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REPORT ON BUSINESS

Commit to communicate well

By HARVEY SCHACHTER
Wednesday, August 20, 2003 - Page C2

Great Communication Secrets of Great Leaders

By John Baldoni, McGraw Hill, 219 pages, \$20.99

Communication is seemingly the easiest of leadership behaviours, but as we all know from experience it's the hardest to carry out consistently and is therefore the cause of many executive stumbles.

"The reason people find communications difficult is that it takes so much commitment. Often leaders are so busy doing all the other important things related to managing systems and people that they simply run out of time and thus do not communicate effectively," consultant John Baldoni writes in *Great Communication Secrets of Great Leaders*.

"Communications requires discipline, thought, perseverance, and the willingness to do it again and again every day."

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Closing Markets

Wednesday, Aug. 20		
S&P/TSX	63.58	7474.91
DJIA	16.45	9428.9
S&P500	2.61	1002.35
Nasdaq	21.62	1761.11
Venture	14.65	1249.73
DJUK	-.63	176.21
Nikkei	117.96	10292.06
HSeng	-33.96	10475.33
DJ Net	1.1	61.95
Gold (NY)	+4.00	367.00
Oil (NY)	+0.25	30.95
CRB Index	-0.48	236.09
30 yr Can.	+0.03	5.35
30 yr U.S.	+0.04	5.29
CDN\$ buys		
US\$	-0.0007	0.7131
Yen	-0.8500	84.2900
Euro	+0.0003	0.6420
US\$ buys		
CDN\$	+0.0015	1.4024
Yen	-1.0600	118.2100
Euro	+0.0013	0.9003

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Business Poll

Have summer vacations made life difficult at work?
Yes, I'm doing the work of three people
Yes, all my customers are away
No, I'm rested and ready to go
No, what vacation?

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He identifies four types of leadership communicators.

The Expert: This person is the keeper of the organization's mission, understanding it clearly and knowing what it takes to fulfill that mission. He or she knows their subject matter well, and presents material in a fact-based, low-key way. Mr. Baldoni lists as an example U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, although the book appeared before his speech to the United Nations on Iraq, which probably didn't quite fit in this category.

The Visionary: These leaders' ardent belief in their cause -- which flows passionately from within -- outweighs their words. Example: Computer pioneer Steve Jobs.

The Coach: Part visionary and part expert, the coach is a collaborator, out to change the organization one person at a time. "They look for the unique way to communicate to an individual by discovering what motivates that person," Mr. Baldoni notes. Example: Vince Lombardi.

The Transformer: Again a mixture of visionary and expert, these leaders lean heavily toward the visionary, using their selling skills to change minds and convince people to come along with them. Example: Mother Teresa.

Once you understand your style better, he says the next stage is to determine why you are speaking.

Is it to explain? Conveying information is the most common feature of communications, be they large presentations or one-on-one encounters.

Is it to overcome objections? Often leaders are trying to overcome objections and they need to structure their remarks around this purpose. It may require thinking through in advance the questions you are likely to encounter and the best responses.

Is it to sell or persuade? You become a pitchman or pitchwoman, selling a new product or a new way of doing things.

Is it to celebrate? At times a leader must be the chief celebrant, be it at an informal ceremony marking somebody leaving the company or a large, formal organizational event.

Is it to entertain? Sometimes you are being asked to be lighthearted, for example at a retirement party.

Credibility is at the core of communications. You need credibility to communicate effectively. And communicating effectively should bolster your credibility.

Mr. Baldoni warns leaders to speak the truth: "Tell people what the facts are. Be straight with people." Never promise more than you can deliver. And then do what you say you will do.

To be successful, your communication must be received and understood. One useful

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technique he recommends is the "brief-back," where rather than simply asking if what you said was understood and accepting a noncommittal nod of the head, you ask the individuals to tell you what you have told them and what they will do as a result.

Mr. Baldoni spices up his guide to the intricacies of communications with illustrative segments on some great communicators, such as Winston Churchill, Oprah Winfrey, Rudolph Giuliani, Mr. Lombardi and Mr. Powell. But the mixture isn't totally satisfying and doesn't live up to the book's title, with many of those sections being general leadership profiles rather than focused on communication secrets. As well, while most leadership communication is one-on-one, the book is weighted to formal presentations.

In Addition: *Why Smart Executives Fail* (Portfolio, 319 pages, \$40) by Sydney Finkelstein of Dartmouth's Tuck School of Business is the fourth book in recent months focusing on the reasons leaders fail. In many ways it's the best of these books, although it requires more work as it presents a seemingly endless series of reasons and you have to sift through all the possibilities to spot the danger signals for yourself or your company. Mr. Finkelstein spent six years studying 51 failing companies in four different categories -- new business breakdowns; innovation and change; mergers and acquisitions; and bad strategy -- uncovering the reasons before developing some general messages and a list of seven habits of spectacularly unsuccessful people. Particularly insightful are the stories of the otherwise savvy executives who ignored all the signs their company needed to change course, but failed to heed them.

Just In: The various articles over the years in the Harvard Business Review by eminent management writer Peter Drucker have been collected in a book, *Peter Drucker on The Profession of Management* (Harvard Business School Press, 201 pages, \$26.95).

In recent years San Francisco consultant Patrick Lencioni has put together three nifty fables that each had some powerful ideas for executives to consider: *The Five Temptations of a CEO*, *The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive* and *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. They are now combined in a boxed set, *The Leadership Fables of Patrick Lencioni* (Jossey-Bass, \$76.95).

If you are intrigued by appreciative inquiry, the new system for building change by focusing on the positive, you may be interested in *The Appreciative Inquiry Summit* (Berrett-Koehler, 310 pages, \$47.95) which is a guidebook to undertaking the process.

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