

tycoon Ludwig.

The fortune he amasses will fund one of America's great philanthropic foundations, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. In 1979, it will enter the ranks (and rankings) of American foundations at number four — behind the Ford, Robert Wood Johnson, and Andrew Mellon Foundations, and ahead of the Rockefeller Foundation (number seven) and Carnegie (number 13).

John MacArthur was a brilliant, brash, nervy, shrewd businessman who would skate up to the edge of rules and regulations. He hated lawyers but was always suing someone. He neglected his own children, though friends' children found him fascinating. He could be rough and coarse, a bottom pincher, yet nearly three decades after his death, a loyal cadre of friends would still gather on his birthday each March to toast his memory.

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## 'The boss is the boss for a reason'

From *Why Should the Boss Listen to You?* by James E. Lukaszewski. Copyright 2008 by the author. Published by Jossey-Bass, a Wiley imprint ([www.josseybass.com](http://www.josseybass.com)).

ONE OF THE MOST PROFOUND underlying concepts this book is designed to convey is the imperative to set aside all your staff-based assumptions and orient your life, your thinking, and your recommendations to the perspectives, viewpoints, and issues of those you advise.

Failure to do this effectively will relegate you to being "just a PR guy," "just an HR person," "just a bean counter," "just a cop without a gun or a badge." Leaving your staff assumptions behind is among the hardest disciplines of being a trusted advisor. You will be working from a much broader perspective, first and always defined by the issues and questions facing those you counsel.

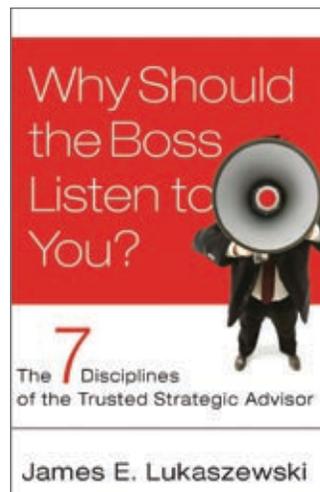
Each staff function tends to apply its staff disciplines to

every problem it sees. Communicators look at everything as a communication problem; finance, as a finance problem; HR, as a people problem; security, as a problem of risk — you get the idea.

The principal reason staff people are excluded from operating meetings is that they bring too tight a staff focus. Most leaders, managers, and even supervisors believe they are good communicators, financially savvy, and aware of their surroundings. They assume they know the risks they face and can add, subtract, multiply, and divide. From the start, you are facing an environment that is not exactly staff friendly. This is a powerful insight. Dump the tendency to see everything

through the lens of your staff experience. Yes, your perspective does matter, provided that, first, it reflects the attitudes and needs of the managers you are advising.

Let me put this into even sharper focus. One of the more frequent questions I hear from staff advisors goes something like this: "I need to know how to convince the boss to change because big mistakes are being made. But the boss just will not listen to me. If a couple of the things I suggested are implemented,



the boss would be much more successful in accomplishing his or her goals." My response to the staff person is, "Why are you pushing this so hard? Obviously the boss does not want to take your suggestion. Unless what the boss is doing is immoral, illegal, completely stupid, or financially irresponsible, the boss is the boss for a reason. It's the boss's career and the boss's decision to make. Move on to something else. If what the boss is doing is immoral, illegal, irresponsible, or something along those lines, you have to address a professional employment decision." The message is this: remember who is driving the bus and whose bus it is. ■

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