



LISTEN UP

Why should the boss listen to you?

By **James E. Lukaszewski, ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA, CCEP**

Certain boss behaviors are puzzling and irritating. The boss clearly seems to respect an employee's thinking when he hears it. But his habit is to constantly seek and listen to the observations of others. These other voices may have no concept of business continuity issues, resumption or crisis management, but some seem to have great sway.

How can employees get attention focused on the important things they have to convey, accept more of the recommendations made, ignore the other voices and get decisions made faster? It's an issue that can be extremely frustrating.

REMEMBER YOUR ROLE

The first thing to remember is whose bus you're riding on. It's their's, never yours. Leaders can take this bus wherever they care to drive it. Your job is to help them get to any destination they choose in the most efficient, effective and direct manner possible. This is one of the hardest lessons for all staff advisers to learn. Leaders and bosses like hearing from many voices before making important decisions. It is rare, in reality, that any leader relies on a single adviser for every decision.

Another reality is that many consultants inside or outside

believe their voice is so powerful, their advice so crucial, that they must be heard. Remember, bosses are in charge because they make the decisions, choose the ingredients of success and ultimately shape the future to fit their perceptions of strategy and organization goals. If, as a consultant or adviser, you feel your advice is so crucial that the boss absolutely must take it, it's time for you to chill out, take a break, step back and recognize just what your role is.

EASY DOES IT

Your job, the job of any adviser, is to help the boss see what the next increments are in moving a strategy to success. Remember that word increment. The communications adviser is always looking for the silver bullet or the big idea—but, they are extremely rare. The technical consultant, often feeling a kinship with the leader, because their thought processes are so similar, thinks the boss just has to listen. The boss gets to look for the ingredients of their solutions anywhere they choose, from anyone they feel has relevant input.

Yes, bosses are solution driven. But advisers, to be truly effective, need to be incrementalists, helping the boss gather input from many voices and sources. Then, from those increments, fabricate the next steps in the process of success or change. This requires that the adviser stop resenting the views of others. In fact, this resentment is similar to a child's response to a parent spending more time with one child over another.

SITUATE YOURSELF

Be professional. Stay at altitude. Look at the entire process and the bosses' goals. Find ways to make strategic suggestions and help with advice on the tactical portion where appropriate—but always remembering that it's the bosses' prerogative to assemble a solution. They will always listen to more than a single voice. When crises occur, bosses often bring in hoards of consultants. It isn't that they don't trust the people inside, it is because crises often can be career-defining moments. Leaders are uncomfortable, sometimes even scared, and want all the voices they can find before they make the decisions that can affect the rest of their working life.

Maintain your perspective, be ready with options to suggest and work to be among the last people the boss speaks to you before key decisions are made. When appropriate, have ready the names of other key advisers the boss should be talking to and suggest them early in the process. This is truly the sign of a trusted, strategic adviser. Do these things and the boss will have to listen to you, and he or she will call you in sooner and more often.

Have a question for Jim Lukaszewski? E-mail him at crisisguru@e911.com. Make your subject line "CPM Questions." Include your full contact information, including telephone number and e-mail address. If your need is urgent, please clearly say so. If you'd like your questions answered in this column, please say so. Contact Lukaszewski directly at (914) 681-0000, or visit his Web site at www.e911.com. All questions and answers used in these columns become the property of the CPM Group and may be used in other media and products.

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