



The Advisory Alliance 60-Second Email™

Now More than Ever, Offer One Hand to Shake and One Throat to Squeeze October 23, 2009

In this month's 60-Second Email™, we offer a simple philosophy for leading during these tough times, even if you don't have people to lead.

Today more than ever, companies are looking for leaders. Not the kind to fill management or leadership vacancies. They're looking for employees, whether or not they have people under their direction, to step up and demonstrate a greater ability to contribute. They're looking for people to lead in terms of what they bring to the table each and every day.

In a different time, one might have argued that this stemmed from a short-term focus on corporate profits, from a desire to extend corporate profitability at the expense of the employee. Today, however, the increased expectations flow from an intensely competitive marketplace. If you feel the pressure of your boss's hand at your back, it's likely being placed there by your customers.

And so what's an employee-cum-leader to do?

Answer: Give people one hand to shake, and one throat to squeeze (...and both of those are yours).

First, make it easy and efficient for people, both customers and colleagues, to work with you. Particularly given the inter-dependencies at work these days, no one has the patience for being delayed or frustrated. That's the "one hand to shake".

Second, be a leader and take full responsibility for the work you need to get done. Commit fully to getting it done exceptionally well, and similarly, commit to fixing it immediately and completely when it's broken. That's the "one throat to squeeze".

Consider the following:

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Both my electric company and my cable company make it relatively easy to do business with them, which when things go well, means it's easy to pay my bill ("one hand to shake"). Now should I lose power at my home, with one phone call, I can find out from the electric company what went wrong and when service should be restored ("one throat to squeeze"). But if I lose cable service, the cable company can tell me only what went wrong; they can't tell me when service should be back. Isn't that kind of important for the customer to know? Don't their repair crews have cell phones, and aren't they a communications company? Why is it impossible to get a simple answer? Personally, that's too many throats to squeeze.

If your company is still in business, at this point it's likely made most, if not all, of the requisite structural changes in response to the economic decline. If it's like most companies, payroll has been trimmed, and there are few expectations of ratcheting up hiring plans anytime soon. Employees are expected to deliver exceptionally well to customers, both internal and external. And are expected to do so for some time to come.

Now more than ever, no one needs the runaround, and no one has the patience for a "not my job" or "I only work here" attitude. Bottom-line, if your people can't give your customers one hand to shake and one throat to squeeze, you'd better forget it. Because sooner or later, your customers will.

You can access all of our 60-Second Emails (TM), including our most recent issue, "Why You Should Know What Your Leaders Do" via this link:

<http://www.advisoryalliance.com/newsletter.php>

Have a comment on leaders or individual contributors who step up during tough times? Share your thoughts with our readers on our blog: <http://www.advisoryalliance.com/blog>

Best regards,

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The Advisory Alliance advises and works with Fortune 500 & Mid-Market companies to build their next generation of leaders and managers.

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