



The Advisory Alliance 60-Second Email™

Why Employees Are Like Children. ***June 29, 2007***

In this month's 60-Second Email™, we look at the similarities between employees and our children.

Before you hit the "Delete" button, and mutter something like, "What the &%\$#! is he saying? Employees act like kids?! Is he saying I act like a kid?!! Is that what he's saying? Hey, Harper, you wanna piece of me? D'you wanna piece of me?!!!"

No, I'm not saying employees act like children. I am saying that there are many similarities between our relationship as a parent to our children and our relationship as a leader to our employees. Consider the following:

- If our children do not surpass us, our society will stagnate and fail. In order for our society to advance, our children must, in general, go beyond the successes of their parents. We must be gracious and active losers in our children's success.
- If you, as a leader, do not ensure that one day your direct reports will surpass you in terms of their capabilities, skills and expertise, your company is doomed.
- Our children will often not let us be the type of parent we'd prefer to be, the one we feel most comfortable being. They have this habit of insisting that we be the parent they need us to be.
- Similarly, your employees will often not let you be the leader you'd like to be, the one that feels most comfortable for you. Their behavior and idiosyncrasies require you to be the leader they need you to be.
- We therefore can at times feel a bit at a loss, as our upbringing and our generation did not fully prepare us for the new issues and challenges of our children's generation.
- As a leader, our early experiences as associates and lower-level managers may lack the full inventory of attributes that we'll need to succeed at higher levels.
- Experience, though, does come with experience. We tend to learn from our first child what we should and shouldn't do with our younger children.
- The successes and "scars" from early leadership experiences can, at times, serve as useful guideposts for future leadership challenges.

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- Demanding a child's compliance is not the same as fostering self-control.
- The days of command and control are long gone. Your title may get you compliance from your employees, but it won't gain their commitment.
- Reading about being a parent is a whole lot easier than being one.
- As readers have heard me say before, self-help books on leadership sell because they don't work. Talk, and words, are cheap. Being a leader is infinitely harder than reading about leaders' hardships, triumphs, and attributes.
- Parenting done well is its own reward.
- Leading others to achieve that which they could not achieve on their own is its own reward.

To all Canadian readers, a very happy Canada Day! And to all American readers, a very happy Independence Day!

You can access this and previous 60-Second Emails™, as well as subscribe to our mailing list, via this link to our website: <http://www.advisoryalliance.com/newsletter.php>

Until next month,

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