. At times like that, when we're about to embark upon something of real significance and importance, getting buy-in is a joke. We don't need buy-in at these times; we want and need true commitment.

If you've ever sought buy-in from someone in your company or organization, you know it can be ephemeral. What seemed like commitment, can end up being a loose promise to show up at a meeting to say a few words, write an email or letter to launch the process, or lend someone's name to an initiative, as if that's all the momentum you'll need to launch this thing into the stratosphere of success.

What's needed is commitment, not buy-in.

Here's the difference between commitment and buy-in:

Buy-in means I show up to give a speech on why this initiative is important.

Commitment means I show up and say that I pledge my 100% support to this initiative, will be directly involved in it, and will give it my full support over the next year (and perhaps beyond, depending on its intended impact and duration.)

Buy-in is acquired via email, voicemail, or a hallway drive-by: "Hey Pat, can I count on your buy-in for this initiative? We really need it." Pat: "Sure, Dave. You got it."



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Commitment is secured via deliberate and thoughtful person-to-person discussion (which can include phone, email, etc.) A major difference is that commitment is further solidified, not just secured, as a result of seeking and getting it.

Buy-in is obtained from someone.  
Commitment is given by someone.

Buy-in is easy to get.  
Commitment is much harder to receive.

Buy-in says "Call me when you need me."  
Commitment says "We'll do this together."

Buy-in can be temporary and fleeting when things get tough and difficult.  
Commitment is precisely what sustains people when things get tough and difficult.

Buy-in is the short-term shortcut to getting things done.  
Commitment is the long-term process by which things actually get done.

Like most buzzwords, "buy-in" has had its day in the sun. If you wanted to get something accomplished, the easy answer was to get buy-in. But too often, "getting buy-in" provides a dangerous false sense of security. What often starts out seeming like a great partnership, often leaves you standing at the alter, alone.

You can access this and previous issues of our 60-Second Email™ newsletter via the following link to our website: <http://www.advisoryalliance.com/newsletter.php>

Until next month,

David Harper  
Managing Principal  
dharper@advisoryalliance.com