

A friend of mine, heard from his neighbor's ex-plumber (long story) that a guy in his sister's home town up in Michigan was buried at his desk. It turns out that the deceased was a rather colorful CEO at a factory that makes tongue depressors. His days were mostly spent sitting at, or some say, oddly embracing, his desk. Hidden behind his office-bunker door, he was rarely seen except for his annual Christmas card photo. Same every year in a hideous holiday sweater, sitting on top of, what they sarcastically called around the office, THE desk.

Evidently while embracing THE desk late one night while chomping on a pickle from the bucket o' gherkins he kept in the bottom drawer, he choked and died face down on his beloved, intricately carved, highly polished, heck of a desk. True to his last wishes, the trusted attorney of this never married desk-lover was buried according to the specifications penned in his own words upon the last will and testament: I shall be buried in a grave precisely 10 feet 7 inches deep by 9 feet square, sitting in my favorite chair at my beloved desk. I wish to be mournfully lowered by the 6 men on the night shift who work the wood presses. Please position me in a manner that provides a 3 foot clearance from the top of my head to ground level. I choose this manner as my resting place such to ensure that no other person will ever enjoy the sweet attraction I felt for so many years for my desk.

Now, I've known CEOs who think a little too highly of their Euro-techno office furniture or walk a little too close to co-dependency with their golf clubs or cuff-links or a priceless sculpture of two people talking that looks more like cement in a salad bowl, but I've not come across any other bury me at my desk Chief Executive Crazy's like the guy my friend's neighbor's ex-plumber's sister knew. All the same, I bet they're out there. They really are confused about what it means to be a leader. You don't lead behind a desk.

Oh sure, I guess a desk can be attractive to some in a creepy, my desk has feelings, kind of way, but a strong attachment to head-honcho collectible power-tripping stuff, really isn't a good use of leadership time or the mental image you want to create for those you lead. We really need to run away from the misguided Wall Street notion that the CEO and the command center desk should be guarded in his or her safe-house lock down unit with staple shooting "admins" posted at the door. Gotta get out more.

Leaders need to be out of the office, down on the floor, slapping the back of the 6 guys sweating it out on the wood press, asking them what they need to be the best wood pressers that tongue depressor users deserve. A leader's office rarely generates much cash flow or wins quality awards. An office too easily becomes a high security hiding place for the "Wiz" to pull levers, bark orders and fall in love with THE desk.

Nothing wrong with an office, just don't get so attached to it that you can't venture out. Instead, roam around, get to know people, ask about their frustrations, eat lunch with them, tell them about your vision, ask them for their input. You need far more interaction than what

your desk can provide.