
IF YOU DON'T
**MAKE
WAVES**
YOU'LL DROWN

*10 Hard-Charging Strategies for
Leading in Politically Correct Times*

Dave Anderson



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John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

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*This book is dedicated to Ashley:
The most caring, witty, bright, and beautiful daughter
a grumpy old dad could ever have the privilege of
loving and raising.*

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Preface

If you can make it through the Preface and Introduction of this book without throwing it across the room into a trash can, or angrily closing it for the last time, then number 1, I'd be very much obliged, and number 2, there is hope for you as a leader in the midst of today's politically correct climate. Let me explain:

It's a fact that society's trends influence business trends. As a result, the world's embrace of political correctness has infected the business world and diminished and debilitated the performance-based psyche required to build an elite organization. Like any unchecked disease, PC continues to spread, creating a too-tolerant cesspool in the workplace that drains morale and preempts results.

In bluntest terms, political correctness is dishonest. It sacrifices truth for the sake of harmony. Its objective—to offend no one and treat all equally—abuses stars while it subsidizes sluggards. Worse, politically correct leaders are prone to subordinate creativity to conformity and replace innovation with emulation, all the while weakening the strong to strengthen the weak.

If you assume a too-politically correct leadership style you will join a growing herd of sheep that leaves a mire of

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mediocrity in its wake, as you diminish your spirit with compromise and cowardice while you wrongly rationalize away what you know is right and true for what is expedient. “Political correctness” is more than a term. It’s a dangerous state of mind and it is a trend. As a businessman, writer, speaker, and citizen, I’m alarmed by its reach and its depth in society and the workplace—and I think all productive people should be as well. In fact, the purpose of my book is to nudge, cajole, persuade, or push you up to a higher level of leadership that requires larger doses of tough love, higher expectations, and stronger accountability. It can be a painful journey, and things I say or suggest along the way may tick you off—but someday you’ll thank me.

The bottom line is that *If You Don’t Make Waves, You’ll Drown* is written to arm you: to help you tighten up, toughen up, and step up to build a high-performance business culture in spite of today’s politically correct stench. If you apply the Hard-Charging Strategies found in each chapter and adjust your style to fit these times you will not only survive but will earn an insanely unfair advantage for your organization. If instead you follow the PC fads that promote diversity over results, confuse loyalty with tenure, and fail to hold others accountable for their actions, you could become irrelevant as a leader and relegated to chief steward of an organizational outhouse. This descent has become all too common today, and I want you to personally avoid the plunge as well as to capitalize on those who fail to see the light and make the necessary adjustments: your competitors.

As I look around today, I am convinced that both society and the business world are in a heap of trouble. A recent generation of Americans has been rightly characterized as

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the “Greatest Generation.” As political correctness in society and business compromises our values, sullies high standards, and supplants merit with entitlement, much of our population has devolved into the rationalization generation.

Things only get worse when otherwise good people complain about political correctness but do nothing to stop it. Business and social structures are used to weaken the strong and prop up the weak. And if you haven’t yet recognized how society’s “anything goes,” “you’re okay I’m okay,” “let’s show a little more tolerance” mantras of Milquetoast are invading and wilting the performance-based psyche necessary to run your business and obstructing the way you manage employees, then I highly recommend you pull your head out of wherever it’s been hiding and deal with the world as it is rather than as you’d like it to be.

Society’s trends to abandon standards, morals, and the acceptance of responsibility for one’s life directly affects the mindset of you and your employees, and if you haven’t previously given the correlation much thought; consider this as a friendly wake-up call. My ranting on about its evils may make you uncomfortable or even angry, but closing your eyes in denial only aids and abets its impact on your business and the society in which you live. The bottom line: Political correctness has gone too far. Its proliferation affects you, your children, your employees, and your business, and it’s time to fight back.

Whether you head a small family firm burdened with spoiled, do-nothing offspring, a mammoth concern where the rank-and-file have become lazy and convinced themselves that tenure substitutes for results, or if you lead the ultra-successful who’ve become intoxicated with success

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and are convinced they've arrived, *If You Don't Make Waves, You'll Drown* offers the inspiration and hard-charging strategies to elevate your corporate welfare state to a meritocracy, or take an already good company and make it elite.

Make no mistake: Building a meritocracy is laborious while burdened with today's hypertolerance, "it's not my fault" losers' limps, and undisciplined workforce. But my guess is that you already work long and hard, that you care deeply about your business, and that you are up to the task. And if you're going to put forth a sincere effort each day to build a better life for your employees, your family, and yourself, you deserve to gain a greater return on your blood, sweat, and tears. But that means you'll have to make some waves while you're at work, because personal and corporate greatness will not just happen by doing more of what you've always done. In fact, the weakening effects of political correctness on culture, your employee's work ethic, and your own mindset can seduce you into doing the easy, cheap, popular, or convenient thing, rather than what's right—and often difficult. Just as has happened in society, politically correct pressures are causing business people to rationalize, trivialize, and marginalize the tough issues and to become disoriented to absolutes like right and wrong, success and failure, and winning and losing. On one hand, we're reluctant to give our best to the best, and on the other, we're afraid to fire the lazy, the lousy and the lost. We've become too reliant on consensus and prone to buy into the chorus that anything goes, that nothing is anyone's fault, and that outside conditions, not inside decisions, determine our fate. In the absence of accountability, political correctness creates a culture of entitlement that breeds

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mass mediocrity and saps passion from your best employees.

This doesn't have to happen to you. If it has, you can still win—but you can't prevail by presiding, administering, or simply managing your business; you're going to have to toughen up, make some waves, and lead it. Following is a blueprint from this book to help you divorce from the politically correct herd and become a tougher, tighter, leader, who lives and leads well in the midst of the PC sump:

Chapter 1: Don't Be a Wimp!

You can't lead effectively today if you're a wimp running around taking polls and trying to make everyone happy. You'll learn four key traits in this chapter that you must weave into your personal leadership style to optimize results.

Chapter 2: Send the Moochers Packing!

Entitlement is an offspring of political correctness. This chapter offers examples of the debilitating affects of entitlement on society and their subsequent trend to carry over into and impact your business, and teaches you to establish the polar opposite of a welfare state in your business: a meritocracy.

Chapter 3: Don't Confuse the Scoreboard for the Game!

Politically incorrect leaders don't get duped or seduced by the great results people produce: They look at *how* their people are getting the job done because the *how* is where these people are headed. In Chapter 3 you'll not only learn to keep "the numbers" in their proper perspective, but also how to become a more astute student of behaviors, culture, and disciplines—all keys to building and sustaining a meritocracy.

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Chapter 4: Sometimes You Have to Tick People Off!

Honest feedback oftentimes hurts people's feelings and can make them mad—but that's a small price to pay to correct their course and edify the organization. This chapter teaches three types of feedback you must give quickly, consistently, and honestly in order to maintain a pressure to perform and bring the best out of your people, and two feedback strategies to avoid.

Chapter 5: Learn to Read between the Lies!

Politically incorrect leaders make waves by challenging conventional thinking and by refusing to instinctively follow the herd of best practices in business. This chapter offers three examples of how conventional wisdom hides the truth in both society and business, and teaches the importance of being more cynical of generally accepted dogmas, the government, the media, and most of the people you deal with.

Chapter 6: Ditch Diversity and Go for Results!

In politically correct organizations the pursuit of diversity supercedes the quest for results. However, diversity without competence is worthless! Chapter 6 coaches you on how to make waves and eliminate an Affirmative Action mindset in your business, where people benefit precisely because of who they are rather than what they've ever done, and to put merit and results in their proper place when building your business; far ahead of gender, ethnicity, or racial preferences.

Chapter 7: Don't Just Win . . . Run up the Score!

Politically incorrect leaders don't want their fair share of the market: They want more. They don't seek a level playing

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field: They want it stacked as far in their favor as possible. But they know that to accomplish this they must maintain a killer instinct, and outwork, outsmart, and out-lead their competition. Chapter 7 teaches you how to beat the live-and-let-live, play-not-to-lose tendency of PC wimps, and to focus on winning big and winning often.

Chapter 8: Spare the Rod, Spoil the Sluggard!

If you want to change someone's behavior you must do more than give endless pep talks, cross your fingers, hold your breath, and hope something good happens. You must care enough about your people to make waves, to confront them when they veer off-track, and learn to coach with consequences. Chapter 8 will teach you to leverage consequences as a key to changing employee behavior and ensuring more consistent results from your team.

Chapter 9: Don't Make People Happy. . . . Make Them Better!

Politically incorrect leaders understand it is not their job to make people happy. Their job is to make them better, and once people get better, they tend to get happy—and if getting better doesn't make them happy then they're not worth having around. This chapter will teach the importance of making waves and earning respect, first, and popularity, second, if at all.

Chapter 10: Don't Trade Your Values for Valuables!

Politically incorrect leaders lead by personal example, not personal convenience. This chapter makes the unconventional case for using your business as a vehicle to support

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causes and movements that reflect your values, and to leave the world better than you found it.

I believe that much of what's in *Waves* will make sense to you and you'll agree with it—and some you will not. So let's get this on the table up front: It's always okay to disagree. Just keep an open mind and realize that when you're feeling uncomfortable or even offended it's because you're being stretched, and that without discomfort and stretching you won't grow to your fullest potential as a person or a leader. In fact, I would wager that the passages that disturb you the most in any book you read have the most to teach you. Overall, the thoughts and strategies I'm presenting are a lot like grocery shopping: If you like them put them in the cart; if you don't, leave them on the shelf. But at least take a look and see if they make some sense and will work for you.

Here's reassuring news: Rather than simply whine about the depths of depravity PC has dunked us in, *Waves* provides tools for excelling in spite of it, bucking the timid trend and creating a significant edge for you as a leader. My guess is that if you're as exhausted and offended by the delusion and denial you see people living in as I believe you are, you won't mind seeing PC drawn and quartered before you. In fact, I suspect you will find it refreshing.

Acknowledgments

There are so many people that have to put up with my impatience, high demands, and stubbornness in order to see a project like this book through to completion, that in the name of being inclusive and politically correct I should list them all here. However, to prevent this from sounding like an award show acceptance speech garbled by some gushy, windbag Hollywood starlet, I will limit my thanks to the most important person behind this project and in my life; my wife and business partner, Rhonda.

Author's Note

I haven't written this book to humor you, entertain you, or tell you how great you are. I'm not saying it's not important that someone do this for you, but I'm not the guy. I am here to help you, and I've seen enough once-effective leaders neutered by politically correct posturing and positioning to know that more sweet-talking will only make things worse.

I also want to present my background, since, as a reader, you deserve to know so you can better understand and evaluate the strategies presented here. My writing and speaking style is quite blunt, because in order to help you become a better leader and build a more vital enterprise I would rather offend you by being direct than affront you with fluff. I am not an academic and have built my own business without having anything handed to me. I should also share that I fit much of the world's definition of all that's evil and wrong in society in that I am a male, Caucasian, Christian, conservative.

What this last sentence means is that my left-leaning friends who promote tolerance and open-mindedness will have a chance to practice what they preach while reading this book. And if you happen to share my gender, race, religion, or political persuasion and smugly assume that this book is de-

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signed to represent these aspects as superior, think again because we get our share wrong much of the time.

As I observe what is *not* working in the workplace or in the world overall, I would respectfully suggest that if people from all political affiliations, denominations, and religions would take the time, money, and energy they spend trying to prove they are right and the rest of the world is wrong and invest it in doing good then life would be a lot more pleasant for us all.

As you may have already discerned *If You Don't Make Waves, You'll Drown* is not your typical warm and fuzzy business manual. In fact, if you're not periodically uncomfortable while reading the book, I will have failed you. Admittedly, I even cross the line of propriety from time to time to make a point. You are more likely to find this book irritating than motivating, but that's a good thing, since frustration and dissatisfaction are unequalled motivators.

If you don't like the way I make my point or present a strategy, frankly, that's your privilege, but you must understand that I gave up trying to make everyone happy years ago, and it was one of the most liberating things I've ever done. In fact, throughout the book I'm going to try and convince you to do the same. I guess the bottom line is that if you want to be hugged and coddled by an author, you'll have to read someone else's book. Don't get me wrong: I care deeply about people. In fact, I care enough to confront them when they're off-track, to tell the truth even when it hurts, and to irritate them enough to get them to leave their comfort zone and grow.

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If you continue to read *Waves* you have implicitly agreed to the terms disclosed. Because of this, you should know that I don't welcome negative comments, emails, phone calls, threats, or feedback about how I hurt your feelings, offended you, excluded you, or otherwise made you unhappy. Sorry, but life is too short. While I take shots at a handful of deserving public figures and professions and poke fun at certain backgrounds, my bottom-line business philosophy is simple: I don't care if you're a Christian, Jew, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, or deist; white, black, brown, yellow, green, purple, or pink; male, female, gay, straight, or confused, there are three elements that trump all these factors in leadership: character, competence, and consistency. Without these it is impossible to have the maniacal focus on results necessary to build an elite organization. I am biased and prejudiced against only three things: lack of character, lack of competence, and lack of consistency. I hope you find that fair. In fact, I encourage the same three prejudices—and only these three prejudices—among all business leaders.

A final word: Those of you that have read my prior books will notice I've taken it up a notch and presented an even more direct and bare-knuckles approach in *Waves*, because I believe many leaders are running out of time. They're heading for disaster. It's not that they don't want to fix their businesses; many of them are functionally blind to what is happening to their businesses. They don't see it and they just don't get it. They don't realize the urgency to toughen up and tighten up. They don't grasp that there is less margin for error.

Frankly, many people might benefit greatly from this book if, instead of reading it, a friend whacked them upside

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the head with it to help bring them to their senses more quickly than I can with mere words. If this is you, you'll realize it soon enough as you read through each chapter. From that point on you can no longer lean on the crutch of ignorance for failing to lead more effectively in politically correct times. After all, ignorance indicates that you don't know any better. Once you know better but still do unproductive things you must then assume the banner of stupidity. However, I say this without fear of offending you because I don't believe it relates to you: Even if it does, the fact that you read this far tells me you're tough enough to take it.

Introduction

Political correctness is defined as conforming to a belief that language and practices that could offend sensibilities as pertains to sex, race, or religion should be eliminated. In its purest form, this definition makes sense. Unfortunately, the definition of PC has swelled over the years, so that saying or doing anything offensive to someone—for any reason—is taboo. In fact, it could make you the defendant in a lawsuit or label you a racist or a bigot. As a result, political correctness has created an unofficial form of censorship in society and the workplace.

If you're the hypersensitive type this book will unsettle you, because it assails the values politically correct society may have seduced you into embracing. If, in fact, you are the hypersensitive type then you probably shouldn't have bought this book, because you may be so far gone over the politically correct edge that nothing can help you. Don't take this personally, because it doesn't mean you're a bad person: You're just a bad fit for the strategies in this book. Frankly, you probably won't like them.

So why would I risk turning off readers and perhaps alienating them in these early pages? Because in an age when we've become more concerned with not offending someone than we have in failing to tell the truth as we see it, we should consider this sad but brutal fact: There are droves of otherwise good people drown-

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ing in denial, in both society and business, that need to wake up. Perhaps they even need offending—they need to hear the truth and to be shaken out of their delusion, because they're tiptoeing through life, talking, walking, and acting like victims. These people add value to nothing, and positively impact no one. Sorry if this sounds harsh. But just take a glance around you in the workplace and in society as a whole. My guess is that you won't have to look far or long to have this assertion validated.

The worst offenders are PC puppets in leadership positions: leadership wimps. These weak-sticks with titles have pledged allegiance to the status quo, sold out their values for valuables, are bereft of courage and immobilized by fear. Even worse, because they are "leaders," their spineless example has cascaded down throughout their organization, castrating the spirit of the rank and file, discouraging the talented at the top while at the same time creating a safe-house for bunglers at the bottom. If you are currently working for someone like this or have in the past, you know firsthand how infuriating these people are.

In my seminars, I ask audiences by a show of hands to indicate if they believe the world has become too politically correct. The answer is complete affirmation. I then ask if they believe that political correctness in society has the potential to negatively impact and influence the way they run their business and deal with their people. The answer, again, is an anthem of moans followed by a unanimous "Yes."

Quite frankly, you'd have to be living in a spider hole not to realize how out of hand the proliferation of politically correct doctrine has become, and to ignore the impact it has on your personal leadership style and your organization. But just in case you haven't been paying attention to society's drift toward political correctness the past few years, here are six examples of how trends in busi-

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ness follow trends in politically correct society—and the devastating impact this has on your enterprise. Be warned that some of these examples may seem unkind or a bit harsh, but if I’m going to encourage you to make waves, I need to walk my talk and do the same. So here goes:

Political Correctness Gone Nuts Example #1: Advocacy groups admonish governments and citizens to adjust their culture, values, and laws to accommodate growing populations of immigrants. While the vast majority of immigrants in this country make positive contributions, and many out-hustle and run circles around the home-grown team of citizens, the philosophy that a society should have to change to accommodate them is 100 percent backward. Undoubtedly, it is an immigrant’s obligation to adapt to a country, not vice versa. And this assimilation should include learning to speak the language. If immigrants don’t feel they can adjust to the country to which they immigrate and put its interests first they should stay put, and save everyone the headache of tolerating their insolence and being burdened by their ignorance.

The Impact on Business: Employees in today’s workplace don’t want to stretch to your expectations or live your workplace values—they want you to adjust and lower the bar to accommodate them. Today we live in an instant gratification society where people want the prize with little regard for paying the price—and they want it yesterday. People project a lottery mindset, hoping today is the day their number comes up, and seek fame and fortune without virtue of accomplishment. You witness a quota mentality, where people get a job or promotion because of what they are rather than what they’ve done; where genetics trumps merit, and the pursuit of diversity supercedes the quest for results. And you see spoiled whin-