

Required Reading for Growing Companies



CEO Self-Examination

caskey's corner

By Wayne Caskey
for Smart CEO

More introspective rumination from our resident poet, Wayne Caskey

When you sit alone

At hours odd,
And ask yourself
How'm I doing,
Really doing,
For the company, for myself?

Here's an aid
For this most important query.

* * *

I had a work specialty
Before I took the helm,
Have I jettisoned it
As ruler of the realm?

Or, do I fall back upon
That which served me well?
When doing so, may end
My company, pell-mell?

* * *

Now that I'm here,
In this plush office.
What do I do as master
Not as novice?

Pick good people, motivate?
Have a vision, articulate?
Establish trust, facilitate?
Enthusiasm, generate?

Orate, gesticulate?
Sometimes dictate?
Delegate, ruminate?
Provide a long-term template?

* * *

So, when all smile at me
And pat me on the back,
Parrot back my words,
And say I nothing lack,

What say I to myself
In all the outward fuss,
What inner anchor cling to
Amid the surface muss?

How clearly do I see
Myself and others, too?
What inner inventory
Clarifies my view?

How many true friends have I
Who value me for myself,
While business acquaintances
Wait to put me on the shelf?

Do I appoint directors,
Fiduciary pledge unblurred
By compensation packages
And pension rights incurred?

Do those above, below me

Tell it like it is,
To save me the embarrassment
Of seeing it all go fizz?

Am I alert
To industry developments,
Which, from the jungle,
Come like trumpeting elephants?

When the economy declines,
And I'm a sitting duck,
Where do I look
For ever-present pluck?

And will I,
When push comes to shove,
Risk or lower that living standard
For myself and those I love

To remain true to my vision for
my company,
And those values I hold dear,
And go through tribulation,
To get to skies that clear?

* * *

Do I myself deny
Opportunities for growth, to ply
My CEO trade unending,
Workaholic, fears off-fending?

Do I make that historic division,
"All business" at the office, per-

sonal life at home,
Affection to the household pet,
Leading like a metronome?

Or, do I dilute my authority,
Befriending those on my team,
So I can't act decisively
When my team runs out of
steam?

Do I delegate,
Not abdicate?
Do I hold responsible,
'Mid cries of "impossible"?

On what do I rely
To motivate my people?
Is it golden handcuffs
Or values like a steeple?

Are my people engaged
Or serving out their time,
Really full of passion,
Or waiting for that dime?

And when the downturn comes,
And options go to hell,
How many will jump ship,
Before the final bell?

Or, will many stay
Through thick and thin,
Powered by growth and values

Which I've sowed therein?

* * *

Do I know to
Cut fat, not cutting muscle?
How to clear my head
In all that tussle?

How tough am I
On my old discipline,
Or with that old friend,
With whom I drank gin?

What powers
My decision?
How open
To intuition?

What helps me live
With an unpopular decision,
One accompanied
By a lot of muttered derision?

* * *

Where do I compromise?
What do I compromise?
Will it be a surprise?
To what do I close my eyes?

In the midst of a price war,
Would I call the competition?
Would I scrimp on product
safety
To make roll-out ignition?

How about product quality
To reach competitive price,
And underfunded pensions
As an acceptable vice?
Will I sacrifice capital expendi-
tures, R&D
For the next year's selling spree?
Will training and development
cuts
Fund the new marketing pro-
gram's guts?

Will I cut the holy of holies,
The shareholder dividend,
When doing so
Might mean my end?

Do I yield to auditors'
Picayune points
Which give my stockholders
Pains in the joints?

Suppose my lawyers
Afraid of malpractice,
Say "business risk"

Or "Don't ask us"?

Or accountants,
Bent on my business,
Propose an approach that's frisky,
Something my CFO thinks
risky?

Do I merely demand
Performance to the plan,
Never enquiring
Where it all might land?

Or do I let it be known
That certain things I don't toler-
ate,
That winking at company values
Will get the winker the gate?

* * *

How do I decide
In all of these penumbra?
Is it to be the value,
Or is it just the numba?

If I strive
To reach a tricky balance,
Will a slippery slope
Prove to be beneath my stance?

Can I forgive myself a lapse?
Does failure mean I never try
again?
Is one success quite enough?
Or will the journey be the gain?

* * *

You have finished this self-test
And now to ponder as you rest
What deeper meaning there?
What lies beneath to bare?

* * *

How will the journey transform
you?
Will you like you when all is said
and done?
Ah, there's the pass/fail,
When all questions are reduced
to one.

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