

THE PRINCE AND I

First published in 1532, Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* has attracted and repelled generations of leaders looking for guidance.

by Cynthia Wagner Weick

A number of books in recent years have been dedicated to the wisdom offered to corporate leadership by the 15th century Italian political philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli. Machiavelli's *The Prince*, in particular, is considered by some as required reading for achieving success in modern companies. So what advice does he offer? And what are the implications for the roles and responsibilities of communication directors? Careful consideration of the behaviour advocated by Machiavelli – and the assumptions behind his philosophy – suggest that his approach is obsolete. We can surely still learn from *The Prince*; however, its lessons warn us of how placing self interest and lust for power above all else leads to dangerous consequences.

WHAT IS A MACHIAVELLIAN LEADER LIKE? Machiavelli's prince offers several insights key to successful management. His motives and means, however, are filtered through one ultimate principle: power is an end in itself. *The Prince* rightly emphasises the importance of education and training for oneself and employees, alertness to the environment, preparation for events that cannot be predicted; and the challenges of introducing change in organisations. But the means needed to reach his ends include whatever it takes to secure and maintain power: intimidation, force, manipulation and deception. Fear should be instilled in others so they will be subordinated and do the prince's will, but not so much so that they come to hate the leader and render him or her ineffective:

"From this arises the question whether it is better to be loved rather than feared, or feared rather than loved.

It might perhaps be answered that we should wish to be both: but since love and fear can hardly exist together, if we must choose between them, it is far safer to be feared than loved."

When needed, force trumps the rule of law:

"You must know there are two ways of contesting, the one by the law, the other by force

The first method is proper to men, the second to beasts; but because

the first is frequently not sufficient, it is necessary to have recourse to the second."

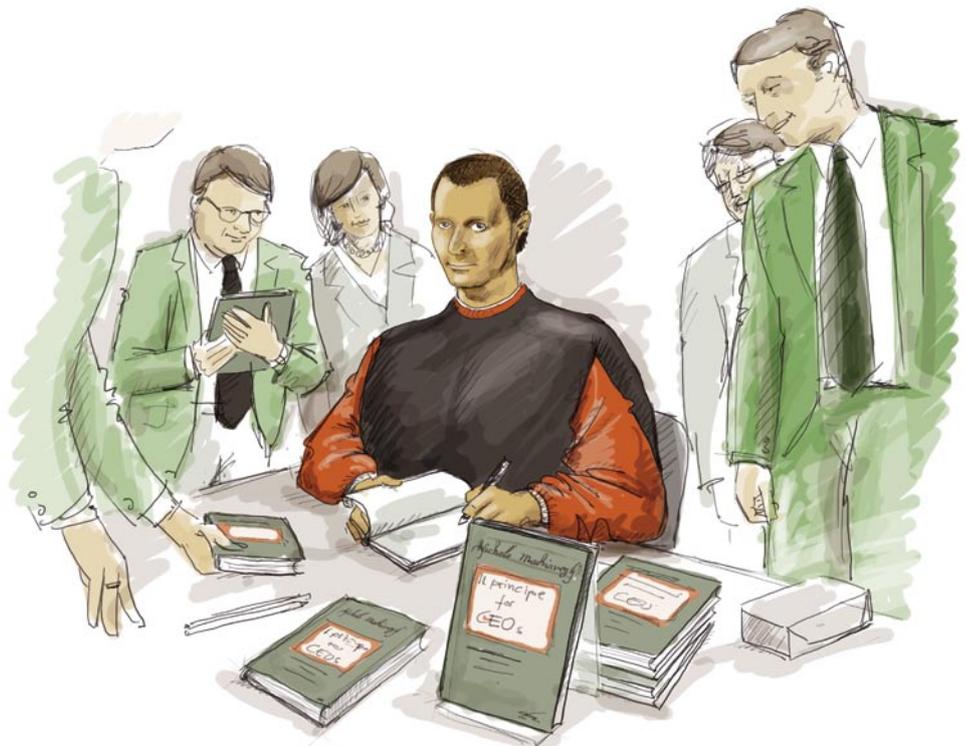
The prince has vices, but makes sure these are never uncovered, and that his or her reputation remains untarnished:

"Every one sees what you appear to be, few really know what you are, and those few dare not oppose themselves to the opinion of the many, who have the majesty of the state to defend them."

Be practical, advises Machiavelli. Goodness and trust are for the naïve, who are eventually defeated by others who are more astute at manipulation and deceit.

"Every one admits how praiseworthy it is in a prince to keep faith, and to live with integrity and not with craft. Nevertheless our experience has been that those princes who have done great things have held good faith of little account, and have known how to circumvent the intellect of men..."

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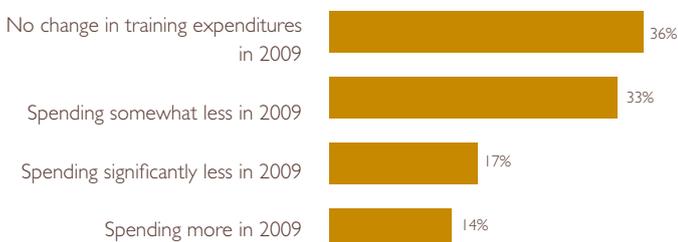


FACTS & FIGURES

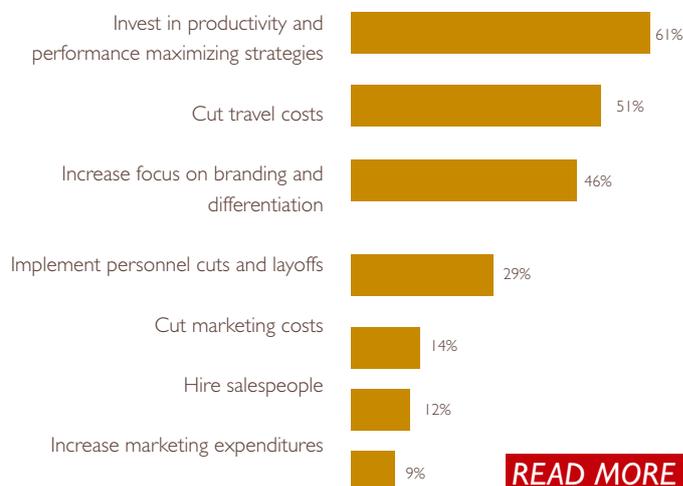
The Ken Blanchard Companies annual Corporate Issues Survey pinpoints the needs and issues of organizations seeking to develop their people to their fullest potential. The findings in 2009 represent the feedback from more than 1,700 executives, line managers, and training and HR leaders from a range of companies, industries, and countries. To deal with 2009's pessimistic outlook, organisations reported a range of tactics with more than 60 per cent planning to implement productivity and performance maximising strategies. Interestingly, less than 30 per cent pinpointed

personel cuts and layoffs as a coping strategy. In fact, training and development expenditures were relatively unharmed, with only 17 per cent responding that they were spending significantly less in comparison with 2008, and almost half (49 per cent) replying that they were spending as much or even more than the previous year. The data suggests the recognition by organisations of the strategic value and competitive advantage in connection to training and developing people. *Taken from The Ken Blanchard Companies®.*

Training and Development Expenditures for 2009



Tactics for Coping in a Down Economy



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COMMENTARY

Social media rides roughshod over controlled comms

Following on from last month's look at the perilous state of affairs at the beleaguered General Motors (GM), it was announced on December 1 that Fritz Henderson was stepping down as CEO, having only occupied the position since replacing Rick Wagoner this spring. According to analysts, he had been on thin ice from the get go, and the straw that broke this particular camel's back was the fiasco around the proposed sale of the Opel and Saab brands. It seemed that the disfavour in which the board of directors held Henderson was partly the result of a desire for a break from the previous style of leadership: according to the Detroit City Press, the new board members "always made it clear they wanted a complete break from the insular, unimaginative culture that ruled GM for decades. They began that process when they ousted Wagoner, but it was clear they never had complete faith in Henderson, who had been Wagoner's hand-picked lieutenant." At a hastily-convened press conference, chairman of the board Ed Whitacre flatly refused to answer any questions, and Henderson himself has remained tight-lipped about the circumstances surrounding his departure. However, social media has a habit of interfering and finding ways around the most tightly-controlled communica-



tions: within minutes of the announcement that her father had lost his job, Sarah Henderson posted an irate message on Facebook, a social networking website with which you may be familiar with. Earning top marks for familial loyalty, she described Mr. Whitacre as a selfish piece of shift" (sic) and vowed to "never buy from this godforsaken company ever again". Although quickly deleted, the story was picked up by a gleeful press and disseminated – fittingly – online.

Image: flickr

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PERSONNEL



Stefan Nünlist
(Head of Communications)

Institution: SBB

Start: January 2010



Switzerland: Stefan Nünlist to lead comms at SBB

STEFAN NÜNLIST, who has been head of corporate communications and public affairs of Swisscom since 2001, will be the new head of communications at the Swiss travel and transport company SBB. Werner Nuber, current leader of SBB communication, moves on to SBB's internal consulting group, a typical career-step for SBB top managers after they turn 59 years old. He worked almost 10 years in his current position.



Paul Lockstone
(Corporate Affairs Director)

Institution: Aviva Investors

Start: January 2010



UK: Paul Lockstone moves from Edelman to Aviva

Aviva Investors, the asset management business of insurance group Aviva, has announced that PAUL LOCKSTONE will be its new corporate affairs director. He will begin on January 2010, and will be responsible for all external and internal global communication activities of the business, with a remit including media relations and public affairs. He will report to Erich Gerth, global business development director.



Gavin Haycock
(Director of Communications)

Institution: AOL Europe

Start: December 01

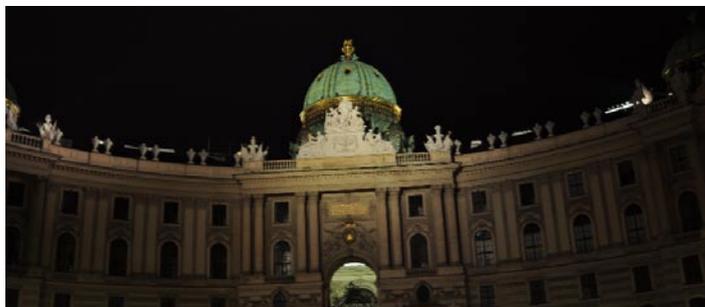


UK: Gavin Haycock heads European comms at AOL

AOL Europe has promoted GAVIN HAYCOCK the role of director of communications, replacing Mark Rigby who has moved to Sainsbury's as director of corporate affairs. Haycock was previously head of communications for AOL UK, a position he took to up in March 2008 after spending several years at Reuters.

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EVENTS



10.12.2009

European Excellence Awards

Bringing together the finest work in the field of communications for a memorable evening, the European Excellence Awards spotlight the importance of the profession, and provide an excellent networking forum for all. The awards take a comprehensive look at the full spectrum of communications disciplines throughout Europe, and are presented to outstanding accomplishments within this arena.

► Communication Director,
Hofburg Imperial Palace, Vienna

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10.12.2009

The Copenhagen Climate Summit: What It Means for Your Business

The Public Relation Society of America hold a special seminar on the international PR repercussions of the Copenhagen conference.

► PRSE, Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany, NYC

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16.12.2009

CharityComms Seminar

Registration is required for this seminar on raising awareness and changing attitudes through powerful communications, with speakers from Barnardo's and WWF UK.

► CharityComms,
St Alban's Center, London

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