

Rowing Your Own Boat



It's a shame. So much young, eager and spirited talent wasted because they get turned off by intractable management.

You know the people I'm talking about - the career-oriented mid 20s to late 30s folks who love the game of advertising but are terribly unhappy and frustrated because nothing seems to change at their agency. They want to accomplish so much but say the systems are broken, senior management is mired in the past and won't make obvious changes, the day-to-day load is suffocating, and they resent the price they have to pay to do something they really want to enjoy.

Well, we have a solution to propose and we're going to drop it right at the feet of the disaffected people themselves.

You're unhappy at work because you're waiting for things to get better. And of course that's exactly right because positive change is what's needed. But the mistake is the waiting.

Stop waiting!

If you wait for senior management to fix things, you're doomed to dog paddle your way to the finish line. Instead, embrace the idea that you don't really work for the company that signs your paycheck. No, the fact is you're self-employed. That means you don't depend on other people to do things - YOU solve problems as you see them. It's you see it, you own it.

Instead of drowning your discontent in pints of beer or Haagen-Dazs, self-challenge to discover solutions you yourself can effect. List all the things you dislike, decide which ones you can nudge ahead, and conspire with similarly distressed people to push for small incremental improvements in your area of influence. This is called leadership.

You'll change the agency, build your career, and create your own future instead of being the victim of moribund management. But you've got to go a step further.

Be Subversive

People who get ahead are also masters of something not often talked about: subversion.

Don't take this as advocating armed overthrow or regime change. Successful people simply learn to quit bitching about what's wrong with the place or their

bosses - it just doesn't do any good anyway - and instead change things under the radar, clandestinely waging systematic guerrilla warfare just beneath the aggravation threshold of the status quo police. It's an art, to be sure.

These camouflaged warriors don't accept what is, and they certainly don't waste time complaining about what they find intolerable. They refocus their frustrations on slipping improvements in under cover of darkness. And they rarely work alone.

Conspire

At one agency burdened by obstinate management, a small band of malcontents met and brainstormed 20 things they thought they could improve without senior level approval. They used the codeword 'COSNOP' to keep them on track whenever their sessions degenerated into complaint fests (Concentrate on Solutions, Not on Problems).

They met Saturday mornings because they knew that change rarely happens without extra effort outside normal routines. They understood that company cultures change from the inside, not by fiat, and concentrated only on activities that would yield significant improvements.

Do important things

Unless you want merely to survive, you've got to accomplish the important not just the urgent (read *First Things First* by Stephen Covey - it will turn your head around about time and priorities). If you're not working on something on your 'Important' list daily, you're blowing it.

Which brings us to setting goals independent of senior management. Don't be so naive to believe that executive management at your place will always do what's necessary to push your personal career forward. If you wait for them to accelerate your success, you'll end up years from now in much the same job you're in now only older.

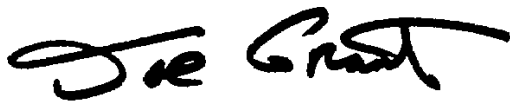
Remember, you're self-employed so go to Borders and buy yourself a goal setting book. Hokey, I know, but the fact is people who don't incorporate personal goals in their work get stuck in place. It's a myth believing doing your current job well will automatically catapult you to the next promotion.

So what exactly are we advocating here? Subversion; taking your own reins; acting like a rebel within the system to push things ahead, often without notice.

We see so many talented energetic people burn out because they expect the breaks to come their way and the company to provide just the right environment for their personal growth. Our advice: Get over it! How you lead your life means how you take it some place, how you *lead* it. The onus is smack dab on you.

As you go about your daily chores it might be helpful to hum the old kids song, "Row, row, row your boat." Put the emphasis on "your."

In the end, it's no one else's boat.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Grant". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.