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Attitude Instincts

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Get Married Again—Your Spouse Won't Mind

PATTYE: Our readers may find this hard to believe, but I would have never made it to the corner office without your help.

SCOTT: Now, why would our readers find it so hard to believe that you needed my help?

PATTYE: Actually, I think most people don't want to admit that they can't do something on their own. But I know for a fact that I couldn't have done it without you there to push me, to encourage me, to make me look smarter, to give me confidence when I was shaking in my boots—the list could go on and on.

SCOTT: I'm all ears because this is good for my ego.

PATTYE: Oh, I'm not sure your ego is in any need of repair.

SCOTT: Point taken, and here is a little secret for you, Ms. Moore. The fact is I couldn't have gotten to the top without your help either. I can't even count how many times I bounced ideas off you, tested out personnel decisions, and asked your opinion.

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PATTYE: If this was a self-help book, you might say we were codependent—in a good way.

SCOTT: But since it's a book about leadership, I have a better term—Corporate Soul Mates. That is truly what we were for 12 years, and what we still are. It is a unique concept and probably the secret to our success. It is sort of like being married without the expense of anniversary gifts.

What is a friend? A single soul in two bodies.

—Aristotle

What is a Corporate Soul Mate? A single soul in two bodies.

—Scott and Patty

Corner Office Instinct 1

Find a Corporate Soul Mate

Soul mate (n.): partner, colleague, supporter, ally, helper, confidante

In a recent Monster.com survey, employees were asked which Olympic sport their typical workday most resembled. Fifty-two percent of the respondents said “the luge”—in other words, they feel like they are racing 80 mph on their own. Only 20 percent of respondents said “bobsled”—which requires teamwork to win the race.

The luge is a pretty apt description for life in corporate America—hurtling through the day at breakneck speeds, basically one sharp turn away from losing control. And, knowing (or believing, at least) that it’s all up to you. You’ve certainly heard the adage that it’s lonely at the top, but for most workers, it’s lonely on the way there as well. And most people believe that this is just the way it is—a dog-eat-dog world and you are on your own.

It doesn’t have to be that way. In fact, if you really want to be the best, it *can’t* be that way. And we are living proof of that.

Our success can be attributed in large part to our ability to embrace, practice, and live one of the most overlooked corner office instincts. Our instinct told us that we had a unique working relationship, but it told us something more. Our instinct told us it was okay to break the paradigm of an arm’s-length agency/client

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relationship and, as a result, we became corporate confidantes. Our instinct pushed us to evolve from confidantes to corporate soul mates—two leaders who depended on and needed each other to challenge and debate the business issues of the day. When we did this, we discovered that it brought out the best and brightest thinking in each other. And that, my friends, is the power and benefit of having a corporate soul mate.

In order for the corporate soul mate instinct to pay dividends, however, there must be a foundation of unconditional trust and honesty between the two of you. *Honesty* in the sense that your relationship is so secure that neither of you holds anything back nor has any fear of being judged. *Trust* in the sense that regardless of what or who you talk about, what is said between the two of you remains confidential. It is only in a low-risk, nonjudgmental, confidential environment that you can truly be soul mates.

The reality is that there are situations at work almost every day where you need a corporate soul mate. Whether you own your business, are working your way up, or are already there, you will encounter new challenges, and you will be asked to step out of your comfort zone. You will often be uncertain as to what is the right decision.

You can internalize this uncertainty, talk to your spouse (who, by the way, might be a perfect corporate soul mate—don't automatically exclude him or her), ask your dog for advice, or you can consciously seek out someone to be your ally, confidante, supporter, friend, and corporate soul mate.

Who's Your Spotter?

Another way to think about this is to consider how helpful it is to have a workout partner at the gym. With a workout partner, you have someone to hold you accountable, to help you stay

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motivated, to encourage you, and to help you get back on track when you slack off. Most important, that workout partner gives you the confidence to stretch beyond what is comfortable, and, as a result, you reach new heights and keep improving your personal bests. Getting to the corner office is quite a workout, and you need encouragement, motivation, and help every bit as much as you do in the gym.

This instinct is one that came very naturally to both of us. For the past 12 years, we've been each other's corporate soul mate and have pushed each other to new career heights.

Joined at the Hip

My relationship with Scott started as the typical client/agency relationship. It was clear that he was very smart and knew the restaurant business so I was glad to have him working on our account. It wasn't long, however, before we both realized that we had a unique opportunity to form an even stronger bond that would pay dividends for both of us and our companies. The passion we each had for the business and for solving problems was evident in the late-night phone calls to report what we had just seen at a competitor or to share an idea that was sparked by something on television. Our curiosity and desire to be the best led us to bounce ideas off each other for growing our own businesses, for solving tough personnel issues, or for our own development. Pretty soon, our "souls" had become so connected that you might mistake us for a married couple (hence the title of this chapter—Get Married

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Again). We were truly joined at the hip, and, truth be told, still are. We still consult with each other several times a day.

—Patty

The Rest of the Story

Although Patty described our partnership well, I don't think you will really "get it" unless I give you more specifics about what it meant for us to be corporate soul mates. Here are a few examples:

- Most nights we touched base (after Patty got her children to bed) to talk about burning issues, upcoming meetings or presentations, or simply to compare notes after visiting competitors for dinner.
- We still laugh about a 6:30 A.M. phone call getting ready for a big presentation one day. I was at the office trying to fax a final presentation to her at home but both our fax machines were out of paper. We spent 30 minutes trying to help each other load fax paper—unsuccessfully, I might add.
- I remember helping her work through tough Arthritis Foundation decisions when she was chair. And I remember her listening to me work through tough personnel decisions.
- I read drafts of her speeches while she read drafts of mine. We rehearsed in front of each other because no one else was as brutally honest.
- I had to sit by her on airplanes (see Chapter 9).

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- She will tell you she became president of Sonic because I made her smarter and better. I will tell you I became chairman and CEO of Barkley Evergreen & Partners because she made me smarter and better.
- I cried when she left Sonic because half of me left as well. She cried (with joy) when I left the agency because it meant we would be working together again.
- We get mad, we fuss, we yell and scream at each other, and we make each other's brains hurt. But we know what each other is capable of and we won't settle for less.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is what it means to be corporate soul mates. What are you waiting for?

—Scott

Note to spouses and significant others: This concept of corporate soul mates may test the strength of your relationship. It may seem to you that your partner has found “someone else.” If you are the suspicious type, your mind could easily wander and you could begin to doubt your partner's motivation. There will be late-night and weekend phone calls, e-mails that go back and forth so quickly they might as well be in a chat room. And there will be meetings and trips together. It would be easy to get jealous or suspicious, but if it's a true corporate soul mate, you have nothing to worry about. Listen in—at least until you nod off because all you will hear is obsessive conversations about work. Besides, think of all the times you don't have to pretend to be listening and sympathetic to the issue du jour or pending crisis!

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The idea of having a partner shouldn't come as a big surprise because many of the great accomplishments in any field have come from two people working together; for example:

- Lewis and Clark
- Columbus and Queen Isabella
- Madame Curie and Louis Pasteur
- Hanna/Barbera
- Ben and Jerry
- Hewlett/Packard
- Bill Gates and Paul Allen
- Larry Page and Sergey Brin

Heck, even the Lone Ranger had a corporate soul mate—Tonto.

In every one of these cases, it's easy to envision the conversations, the late night arguments, the debates, and the decisions to go for it, to try something new.

And, just like jumping off the high diving board as a child for the first time, the jump and flight into new territory didn't seem quite so risky when we were holding our best friend's hand on the way down. Therein lies the ultimate benefit of a corporate soul mate.

A corporate soul mate provides that hand to squeeze as you jump, and from that squeeze comes the confidence and self-assuredness needed to lead others. This confidence is critical because it often determines how passionate others will become about your vision. And the level of passion in those you lead often determines your success as a leader.

Why Do You Not Have a Corporate Soul Mate?

We are willing to wager that most of you reading this book don't have a corporate soul mate. As we talked to colleagues and

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business associates around the country, we discovered that most people don't have anyone to confide in, to encourage them, or to challenge them.

Warning: We must warn you that just finding someone you can confide in does not a corporate soul mate make. Going to lunch with the same peer and venting about all your problems at work may be therapeutic for you, but it is not the relationship we are describing. You are not seeking counsel, you are not asking for a critique of your performance, or help on which direction to take—you are venting. A corporate soul mate goes a bit deeper than venting.

If you don't have a corporate soul mate, don't be alarmed because you are not alone. You might want to think about the reasons why you don't. Do any of the following hit home?

Here from the home office of INSTINCTS LLC are the top 10 reasons for not having a corporate soul mate:

10. You don't trust anyone as it relates to your career, except yourself. *You alone are out to disprove the theory that no man is an island—good luck.*
9. Your boyfriend says he doesn't like you spending so much time with the new marketing director of your client. *Maybe you two should work on those trust issues.*
8. You resent sharing the spotlight. *With an ego like that, good luck finding someone to be your corporate soul mate.*
7. You can't rely on a female as a corporate soul mate—what would the guys say? *You've got bigger issues than we can focus on.*
6. You tried it once but it just didn't work. *So you think giving up easily will get you to the corner office?*

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5. You'd like one but you're not quite sure how to find one or how to use one. *Keep reading!*
 4. You don't want anyone telling you what to do and, more important, you don't want anyone to know you don't have all the answers—they could use that against you. *Get therapy!*
 3. You don't have the time. *We guess you don't have the drive to make it to the corner office either.*
 2. You prefer a venting partner because it is more fun to be a fire starter rather than a firefighter. *Your own career is likely to go up in flames.*
 1. You don't understand the need to have one. After all, no one is as smart as you. *We look forward to reading your new book.*
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Corporate Soul Mates Are Not Your College Drinking Buddies

Let us repeat that. Corporate soul mates are not your college drinking buddies or your best friend from high school. It's great to have friends, but the chances are they don't work in your company or your industry, and they are not going to understand your particular challenges or issues. A true corporate soul mate should be someone:

- You respect, admire, and trust, and who is at a similar level or position.
- You think is smarter than you, but who is equally passionate about what he or she does.
- Who works either at your company, for a vendor, in your industry, or in a related field.
- You work with on community/civic boards. We've found some of our best corporate soul mates this way.

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Once you've found that person or persons (by the way, there is no rule that you can only have one), invite them to lunch and ask them for advice. If it's a good fit, you will naturally start to seek each other out more and more. If it's not a good fit, move on.

Pay particular attention to those who work at competitive firms. Seek out and build relationships with competitors you respect and admire. Make a point as the years roll by to stay in touch with them. Even though they may not have been a candidate at that time for a corporate soul mate, jobs and careers change.

From Most Feared Competitor to Most Valued Corporate Soul Mate

For years, Tom Millweard ran the Pizza Hut account for his agency in Dallas and I ran it for my agency in Houston. We each tried to secure more and more business, most likely at the expense of the other. As much as I wanted to beat him every time, I have to admit I had a great amount of respect for how Tom ran his business and how he serviced the client. Years later, as president of an agency in Kansas City, I found myself in need of a corporate soul mate internally. I needed to find someone who wasn't afraid to tell me when I had a bad idea and someone with whom I could have unconditional trust as to how he handled issues with clients and personnel.

I flew down to Dallas and asked Tom, my greatest competitor over the years, to come help me grow this agency. He did. We joined forces and I could not have asked for a more honest, trustworthy confidante and advisor. He was not afraid to tell me when he thought I

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was wrong, and I always appreciated that he felt he could say what was on his mind without fear of some adolescent response on my part. We grew the agency to record highs, but most important, we had a glorious time doing it.

—Scott

Conclusion

There is something we want you to be mindful of as you progress in your career. Over the years, we all pick up subtle and not so subtle signals that shape our behavior subconsciously. Some of these signals are good and others are bad. One bad signal we all get is that *reaching out* can often be seen as a sign of weakness. We strongly advise *against* taking this to heart. Our 12 years together of pushing, trusting, challenging, laughing, and crying has allowed us to move forward in each of our careers with a higher level of confidence that our decisions were the right ones for the time. We didn't have to take our partnership to the extreme—but we did. The choice is yours.

Just remember, like the story we told you, half the fun is the journey. We absolutely guarantee that it won't be as much fun or as rewarding if you go it alone.

Five Questions to Ask Yourself to See if You Have the Instinct to Find a Corporate Soul Mate

1. Do you have a late night or weekend conversation with the same person about work on a very frequent basis?
2. Is there one person you immediately call when you have a new idea or see something intriguing that might work for your business?

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3. When you've got a tough decision to make, do you immediately reach out for help from this one person first?
4. Do your kids think that (fill in the blank) is a relative?
5. Is there someone who understands how you think?

If you answered yes to all of these questions, then you indeed have a corporate soul mate. Here's a more difficult question: Would that person answer yes to these questions about you? We hope so.

Five Steps You Can Take to Begin Developing the Instinct to Find a Corporate Soul Mate

1. Make a list of people with whom you work closely and/or with whom you are friends. Then write down times you've gone to them for help and gauge how helpful it was. Be honest.
2. Examine your list—does anyone stand out as consistently being your “go to” person? If so, you might have a soul mate.
3. If not, make another list. This time, go beyond the usual suspects—the names you came up with quickly. What about someone at church or on the community or charity board with you? Someone you talk to at the fitness center?
4. Once you've identified some potential folks, go for a trial run. Invite them to lunch. Call and ask for advice. (People love this, by the way—wouldn't you?)
5. Feed and water regularly. Marriages need care. Friendships need attention. And corporate soul mates disappear if not fed and watered regularly.