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# Money

Current Conditions

June 11, 2008

## Number 2: This one's for you

By SHARON ASCHAIK, SPECIAL TO THE SUN

You may be your boss's right hand, but do you really have her ear? How can you convince your manager of the value of your ideas?

They're the burning issues faced by those wanting to be the No.1 number 2 to their bosses, and they're tackled head on in a new book, *Why Should the Boss Listen to You? The 7 Disciplines of the Trusted Strategic Advisor* (Wiley, \$29.99).

### TRUSTED ADVISERS

Author James E. Lukaszewski, a crisis and management leadership expert, gears his book to consultant advisers to senior managers, as well as company operations people -- the number 2s -- seeking to gain influence and become key trusted advisers. He does so by breaking down the crucial disciplines that trusted advisers must master to obtain and maintain the confidence of leaders, which include being trustworthy, developing a management perspective and advising constructively.

The book kicks off by dissecting the common dynamics in the leader- adviser relationship, and talks about the importance for advisers to be big picture thinkers, view work issues from the perspective of their managers, and develop expertise beyond their immediate staff role.

### 'EXPERTISE'

"Look around at those in the inner circle, those whom the bosses consult routinely, and ask yourself why these people are more sought after than you or your colleagues. One of the crucial reasons is that they bring this real sense of expertise to the boss's territory," Lukaszewski writes.

Part of becoming an essential number 2 is understanding how leaders think and operate, and Lukaszewski discusses the various pressures and obstacles they face in today's ultra-competitive global marketplace, what matters most to them and the kinds of solutions they're seeking.

He suggests advisers read the same publications many leaders use to keep themselves informed, such as *Harvard Business Review*, *Forbes*, *Fortune* and the *Wall Street Journal*.

"Studying leadership should lead you to discover more interesting ways to be of service, to create more powerful and purposeful ideas and suggestions, and to develop a deeper understanding of how you can help those you advise achieve bigger and better things on a regular basis," he writes.

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Leaders appreciate advice that's practical, pragmatic, purposeful, focused and fair, he writes, and consultants or advisers should test the quality of their recommendations before offering it by asking themselves the following five questions:

- Does it help the boss achieve his or her objectives and goals?
- Does it help the organization achieve its goals?
- If the answers to questions 1 and 2 are yes, is the project truly needed?
- What aspect of the business will fail or fail to progress if the recommendation is ignored or delayed?
- How does this suggestion save money, make money or conserve money?

Further into the book, Lukaszewski covers the importance of being trustworthy to build credibility with superiors, and strategies for building trust, the key ingredients of which are: candour, credibility, competence, integrity and loyalty.

"As you move up in authority, responsibility, and power, trust becomes increasingly crucial because this ingredient in the relationship is what permits, sanctions, and protects interpersonal openness, candour, truthfulness, and face-to-face engagement," he writes.

Advisers should work on enhancing the way they communicate with their leaders to become "verbal visionaries" by, for example, expressing the facts of a case well, presenting ideas through stories, and offering a variety of perspectives to work through a problem.

A discussion in chapter seven about strategic thinking deals with the variety of management styles, but emphasizes that on the whole, strategic thinking is always positive and future focused.

This ties into chapter nine's emphasis on advising constructively, which involves presenting concepts and ideas in ways that suit the leadership style, skills and experience of a manager. Lukaszewski offers a handy six-step drill readers may follow to structure and improve the way they provide strategic recommendations.

In concluding, he says the most important step to becoming a trusted strategic adviser is "making your personal commitment to becoming one, then publicly and purposefully undertaking the steps and decisions to achieve your goal."

## KEY STRATEGIES

In *Why Should the Boss Listen to You?* author James E. Lukaszewski says a trusted strategic adviser is committed to:

- Understanding that leaders think and operate with a focus on solutions; understanding the pressures and obstacles leaders face, what matters from the leader's perspective.
- Recognizing and anticipating what leaders expect.
- How does this suggestion save money, make money or conserve money?

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- Understanding that leaders think and operate with a focus on solutions; understanding the pressures and obstacles leaders face, what matters from the leader's perspective.
- Recognizing and anticipating what leaders expect.
- Studying leaders and leadership to understand their patterns of thinking, decision making and action taking.
- Having a relationship with leaders built on trust and service.
- Practising the disciplines of the trusted strategic adviser: being trustworthy; becoming a verbal visionary; developing a management perspective; thinking strategically; being a window to tomorrow; advising constructively; and showing the boss how to use your advice.



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