

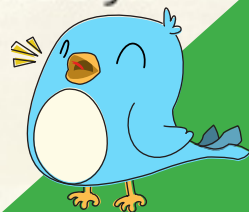


WHAT TODAY'S BOSS REALLY WANTS

You may be surprised to learn that today's boss wants you to think more.

And do less.

By Ken Revenaugh



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WHAT TODAY'S BOSS REALLY WANTS FROM YOU

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You've probably met or will meet fellow employees who are perfectly happy to work within the system. They're the ones who:

- Always follow the company manual to a T. Check.
- Always use the current processes. Check.
- Always do things pretty much the way things have always been done. Check and double check.

Then there are the other types. While handling their jobs, they're always thinking...thinking

"Accepting the status quo can be dangerous to your career."

about new and better ways to do things. Every company needs great thinkers like these. They are rare and highly valued.

THINK FAST: WHO INVENTED THE LIGHT BULB?

General Electric is indebted to that great thinker, Thomas Edison, who founded GE. Why? Because over the years, Edison has been credited with ringing up billions of dollars in light bulb sales for GE. However, Edison is not credited with inventing the first electric light bulb, as many people believe. Other designs from other inventors preceded his.

(SEE 'DID YOU KNOW?') GE is indebted to Edison for thinking of a way to perfect the first commercially practical incandescent light bulb and mass-produce it. You could say he thought of a way to reinvent the electric light bulb.

To be a hero, you don't always need to invent the solution; you need to come up with a better way to address it. Just as Edison recognized that he could take the light bulb to the next level, you can identify and solve problems at work. Don't accept the status quo. Become a thinker like Edison and maybe you, too, can be a hero!

DID YOU KNOW?

Edison did not invent the first electric light bulb!

It's true. In 1878, Thomas Alva Edison merged his company, Edison General Electric, with Thomson-Houston Electric Company to form General Electric, in Menlo Park, New Jersey. But Edison did not invent the first electric light bulb. Earlier inventors had developed several designs before Edison, including the patent he later purchased. These designs, however, could only stay lit for a few minutes before burning out. What Edison did invent was the first "commercially practical" incandescent light bulb.

'DO, DO, DO' OFTEN RESULTS IN JUST A PILE OF 'DOO-DOO'

Here's another example of how always accepting the status quo can be dangerous to your career. It comes from a good friend of mine, Bill Doolittle, who was once tasked with turning a company around that was basically in a death spiral. Bill said everyone at this company always stayed busy, yet the business was failing miserably. "They just do, do, do," he said. "And that's why they ended up with a pile of doo-doo." No one was thinking. All the employees felt valuable because they all had a list of tasks to do every day. Ultimately, they were always just checking the boxes and going home. Nobody was thinking of the future.

Bill met many people at this company who proudly called themselves the firefighters – the problem solvers – or so they believed. But the more he learned, the more he realized they were actually arsonists. They set the fires (caused the problems) so they could swoop in as rescue heroes.

QUANTITY VS. QUALITY: AND THE LOSER IS...

Author and researcher Neil Rackham wrote, "When emphasis is placed on quantity, quality usually suffers." I often come in contact with executives who confirm this, saying that what they would really appreciate, more than anything, is for their employees to think more.

In my role in corporate America, I often ghostwrite key presentations, speeches and letters for top executives. I often hear from frustrated executives. One memorable quote, "I want them to use the gray matter between their ears to analyze the situation and reach conclusions." This is a common sentiment.

GIVE THE BOSS SMART THINKING, CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Following is a memo describing a process you may use to help yourself or others to think smarter, and communicate clearly. It is a blend of many letters that I have seen leaders use to communicate this idea to their teams. Using this process, I believe you will see the great value and impact your thinking and opinions can have on your company and your career.

"When emphasis is placed on quantity, quality usually suffers."

Team,

During my travels over the last two months, I have been impressed by your knowledge of our business and industry. Everyone on the executive team appreciates your enthusiasm and commitment to communicating expectations with customers. From the start, I have embraced an “open lines” communication philosophy. We must do this to remove obstacles, successfully meet/exceed customer expectations and rapidly close deals.

With this in mind, I need your help... We are drowning in lengthy e-mails, attachments and broad issues. We need concisely articulated communication, including easily prioritized, specific and actionable recommendations.

Starting now, I am counting on you to:

1. Evaluate situations and reach conclusions.
2. Identify the most important aspects of the situation and make recommendations.
3. Understand that you are expected to do more than just recognize an issue. You are expected to reach logical conclusions. It all begins with curiosity. Be curious about everything we do. Evaluate the current situation and make your recommendations.

Present a simple business case format using these guidelines:

- Situation – What is the situation? Provide a brief description (less is more).
- Complication – What is complicating the situation? What is the timetable to react?
- Options – What are the two or three options? Is there a cost? What are the benefits and risks?
- Recommendation – What is your recommendation and why?
- Implications – What does it mean to our client/our business? What if we don't take action?
- Next steps – What needs to be done, and by whom, to implement the recommendation?

I don't expect details this extensive for everything you do or we do, but I do expect this line of thinking. It will help each of us learn more about the business and our customers, and will help us all grow professionally. If you have an idea, think it through and see what conclusions this process will lead you to discover. Before you engage anyone, make sure you've thought about what/how you are communicating. Remember, we are all often working remotely and a message that can be understood quickly on a BlackBerry will ensure quick action.

You are all smart and talented; but none of us individually is as smart as all of us collectively. Together, we can be outright brilliant if we invest a little effort in how we communicate and use our time as effectively as possible.

All the Best,
(Leader's name)

COMMUNICATE TO WIN AND BECOME A HERO

Before you distribute a team memo at your company like the one shown, first put your thinking cap on and go through the processes yourself. That will take practice, perseverance and patience, and there are no shortcuts. Analyzing problems, developing solutions, communicating their impact and getting your ideas implemented are difficult paths to navigate in corporate America. Learn how to accomplish this successfully, and you'll become a company hero. And heroes tend to get ahead faster.

**"My workshop, Communicate to Win,
can help get your ideas
implemented, and make you a hero."**

I've been testing my own processes for over 20 years. I'm now teaching them in a workshop I've developed called "Communicate to Win." The feedback I've received indicates there are heroes in the making. You can find more information about "Communicate to Win" on my website: www.FastTrackTools.com



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