



## The Advisory Alliance 60-Second Email™

### ***Which Are More Valuable: Laptops or Employees?*** **October 31, 2007**

*In this month's 60-Second Email™, we examine what we think, what we believe, and what we value.*

Which are more valuable: your company's laptops or your people?

I'm serious.

I often ask this question during presentations about the talent shortage, and the common response is not surprisingly, "People, of course!" And when I ask why, I'll hear something akin to "Because people are our most important asset." And when I then ask why they'd say *that*, there's a comment about how without people, the company's nothing. It couldn't operate; it couldn't compete.

But I'm not sure that's the final answer. Yes, I believe we all *think* that people are more important than laptops, but deep down I'm not sure that's what we truly *believe*.

Let me explain via the following. Pretend I visit your place of work, and I'm able somehow to evade security, reception, etc. and I find my way to an office or cubicle. The person who's normally there just happens to be out, and I see a laptop on his/her desk. I unplug it, collect up all the cables, walk out of the office/cube, and try to leave the building. And let's assume the company's state secrets aren't on the laptop.

If you saw me leaving with the laptop, what would you do? You'd probably yell for me to stop. You might call security. You'd at least do something to try to prevent me from stealing the laptop. And if I were to ask you why you're so upset, if you're like most people I ask this to, you'd say I'm *stealing*, that it's against the law, that you just can't do that kind of thing, etc.

Now suppose instead of stealing a laptop, I "steal" one of your key employees. I may tunnel in via email or by phone, and lure him or her away. Or I may do it at a business or networking function. Yes, you'd likely feel upset. Yes, you'd feel angry. But for some reason, deep down you aren't as irate and incensed as when I steal the laptop. I've even heard some people say

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it's the cost of doing business, but they'd never say that about stolen laptops.

To add insult to injury, I can call Dell or other companies and replace the laptop almost instantly. Furthermore, I'll probably get a better one at the same or lower price than the stolen one, and I'll have it in a matter of days.

But there is no 1-800 number to call to replace a stolen employee, let alone one with years of experience, who knows your people, customers, and culture so well.

So given that, what "locks" are you using to prevent the theft of your most valuable asset?

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

Until next month,

***David***

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