



The Advisory Alliance 60-Second Email™

Leadership Development By Yourself, By the Book ***September 29, 2008***

In this month's 60-Second Email™, we provide some suggestions for those leaders who are developing themselves on their own.

As of this writing, there are over 32,000 business and management books under "leadership" on Amazon. If you insisted on "leadership development", you still get more than 3,500 books. That's a lot of reading, and if you're looking to read one, you face several challenges:

1. First, you need to figure out which of the thousands is worth your time.
2. Then, you've got to find the time to actually read it.
3. Third, you'll need to remember what you've read, particularly if you've been reading over the course of several weeks or months.
4. And, finally, you'll want to apply some of what you've read and remembered, which for many of us is the most challenging part. If it was hard to find time to read the book, it's orders of magnitude more difficult to actually do the things in it.

So if you're stuck on step 4, where to from here? My suggestion is not to read more books on leadership. Leading people is incredibly difficult, while the well crafted writing and structured thought behind many leadership books gives the reader the sense that it should be more easily done. So don't find another book to learn even more about leadership; the law of diminishing returns applies here. Instead, keep the book close by: by your bedside, in your briefcase, car, knapsack, on your desk, etc. You found several items in the book that stood out for you; hopefully you marked them in the book or noted them down somewhere else. Use the book as a reference guide; refer to it.

So now what?

Of the several items in the book about leading more effectively that caught your attention, pick one, only one. Test to see if the author has been specific enough and whether you could actually do what he/she suggests. If the author is vague with things such as "True leaders are innovative and think outside the box", I'd recommend passing on that (unless all this time you've been holding back on your innovative-



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and-thinking-outside-the-box-ness"). It sounds great, but what does it mean? And moreover, how do you specifically do it? If you don't know, don't waste your time.

Next is where most of us fall down: the point where we actually have to go do it. Your gut will tell you if you've made the right choice. If viscerally you're feeling that this will be too hard to do, without outside support, you're probably right. So literally and figuratively, do a gut check. Do you want to do this? Will you be able to see yourself through it? Is doing it consistent with your definition of leadership, or are you trying to fit someone else's?

So make it as easy as possible for yourself. Pick one thing that fits with your vision of leadership, and give yourself the time to try it out and do it, and truly enough time to do it well. Rome wasn't built in a day, and the same with most leaders, particularly if you're the one driving your own leadership development.

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,

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