The definitive guide to taming the

em@il monster

ELIMINATING EMAIL AND WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

THE
GROSSMAN
GROUP

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Just another typical day in the office.

Emails flow into an already-cluttered inbox like rapid fire. It seems for every email read or responded to, another five come in demanding to be read as quickly as possible. It's a struggle to prioritize which emails to open and tackle first when so many are marked "urgent" or "hot". There's the dreaded "reply all" maze, an ugly labyrinth of emails sent to masses of people that leave you guessing whether the topic is even relevant to you. Delete! Worse yet is finding the time to respond to the important emails in a thoughtful way when so many unnecessary ones also require your time and attention.

Colleagues drop into the office to have a conversation, key meetings… just another typical day in the office. Before you know it, the day is done and you're faced with the question of whether to spend the evening getting caught up on email before the cycle repeats itself the next day.

You're in the battle of your life to tame the monster in front of you—your email.

Is there any relief in sight? Turns out there just might be…
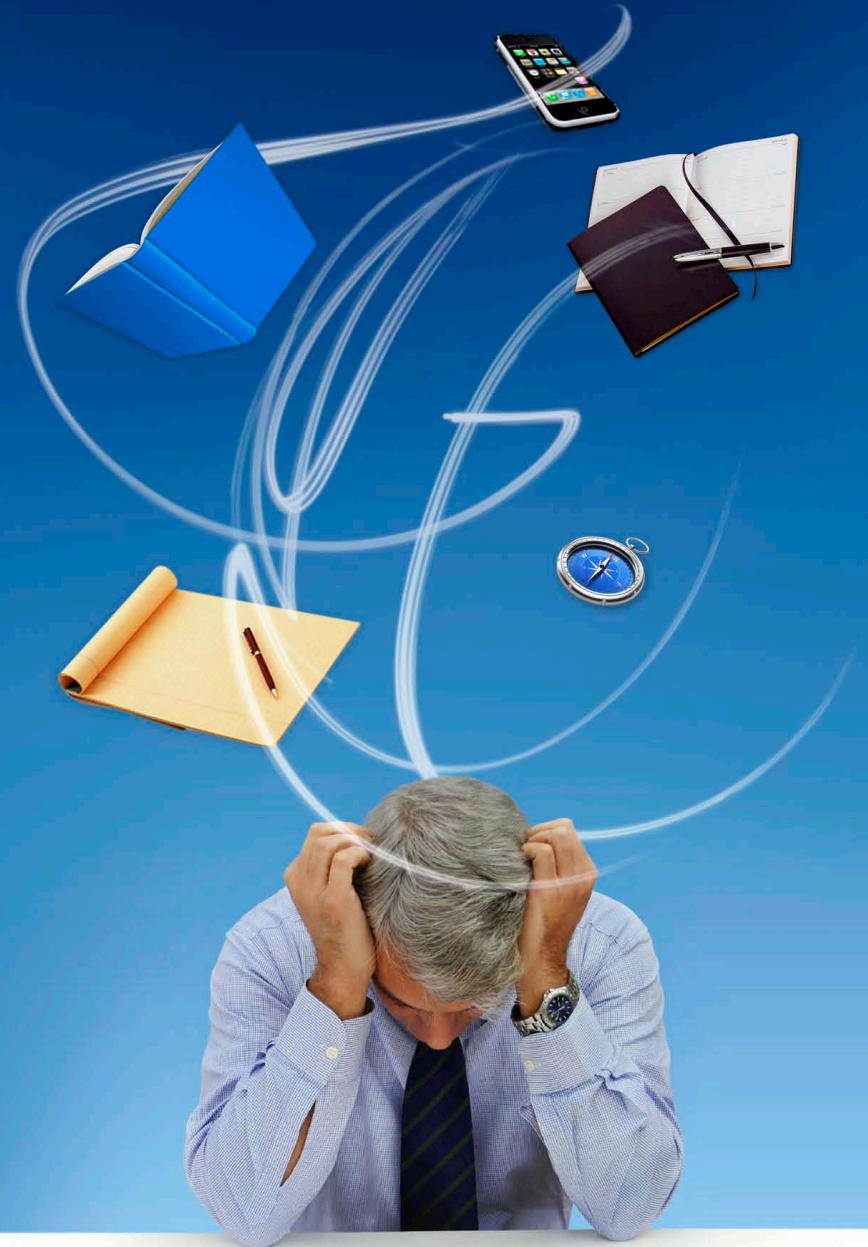
Mandated Email Restrictions: *An Emerging Trend*

2012 might be called *"The Year They Turned Off the Switch."* A handful of companies are electively reducing or eliminating emails sent to employees, and we expect to see more companies with policies that limit email, and address email abuses and abusers.

Atos moving toward a no-email policy

The CEO of French technology giant Atos, Thierry Breton, plans to phase out internal emails by 2014. The move is a result of internal research that revealed employees spend too much time on internal email (employees averaged 100 internal emails a day; reading and replying to emails took 20 hours a week), and not enough time on management.

Breton's goal is to replace email with internal social media tools such as instant messaging services, Facebook and Twitter. Eliminating email is part of a larger global initiative, "Wellbeing at Work," which is designed to enhance working conditions.

Volkswagen turns off email to reduce burnout

Volkswagen (VW) has decided to stop sending emails to employees' BlackBerry when they're off-shift, citing its desire to prevent burnout. Europe's largest automaker will stop routing emails 30 minutes after the end of shifts until 30 minutes before the next day's shift begins.

This BlackBerry Blackout affects employees in Germany who are part of collective bargaining and was started after complaints from VW employees and the union that work and home lives are becoming blurred. Employees can still make and receive calls in off-hours, and the Blackout doesn't apply to senior management. So far the response has been positive a VW spokesperson told the German newspaper, *Wolfsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*.

Brazil legislates for compensation

Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff approved legislation in December 2011 stating that workers who answer work emails after hours can qualify for overtime. The rationale for the new law states that company emails to workers are equivalent to orders given directly to the employee.

Our take? Moderating emails after hours, as well as fixing email abuses and abusers, is a win-win.

- **It solves well-known irritants**—Whose inbox isn't constantly overflowing? Who hasn't received an email where someone is hiding behind the technology? Who hasn't received a "nastygram" that really should have been a phone call or discussion in a face-to-face meeting?

- **It saves time and money**—The average employee wastes 30 minutes a day or more on email

- **Employees will cheer the move**—It helps facilitate better work/life balance, is a morale booster, and should get bosses to think twice in the long run about what they communicate over email and how

- **Organizations will likely see productivity gains**

At least it's a step in the right direction. Eliminating email and email abuses isn't the ultimate solution to improving employee engagement, work-life balance, and productivity. Really, it's a Band-Aid because the much larger issue is about ineffective communications inside organizations today, which is negatively affecting business results.

The facts about email

Email isn't one of the top communications issues facing organizations today. We know that from anecdotal experience and data-based research. That said, it's still a big issue that merits fixing...
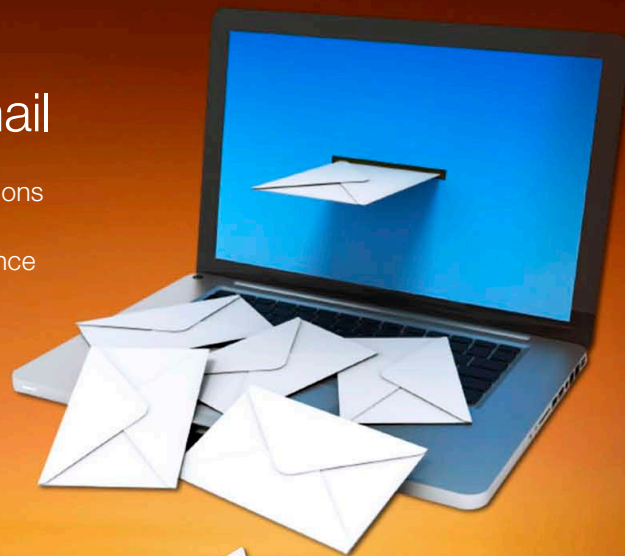
Employees send hundreds of emails a day

• Workers send an average of 160 emails / day[1]

• It's estimated that in 2009, 247 billion email messages were sent daily, and 90 trillion emails in that year alone[2]

We're at email overload

• A recent survey by Harris Interactive found that 94% of employees reach their daily email tipping point at 50— any more than 50 emails causes information overload[3]

Employees spend 25-50% of each workday (2 – 4 hours) on email

• 36% of time spent on email is attempting to contact people, find information, scheduling meetings

• 14% of time spent on email is duplicating information, forwarding emails, dealing with unwanted communications (spam, unsolicited time)[4]

[1]Deloitte Telecommunications Predictions: TMT Trends 2009   [2]Pingdom, web monitoring firm   [3]Harris Interactive Survey, 2010   [4]Webtorials, 2011 State-of-the-Market Report

eM@IL

Caveat:
Many workers don't have access to email

If you work in a retail or manufacturing environment, chances are only a few employees have easy access to email and the intranet. In other environments, like customer service call centers, while employees might have easy access to email, they're not given the time to check it.

In those environments, communication tools such as posters and printed materials continue to be important information sources, along with bosses.

GO FIGURE!

30 minutes (at least!)

That's the average time an employee wastes on email. Multiply that by the number of your employees and their average hourly wage, and you get a very large number.

Common employee preferences

Employee preference for communication vehicles tends to depend on the topic:

On these topics……	Employees prefer….
Strategy	Email
Organizational updates	Email
Industry and competitor news	Email
Work/job activities	Supervisor
How an employee's job fits within the bigger picture	Supervisor

Why now?

As work/life balance becomes more and more unbalanced due to people's constant attachment to electronic devices, employees are reaching a boiling point.

They want to reclaim their personal lives—and they aren't shy anymore about telling their employers what they want. Smart employers are heeding the message.

It's about the PEOPLE who use the technology, not the TECHNOLOGY

Employees today want to feel connected to their organizations, especially in this post 9-11 world, and feel like they are making a difference. They are willing to work hard and take pride in their work.

But during reasonable hours please.

The solution for bosses is to listen and lead better.

Listen to what your employees are asking for. What do they need to know to be the best they can be in their roles? Do they understand the vision? Employees want to know how they can further the overall objectives of the company.

The faster your employees understand the information you need them to know, and shared in the way they prefer, the more productive—and happier—they will be.

The biggest issues employees have with email are typically around relevance and duplication

- "It's not relevant to me"
- "Messages are duplicates of what's already been communicated"

Many employees are open to limiting emails

- A recent poll by Guardian News and Media Limited* found that 87.4% of respondents would like their employers to stop emailing them after hours. Only 12.6% said they're okay with receiving after hour emails.[5]

[5] Guardian News and Media Limited Poll, 2011

Step Away from Your Smart Phone

Addicted to your Smart Phone? You're not alone. Numerous studies have shown the negative effects of Smart Phone use, whether it's getting in the way of relationships, leading to sleep loss, or causing vehicle accidents, among other significant downsides.

Many workers today are constantly "plugged in." While technology helps workers be "present" even if they're not physically at a work site, it's the tools that connect us that also give many employees the feeling that anywhere they are—they have to work.

Additionally, with job and promotion opportunities becoming scarcer in some organizations, many workers worry that someone who is more connected and available could advance higher on the corporate ladder.

Still, others just can't put their smart phone down. A survey by The Energy Project, as reported in Harvard Business Review noted that about 60% of employees spend less than two waking hours a day completely disconnected from email.[6]

No LOL:
The three most powerful sounds in the world that elicit an emotional response[7]

1. Baby giggles

2. The Intel chime

3. Vibrating phone

[6] The Energy Project Poll, 2010

[7] According to NYT author, Martin Lindstorm

Email can be a highly-effective tool, if used properly

Email is a form of one-way communication, meaning it does not allow for an immediate exchange of ideas. If you plan to use email as your communication tool, consider its limitations and your strategy for getting feedback. Aside from using email as a logistics coordination tool, it's best used as follow-up to meetings or conference calls to recap concepts, agreements and gain alignment between groups.
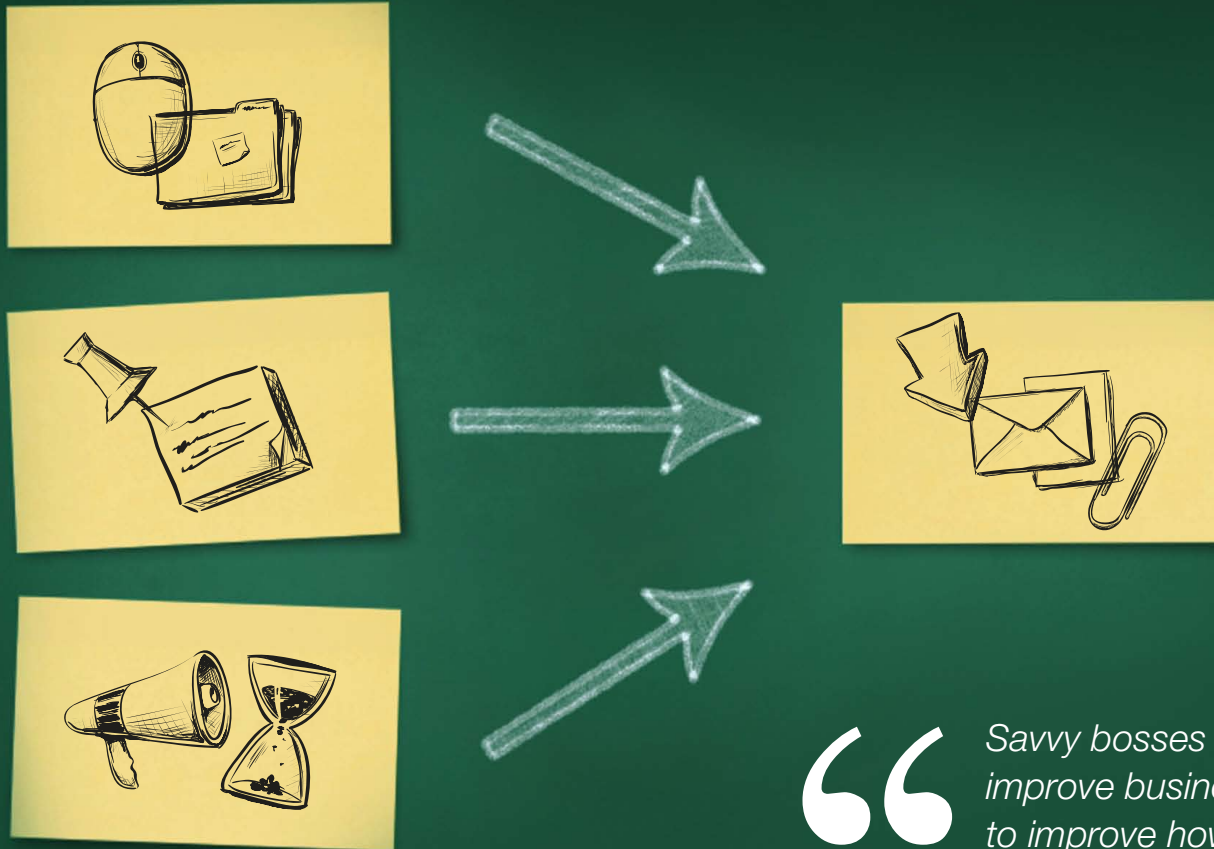
"Savvy bosses today know that to improve business results, you need to improve how you communicate.

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As with all communications, emails must be planned and considered to get the action you want.

Email is most effective to…

• Provide directional, important and timely information

• Share detailed information and data

• Ensure there's a record of your communication

• Direct the receiver to an online source for more information

• Provide brief status updates

DO use email to:

• Provide one or multiple audiences with a brief status update in the body of a message

• Deliver a longer message or information as an attachment to your intended receivers

• Give timely information consistently to a group of receiver(s)

• Prompt the receiver(s) to view web-based content or other content that's attached

DON'T use email:

• To give bad or negative news

• To give complex, detailed or lengthy information or instructions

• When the receiver deserves an opportunity to give immediate feedback or response

• When there might be nuance or context that can't be understood by written words; to express feelings

Tips & Best Practices

• Keep messages focused, easy to read and brief

• Don't put anything in an email you wouldn't want publicly broadcast

• Make the subject line relevant and meaningful

• Indicate if you need a response (what and when)

• If it takes more than 2-3 emails to bring closure to a topic, make it a voice-to-voice conversation (it's probably too complex for an email)

E-tiquette

Mind your manners with these tips to break bad habits, improve e-tiquette, and communicate more effectively over email.

Keep your message simple and clear—Edit unnecessary words to focus your recipient on what's most important. Short sentences and bullet points make your message easier to read on a computer screen, and a smartphone.

Answer all questions, be proactive—Avoid wasted time with back and forth emails. Answer all questions posed to you, and proactively answer your recipients' likely next questions.

Respond quickly—Email is built for speed. Respond quickly to avoid uncertainty.

Use polite greetings and closings—Please and thank you go a long way in conveying a positive tone.

Use proper spelling, grammar and punctuation—Be professional and show you care. Always use spellcheck and proofread your emails.

Do not use all caps—Did you mistake the meaning of that statement because I didn't put NOT in all caps? No? Neither will your recipient.

Don't use special formatting, backgrounds, colored text or emoticons—It simply looks unprofessional.

Double check for correct email addresses and attachments—Avoid being embarrassed or disseminating proprietary information.

Be clear in the subject line—Avoid having your emails ignored by briefly explaining the content of your message.

Use the CC field as an FYI—The CC field says this is an FYI and you are not expected to take action. CC your manager when you want him or her to know you've taken an action.

Use the BCC field for large groups of recipients—Don't advertise people's email address.

Use "Reply All" only when appropriate—If everyone on the chain doesn't need to see your response why fill up their inbox?

Take care when sending large files—Check with your recipient in advance to see how they would like to receive the file.

Avoid sarcasm or tongue-in-cheek humor—Email doesn't convey the meaning behind these types of statements.

Never send an email when you're upset—Take a step away from your computer and consider how to best resolve an issue.

Don't hide behind email—It feels so easy to avoid difficult conversations by sending an email, but research shows that conflict escalates quicker and lasts longer over email.

Don't be afraid to pick up the phone—Email is not always the right vehicle. You should never give bad news over email. Complex information is best addressed in a face-to-face conversation, nuance is often missed over email.

Email unto others as you would have them Email unto you!

Biggest email abuses and bad habits

- Selecting email as the wrong method of communication
- Poorly written emails
- Sending irrelevant information
- Engaging in too much back-and-forth when a phone call would solve the issue
- Hiding behind email for tough conversations
- No call-to-action
- Using "reply all" improperly
- CC'ing unnecessarily
- Saying something on email you would want to read in the newspaper

We want your bad emails!

Send us your best—*or actually the worst*—emails in your inbox. Email us at *BadEmails@ yourthoughtpartner.com.* We'll use the emails for a future eBook.

About Face

Leading in Person: 6 Reasons to Communicate Face-to-Face

We all know how technology enables communication—email, voicemail, text message, instant message, Twitter...the list goes on. There are more than enough ways to communicate, and too often they add up to message overload for employees.

That's why when something is important, nothing compares to communicating face–to-face. When a boss needs to inspire people—or move them to action—the best way to do it is to look people in the eye and tell them exactly what they need to know.

Communicating face-to-face sends a message before you say a word. People will not only hear what you are saying, they will perceive the greater meaning of your tone, voice inflection, emotion and body language.

" *Clearly, the workplace would be more productive (and pleasant!) with less BS and more humanity.*

Here are six good reasons for bosses to make the time to communicate face-to-face:

Demonstrate importance

Being there in person tells your audience they are important to you and the issue you are discussing is worth your time and theirs. Your focus will get people's attention and increase the potential for your message to be heard.

Interpret thoughts and feelings

When you are face-to-face, you can see and respond to people's reactions—like facial expressions and body language—as well as their tone of voice. Bosses have the chance to show they care by asking probing questions and actively listening to understand the audience's perspective. This is especially critical when you need employees to adopt new behaviors to advance your goals, such as in times of change.

Enhance credibility and trust

Bosses need to build employee trust to be effective. Face-to-face situations allow you to share your strategy, explain it clearly, and answer questions honestly. Employees see how actions align with words, which enhances bosses' credibility and trust.

Build relationships

Interacting directly with other bosses, managers and employees expands your network and establishes shared experiences that can enhance future communication. It also helps create camaraderie that is the basis of cooperation and success across the organization.

Gather feedback

Meeting in person helps employees feel valued and gives them a chance to contribute input to organizational strategies and communication. It gives the boss a chance to confirm people's understanding of key issues, identify gaps and encourage ongoing feedback and engagement.

Address sensitive issues

You demonstrate respect for employees and a commitment to a successful outcome when you deal with a sensitive issue face-to-face. Whether you are providing specific feedback to increase their success or delivering a tough message, focus on your desired outcome and prepare by understanding the employee's mindset and possible reactions. Ultimately your involvement means a lot and taking the time to meet can help turn a challenging conversation into a trust-building interaction.

The real questions,
at the end of the day

For organizations....

Will policies that limit email or help workers use email more effectively be beneficial, or do the perceived risks outweigh the benefits? What's your appetite for change? Overall, how is communication flowing inside your organization? Do you have data that's helping you understand what employees think, and how to improve what's getting in the way? Would an outside perspective on your communications climate be beneficial?

For bosses.....

Are you open to holding up a mirror to yourself to understand your strengths, weaknesses, and blind spots when it comes to how you communicate? This isn't about how you think you're doing; rather, it's about feedback from employees and others. Have you set clear expectations with your team regarding how everyone can best work together, including expectations about how the team communicates?

Do you realize that employees who have balance in their lives are actually more productive at work?

For employees.....

Are you able to step away from your emails and realize that not everything needs to be answered urgently?

In fact, sometimes, time and distance from an issue helps us think more clearly and effectively about the solution (often, the problem even gets solved before we get back to our email)!

Will you take personal responsibility to be part of the solution by using emails yourself more effectively and coaching others who abuse email? That means:

• Commit to become a better, more effective user of email

• Be more selective about when email is the appropriate method of communication, and when another vehicle would be better

• Make the best, highest use of the tool—use it as a summary and follow-up to a discussion

• Pick up the phone when a discussion on email really should be a conversation

• Do not hide behind email when there are tough issues that need to be discussed

• Stop "replying all," except in rare instances

• Ensure every email describes the action needed

If the *monster* were tamed, how might it change your life?

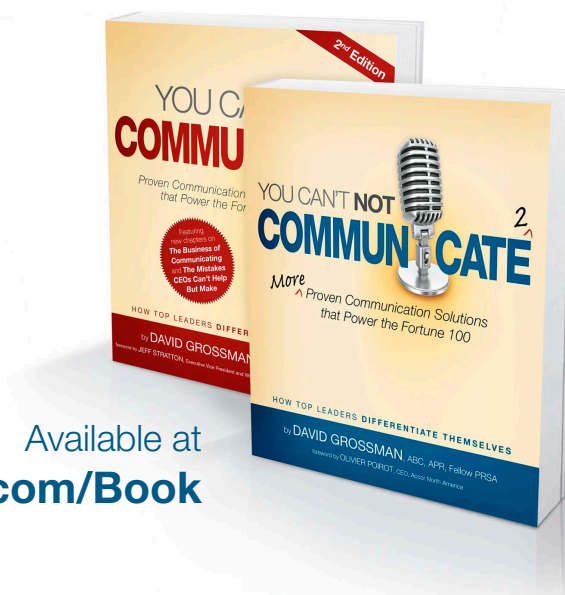# Imagine having your own personalized business messages and stories in the palm of your hand.

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Click here to learn more

David Grossman, ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA is the founder and CEO of The Grossman Group

David is both a teacher and student of effective communication and counsels some of the world's leading organizations on internal and leadership communication. He's author of the highly acclaimed, *"You Can't **Not** Communicate: Proven Communication Solutions That Power the Fortune 100"* (Second Edition) and its follow up, *"You Can't **Not** Communicate 2."* David is often quoted in media, providing expert commentary and analysis on employee and leadership issues. Specifically, he was featured on *NBC Nightly News, CBS MoneyWatch* and in the *Chicago Tribune*. Share your internal communication challenges or tips with David at **dgrossman@yourthoughtpartner.com.**

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YOU CAN'T **NOT**
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More ^ Proven Communication Solutions
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HOW TOP LEADERS DIFFERENTIATE THEMSELVES

by DAVID GROSSMAN, ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA

Foreword by OLIVIER POIROT, CEO, Accor North America