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Q: I've attended a few of your seminars, and one thing that you've recommended is that people read Jack Welch's book.

Jim Lukaszewski: Absolutely. In the book, I list 13 or 14 different management literature (sources) people should be reading. Welch's book is important because it is the diary of someone, pretty much in current time, who is a business CEO. It is how he got the job, what he went through, what he thought about.



He spent the first 10 years firing 200,000 people. They called him Neutron Jack. In the last 10 years he rebuilt the company. There are marvelous management lessons in this book, which is why so much is still written about him. There's a new book about him every year written by other people.

My point is, really the larger point is, if you want to advise leaders, you have to study leadership and you have to study leaders. I advise people to read about military leaders. Most of the biographies we have are in politics or of military leaders. There are wonderful lessons about how these people think, how they make decisions, what bothers them, where they fail and where they succeed. You have to become a student of leadership to be an effective coach for leadership.

Again, if all you have to offer is what reporters are going to do with something the guy says, he knows that already. He doesn't need you to tell him that. You need to do a few things with these people. One is you have to tell them things they don't already know. They know a lot. That's why they're driving a bus and you're not. The second thing is you have to help them with what to do next because the greatest challenge of leadership is there's nobody to tell them where to go—that's their challenge and their job.

Any way you can help them determine what the next steps are, or what the next ingredients are, or what the next elements are, and what they're supposed to be doing, this is valuable. It may be a communications component and it may not. More than likely, it is. Communication is one thing that pervades every level of management.

Again, if that's all you have to bring to the table, they feel they know this stuff and they won't listen to you.

One of the greatest deficiencies we have as staff advisors is we lack so much knowledge. We normally ask questions, and we have to learn on somebody else's nickel what this is all about. Then we go away for a while and think these things through, write a memo, write a note, do something, do a plan or something, and then we come back a little while later and offer our wisdom, as it were. The problem is that managers work in real time.

When you're asked a question or you attend a meeting where they make a decision or are thinking things through, when you leave that meeting and go away for an hour, half a day, a day or a week, by the time you come back they've moved on, so your information is old and your advice is probably outdated.

Quite often what I see is staff people leave and what they bring back to the boss is a report of what they learned from the previous meeting, not the next steps. Who needs that stuff? Nobody. It's yesterday. We're already working for tomorrow.

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Jim's new book, [Why Should the Boss Listen to You: The Seven Disciplines of the Trusted Strategic Advisor](#), will be released mid-February. Copies may be preordered at [Amazon.com](#). Jim may be reached at [www.e911.com](#).

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