

Some people go through the workweek fighting battles. The easiest route, however, is to go through your week seeking out individuals, departments, or strategic partners who have the same goals as you do. Ask yourself, "Who else would like to see this same thing happen?" "Who else would stand to gain if this policy passed?" "Who else would benefit if we did X?" Find others who stand to benefit from what you want to do, change, buy, or get approved. Align your efforts.

4. Schedule the meeting before the meeting

If you've ever attended an industry conference, you know there are typically as many people wandering the halls during the sessions as in the meeting rooms. That's for good reason. People converse one-on-one to see where each stands on trends, decisions, issues, and plans. Then when the committees or boards meet, decisions have already been made. All that remains is the count.

The same is true inside corporations. Pre-meetings take place one-on-one in the hallways, in the cafeteria, by the water cooler. The pitch. The assessment. The count. Once you know you have the majority vote, then you schedule the official meeting and reveal the decision.

Just as with Congress, understand that this is the way things get done in controversial situations.

5. Ask your grandmother's blessing

The final test: Look yourself in the mirror and imagine asking your grandmother for her approval and blessing on your plans and decision. How does this differ from asking yourself? We can all justify behavior and decisions to ourselves. Most of us feel that we "did the right thing." But could you justify your action or decision to your grandmother — someone who loves and believes in you, but who has common sense combined with long-term perspective?

Count on these five rules to guide you through most leadership challenges.

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