

More Weight!

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As head of your organization, I'll bet you're too much like Giles Cory in taking on responsibilities.

Giles Cory was a 71-year-old farmer living in Salem Village, Massachusetts in 1692. He believed in witches and, with his wife Martha, attended the examinations of those accused by several young girls of witchcraft. Martha, skeptical of the charges, was arrested when her opinion became known and — thanks to the screeching girls — was ordered by Judge John Hathorne to stand trial.

Giles was a witness at her examination. When he realized his statement about “uncommon accidents” around the house was interpreted as proof of Martha’s malevolence, he began to speak out against the girls, who screeched in turn about him, and Giles was himself arrested.

Neighbors and girls accused this fiery man of beatings, of appearing as a spectre who choked them, of taking part in Black Sabbaths, even of murdering his first wife! When asked how he pleaded, Giles remained mute. He knew three things about English common law: (1) Except for a charge of treason, a prisoner did not have to enter a plea, which would enable him to be tried. (2) If not tried, he could not be convicted as a witch. In the cases prior to his, the property of those hanged had been confiscated by Sheriff Corwin, who apparently made a tidy profit from those deaths. (3) If he died, his family would inherit his land and goods.

Because he refused to plead, the system had a handy way of encouraging the recalcitrant. He would be pressed to testify. . .literally. Giles was taken to a shallow pit dug outside the jail, stripped of his clothing and lain into it with boards across his chest, and boulders atop that. The sheriff stood on the boards and shouted, “Will you confess?” to which Giles’ only reply was, “More weight!” They added more weight and asked again. “More weight!” was his only answer.

It took Giles three days to die. In his last breath he cursed Salem and Corwin. Martha was hung three days later.

You may be like Giles Cory. Tough, smart, shrewd, knowledgeable, and stubborn. What has made you successful is your readiness to take on the necessary tasks, large or small, to get the job done. “Bring it on!” could be your mantra because you have never shirked from work or challenge.

This sterling quality also has its dark side, in that you can sometimes be mute like Giles, being willing to take on “More weight!” when the situation more than justifies you saying, “This is too much. I need relief, help, the ability to offload some of my responsibilities.” This does not come easily to you because you pride yourself on your

strengths, your get-it-done attitude, your ability to outwork just about everyone around you.

It won't ever get easier for you because this is as natural to you as breathing, as WELL as trained into you by your past experiences, but it's critical for your development as a leader to sense when you're being crushed by the jobs you've taken on, to create a delegation strategy and put it in play. This way your people will develop, too, as they take on "More weight!" and now have to juggle priorities instead of hanging out at a job you make too easy for them. You can leave the busynesses that have weighed you down and focus on the strategy, people and operations, which are your more valuable strengths.

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