

Corporate Survival Guide: The Excerpt

By Bob Pladek

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Quite honestly, I've seen a dog eat another dog's you-know-what; I've seen dogs eat things even the cat threw up -- and then throw it up themselves -- and then eat it again; BUT NEVER YET seen a DOG eat a DOG, unless it was what had once been a hotdog several years ago.

Corporate survival guides run the gamut from "dressing for success" to "staying on top of hi-technology" (as opposed to the more tried and true method of "staying on top of the boss's low-technology") to how-to's on dealing with everyone from the top executives (reasonably unimportant) to the internal security guys (extremely important).

While I will soon have available for purchase a little book with the working title "All you need to no" that tells ya how to make it in the corporate world, I'll give you a sample, a free tasting of TWO simple survival techniques:

(1) Executive Carousel; the DT's

Most small, unprofitable subsidiary companies are places where soon-to- be-retired executives from the mother company, or execs who have otherwise outlived their usefulness, are placed to ensure the subsidiary remains both small and unprofitable. You could just try to wait them out...but there seems to be an unending supply of these folks. As the company unprosper, executive quality nosedives past a point believed to be humanly possible. Sort of a reverse "what's good for GM" thing. If you're stuck in one of these lesser appendages, you can expect zero help in getting any movement back into it. The bosses are gonna get their nice, fat retirement packages, regardless. You, you poor working stiff with the cheap substance abuse problem, you have to rely on the dopey company staying around long enough for your children to be fed and educated at some community college. So try to keep them in business, but for God's sakes don't tell them how you're doing it. They won't understand, and it'll simply make them nervous.

Working is always risky business. So practice the DT's: "Do Things. Don't Tell."

- Make the necessary phonecalls. Don't tell.
- Work that supplier over until he gives you the price you want at a price he can't afford. Don't tell.
- You want that lady? Fine. Don't tell.
- That lady want you? Have another drink. Don't tell.
- Realize that the CFO has been skimming million\$ for years? Tell.

But DON'T tell.

- Realize YOU'VE been finally caught skimming hundred\$ for years? Time to tell about the CFO.
- Executive toilet stopped up?

... What, you kidding?

(2) Screaming Me Me's

Every organization has its screamers, people who try to make up for in volume what they can't make up for in competence. While you're tempted to retort with far less inane if off-subject derisions ("Didn't you know it's dangerous for fat people to get that excited")("Who do you sleep with to get out of this job?") ("Thanks for your opinion but I always consider the source.") ("A little louder please, so the competition can relax.")

don't.

There are two proven ways to handle Me Mes:

The "HaHa" Wait for them to finish yelling, or at least catch a breath, and tell them a joke having nothing at all to do with them, the company, or the subject of the scream (assuming you can tell what the scream is about, which often isn't easy)

"Uh huh. Hey, did you hear the one about the..."

This is practically guaranteed to take them aback, make them rewind and come at you with something clever like "What are you talking about?! Didn't you hear what I said?!"

Having committed to this course of inaction, you will need to tell another joke.

Chuckle a little, first, maybe slap your leg:

"Heh heh. Yeah, that's a good one. (slap) But I think this one's funnier. Seems there was a chicken, a cat..."

Now one of two things will happen. The Me Me will try once again to get it into your thick skull that the Me Me has something important to say and you're not listening, in which case you may have to tell yet ANOTHER joke (some people prefer just telling the first one again: your call, whatever you're most comfortable with), or the Me Me will flee in disgust. If you're really brazen, you call out to the Me Me as they are leaving "No, wait. Don't leave. There was this salesman, see, and one night....."

"I don't understand"

You may feel a bit of an idiot, which fits the Me Me's view of you perfectly, but "I don't understand" works wonders. Repeat it many times. It doesn't matter that you actually DO understand, although that gives you an added edge, and can improve your timing. Say this often enough and the Me Me will get so flustered and lost in rage that the Me Me will begin spouting things so insane that even the Me Me will have to admit that there is no way you could understand what the Me Me is so upset about.

I once did 10 "I don't understand"s in the space of 3 minutes. It is really fun. Making a Me Me crazy---extra points for red-face, big bonus ones for suicidal -- is one of the joys of working, and highly, highly recommended.

Remember, my friends, corporate survival isn't just about keeping your job. It's about keeping your job without having to do things, or NOT do things, that could cause you to LOSE your job. After all, its THINGS that get you in trouble. Few people get in trouble over nothing.

(see myDeas: "Nothing")

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Bob Pladek actually attended, graduated from, and secured a good position as a result of law school. Not a big enough liar to make it to retirement, he does what he always did: speak his mind, however little he has to say. Only now he doesn't get paid much for it.

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