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**WHAT'S IMPORTANT | Volume VI, Issue 2 | April 1, 2010**

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***"What's Important" is a universal concern. The phrase resonates with an infinite number of meanings. What's important is both a question and an answer, depending on the situation.***

The year before Edward Noha was tapped as CEO, CNA Insurance lost \$200 million and was nearly insolvent. The challenge before him, to turn this Titanic company around before it could hit another iceberg, could have caused him to bury his head in spreadsheets and action plans.

Soon after being hired, advisors urged Noha to address the 12,000 CNA employees over the company loudspeaker - the high-tech mode of communication in 1975.

He refused.

Instead, he shook hands. Talking with groups of 15-20 employees at a time, he invested six months to shake the hands of every employee in the 44-story office building. He talked. More importantly, he listened.

Noha knew that to change the fate of the sinking company, he had to inspire the crew. His challenge was to gain their trust, offer hope and help them feel valued as part of the future vision for the company. That couldn't happen over a loud speaker. It could only happen face-to-face.

Guided by Noha's leadership and the support of a valued staff, CNA not only stayed afloat, but it became one of the nation's leading insurance organizations.

What if Noha had followed the recommendation to rely on the loud speaker as the company life preserver? It would have been much more expedient, less uncomfortable.

Today, would he have resisted the temptation to try to drive change through email or even text message?

To engage the staff, Noha had to be engaging. And, there's no better way to inspire, comfort or motivate a team, big or small, than through direct, personal contact.

Technology makes it easier and more convenient than ever to stay in-touch, yet strong leaders know that expertly managing change requires more than a WiFi connection. It requires a human connection built through direct contact.

***What's Important is that to inspire and motivate a team, technology simply can't replace the power of personal communication.***

Email me at [chuck@durakis.com](mailto:chuck@durakis.com) to share your thoughts.

Thanks,

Chuck