

# RAJ REVIEW

**Ideas**

**Insights**

**News**

**Monthly Briefing for the Business Professional**

## A Message From RAJ

*Spring has sprung, the grass is riz, I wonder  
where the birdies iz!*  
Anon.

As we sit here and plan this month's newsletter, the temperatures are hovering at 70 degrees, the sun is shining, and we're feeling great! Not even the bleak economic predictions can get us down! Which brings us to the subject of how your organization – or department – can survive when facing a recession. All over the country, budgets are tightening, growth is on hold, and employees – and even departments – are getting the pink slip. For most of us, this isn't the first time we've been faced with such harsh conditions. If we've learned one thing from past successes and mistakes, it's that we must make the best of the situation and use our assets to their fullest. One of those ways, of course, is through continuous feedback and coaching of our most important assets – our employees. The internal cost of firing, rehiring in better times, and training new hires can be astronomical when you compare it to holding on to your staff. Many companies think training should be the first thing to go – a huge mistake.

We strongly urge you to make the best of the staff you have by increasing their abilities and commitment to the organization. To find out how we can help, just give us a call! When

the recession ends, as we all know it will, you will be far ahead of your competitors.



**April 2008  
Edition**

### Reader Highlights

**FEATURED  
ARTICLE:**

*The Seven Saving  
Graces for Managers,*  
George Hallenbeck

**TIP OF THE  
MONTH:**

*Ask the question:  
'How am I doing?'*,  
Excerpted from *The  
Leader's Edge*

**FOOD FOR  
THOUGHT:**

One of those days . . .



## Featured Article

### **The Seven Saving Graces for Managers by George Hallenbeck**

Excerpted from *BusinessWeek*, February 2008

In managerial and executive success, what comes after the “but” is what is important. This is the one time when using “but” is a positive. Executives are generally hard-charging drivers with rough edges who are often focused on getting things done rather than on pleasing people. What does research say about characteristics that keep an executive in favor, even if he or she possesses some flaws or shortcomings? What comes after the “but” are called saving graces – qualities or redeeming features that make up for other generally negative characteristics. They serve as balancers so that the driver strengths that got you where you are do not go into overdrive and damage your efforts. They also offer benefits of their own because many of them contribute to perceptions of you as someone who is trustworthy, considerate, and insightful. Thus, they can help you more easily acquire information from key people, gain access to limited resources, and navigate the bureaucracy. In order of importance, the saving graces are:



**Listening:** Taking time to listen can get you out of more jams than the rest of the saving graces combined because it demonstrates that it is not all about you and your agenda. It is an excellent tool for breaking down barriers and getting more out of what you do with others. Few executives are good listeners.

**Approachability:** The best executives need to be early knowers, especially when it comes to negative information. These people are easy to talk to, even when conveying or having potentially bad information conveyed to them. To be effective, approachability has to be combined with lis-

tening. Simply asking questions is not a best practice for effective executives.

**Boss Relationships:** It can be very difficult to swim alone. If you tend to stir up controversy and are quick to engage in conflict, it is helpful to have the advice and counsel of a seasoned boss who can coach you through such situations and provide some support when you falter. Making your boss successful in Job One, whether you like him or her or not.

**Integrity and Trust:** This one speaks for itself. The people you lead will often forgive a lot if they can clearly perceive that you speak the truth and are a person of your word.

**Humor:** This is a useful skill with self-deprecating humor one of the better techniques. It puts others at ease and makes your thoughts appear to come from someplace a little more accessible. Humor allows you to become approachable by putting others at ease when in your presence.

**Interpersonal Savvy:** Being able to relate 360 degrees is important. Finding a way to make a connection with individuals up and down the chain and inside and outside the organization gives you something to rely on when things are not going so well. Diplomacy, tact, and knowing what to say and when to say it can take the tension out of situations and make unpopular decisions and unfortunate

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### **Books of the Month**

***The Five Dysfunctions of a Team,***  
Patrick Lencioni

***The Empowered Manager,*** Peter Block



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mistakes easier to handle.

**Understanding Others:** The focus here is on groups rather than individuals. Understanding others is about knowing what makes one group different from another and why that matters. This is more difficult to master than listening, but learning to identify what is important to a group and why is often the key for gaining buy-in and knowing how to lead through difficult situations.



Saving graces are not the fire extinguisher you pull out in the case of emergency, but are more the trusty life preserver you should wear at all times. Saving graces lead to longer tenure and staying power

when coupled with power skills like drive, strategy, results, and power. They can compensate for mistakes that would get those people who don't possess them into trouble. They smooth out the rough edges and can help smooth over rough situations.

### Inspirational Thoughts

Life has two rules: Number one, never quit; Number two, always remember rule number one. -**Duke Ellington**

Don't let anything keep you from struggling and seeking to be a decent, striving human being. It is where you are headed not where you are from that will determine where you end up. -**Marian Wright Edelman**



## Tip of the Month

### Ask the question: 'How am I doing?', Excerpted from *The Leader's Edge*

Here are the questions you'll need to answer and the steps you'll need to take to assess the bottom line and culture of your organization to keep it healthy.

**Key Financial Drivers:** *What makes us money? What costs us money? What's our long-term vision? What are our key strategies? How are we performing?* Review financial reports and indicators. Assess anything that's unclear about the operation's financial performance. Spend time with your financial people to talk about specific drivers and indicators.



**Understanding the Business:** *What functions directly affect our fiscal performance? What's the primary role of each functional area? How do functional strategies affect our overall performance?* Assess your working knowledge of each functional area. Identify the appropriate subject matter experts. Schedule an informational interview with each expert. Prepare for the interviews by drafting an outline of issues and questions.

**Corporate Culture:** *Do we value everybody's ideas? How hierarchical are we? Do we promote cross-functional development? Does our climate promote open and honest communication?* Reflect on your own view of the culture and seek insights from colleagues. Judge how well the culture aligns with your own belief system. Gauge your potential for long-term success in the existing culture.

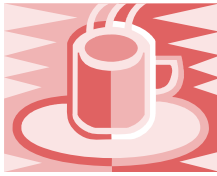
**Political Climate:** *How political an environment do we live in across units, departments, divisions, and organization-wide? How does this environment align with my beliefs and personal goals? Am I overly influenced by my own agenda? How about*

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## Food for Thought

### One of Those Days, anon

The staff at the coffee shop was having “one of those days”. The espresso machine was malfunctioning, the bakery had not delivered the bagels and sweet rolls, someone from the morning shift called in sick, and the crew from the previous evening failed to restock the cabinets with supplies. There were several people waiting to get their first cup of coffee for the day. A woman at the back of the line began to complain loudly. “What is taking so long? Are you growing the beans back there or what? I don’t have all day!” “Yes, we are running on empty this morning,” the manager said with a pleasant smile. He motioned for the woman to come forward. “What can I get for you?” “I want a large coffee with steamed milk – to go,” barked the woman. “No problem,” said the manager. He looked past the woman to the other customers waiting in line and offered them a reassuring wink. In a matter of moments he had made the woman’s coffee, took her money, and sent her on her way with a “Have a nice day.” The other customers stood silently with confused looks on their faces. The manager said, “Folks, I’m really sorry for the inconvenience this morning. Because you have been so patient, your coffee is on the house.”



## GET IN TOUCH

We love feedback. Let us hear from you about what’s most useful in our newsletters, how we can make it better, and topics you’d us to tackle for you.

Call us to discuss your needs, explore how we can help, and learn more about our services.

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others’? Am I a good steward of the organization? Draw your own conclusions about the political environment. Ask others up and down the line for their opinions. Observe how other leaders behave. Determine how well the climate feels in light of your beliefs and goals, then decide whether you’ll thrive in it, change it, or leave.

## On the Humorous Side

### Ole and Sven

Sven was out shopping in the mall when he met his friend Ole outside the Jewelry Store. Ole noticed that Sven had a small gift-wrapped box in his hand. “What have you just purchased Sven?” Ole asks. “Vell, now that you’ve asked,” replies Sven, “It’s my Lena’s birthday tomorrow and when I asked her this morning what she wanted for her birthday, Lena said, ‘Oh, I dun know, dear, just give me something vith lots of diamonds.’” “So what did you get her?” Ole asks. Sven smirks and says, “I bought her a deck of cards.”

### Waiting Room

There were three fathers to be in a hospital waiting room, waiting for their babies to be born. The first nurse comes out and tells the first father, “Congratulations you’re the father of twins!” He says, “Great! I am the manager for the Minnesota Twins.” The second nurse comes out and tells the second father, “Congratulations you’re the father of triplets!” He says, “That’s cool! I work for 3M.” The third father opens the window and jumps out. The third nurse comes out, and asks, “Where’s the third father?” One of the other fathers said, “Oh, he jumped out the window.” The nurse asks, “Why?” He replied, “He works for Seven Up!”