

Surrender Is Not a Winning Strategy

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CORPORATIONS around the world should learn an important lesson from the refrain of a 1964 Beatles song: 'Money Can't Buy Me Love'.

And corporate leaders should learn as well from Neville Chamberlain, who proudly announced in 1938 that his policy of appeasing Adolf Hitler would bring 'peace for our time'. A year later, Hitler started World War II.

The lesson? Surrender is not a winning strategy. It won't buy either love or peace from an attacker committed to your destruction.

Unfortunately—in a futile effort to protect themselves from a growing number of costly lawsuits—too many corporations are surrendering to the demands of radical attack groups. Many corporations go even further, and donate billions of dollars to some of their fiercest attackers.

These corporations are advised by a growing band of capitulation counsellors—who call themselves public relations strategists—that raising the white flag will transform their enemies into friends.

My advice to corporations: you can compromise with, or surrender to, these radical attackers if you think it's strategically expedient—but don't call it 'coalition building' or 'forging alliances'. Call it paying protection money. And, be ready for another attack from the same source or one of its allies, because it will probably come.

Radical attackers have succeeded in disguising themselves as crusaders for the public good—calling themselves 'non-profit public interest groups' with appealing names like Greenpeace, Friends of Earth, and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. But the truth is, many are

motivated by a desire to make money by suing corporations, along with an ideological hostility to private enterprise.

Donating money to your enemies and surrendering to their nonsensical demands, in an effort to make them your friends, is like walking into a boxing ring and offering a charging opponent milk and cookies to give you a hug.

The only way to respond to the other boxer is to hit him. The objective of corporate damage control must be the same as the objective of anyone in a boxing ring—to stop the attack by your opponent. Appeasement simply breeds more attacks.

What happens when you try to make peace with attackers who live to make war?

In California, environmentalists fought for years against the construction of desperately needed power plants. Utilities, and politicians pandering for votes, surrendered. The environmentalists won the battle, but the people of California lost the war to meet their growing power needs.

Today California faces power shortages that are causing brownouts, blackouts and huge price increases for electric power. It would have been much less painful for utilities and governments to have fought the anti-power plant crowd a lot harder years ago.

In another example, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—a group dedicated to ending the use of animals for food—campaigns to get the McDonald's chain to buy eggs only from farmers who give chickens better living conditions. McDonald's made changes last August. PETA then declared a one-year moratorium on

attacks on McDonald's, but demanded the company take even more drastic steps to improve treatment of chickens, cows and pigs.

On its Website, PETA warns that if McDonald's fails to make significant progress to meet the new demands by 1 September, 'PETA will relaunch its campaign blitz against McDonald's'. The PETA Website—called www.meatstinks.com—continues to attack meat eating as cruel and unhealthy. It always will.

What's the downside of corporate surrender for society at large? Corporations fearing attack abandon steps that would make their products better, safer and cheaper. They don't irradiate food to kill bacteria. They don't expand the use of genetically modified crops to help feed the world's hungry. They don't use chemicals to destroy disease-carrying organisms that kill millions of people. They don't do a lot of things.

The real victims of this surrender are the citizens of the world.

Instead of surrendering, corporations should point out the truth about the attackers: their claims are based on science fiction rather than science, and they are advocating policies that will cost us jobs and money, and create pain and suffering.

History has taught us that you don't win by surrendering. You win by winning—and by accepting that you will never get everyone to love you or even like you.

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