

# GOVERNMENT LEADER **MANAGING FOR RESULTS**

## Hope dealer: a new kind of government leader

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### COMMENTARY

We love to fire leaders. In business, it's good for the stock. According to Burson-Marsteller, stock price appreciation of S&P 500 companies averages 1.5 percent on the announcement of a new CEO. And when the board fires the CEO, a company's stock price increases 3 percent. Is it any wonder that leadership tenure has fallen to less than five years? Not only does Wall Street welcome new leaders, it rejoices!

Our reverence for firing leaders does not only apply to business leaders. It extends to coaches, sitcom characters and, on occasion, teachers (with the exception of those with tenure). When things aren't working, we fire the leader. It's human nature.

This phenomenon surely extends to government leaders as well, both elected officials and professional administrators. The question is: Why do we rejoice? It's simple, really. New leaders, by virtue of their mere novelty, are signs of hope. Could this leader be our savior? This then begs a second question: Why wait to be fired to send messages of hope? I believe it is because we do not know how. We, as leaders, do not often talk about hope or consider it a competitive advantage. The irony, however, is that government leaders are dealers in hope.

When people look to leaders, they are looking for reasons to believe—in the organization, in the future and, fundamentally, in you, the leader. Learning to use hope to your advantage could be the single greatest skill you can master.

Here's why. There is a silent revolution under way in our organizations. It is a revolution caught between apathy and the eternal search for meaning. It is a revolution of hope rising. What does it all mean? Why am I here? And what are you, my employer, going to do to help me figure it out?

We've helped restructure, reorganize and re-engineer. We've innovated, executed and gone from good to great. We're fully outsourced, outspoken and outside the box, but now what? Isn't there supposed to be a pot of gold at the end of every rainbow? If so, then why are so many employees asking this question: Why doesn't the stuff in *my* pot shine? Where has hope gone?

Consider this: According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, average 18- to 34-year-olds

invest only 2.9 years in a job before looking to greener pastures. If young people have lost hope, have we all? Regardless, they leave. And when they do, for them, hope is restored. And then the cycle repeats itself. No wonder despair is the single largest drain on workplace productivity on the planet.

According to the World Health Organization, depressive disorders account for the greatest cause of disability in the world. In WHO's annual World Health Report, *Mental Health: New Understanding, New Hope*, researchers discovered that more than 36 percent of all years lost to disability are due to mental illness. This is a crisis. However, those who suffer from clinical illness are not the only members of this revolution, we all are. We all want answers.

I believe we, as business and government leaders, have reached the point of diminishing returns when it comes to *thinking* differently. We are all “outside the box,” secretly wanting to climb back in. Therefore, in order to remain relevant, government leaders must bring more than their vision to work. They must bring their beliefs. There is a difference. The most successful government leaders of our time will be remembered as much for their beliefs as for their ideas. They will be remembered for their hope. The challenge to government leaders is one of training and development. The good news is that some leaders have figured it out, and, as I have discovered from studying this phenomenon, hope can be learned.

There is no better time to think about believing than now. Start a new conversation. Put hope to work. The coming revolution is a call for consciousness—a call for meaning. If you believe that people are your greatest asset, then you must understand how to lead through this silent revolution. Answer the call. Deal in hope.

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