

# To climb the corporate ladder you'll need some rope, but rope has many purposes

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When KC told me about a trick she learned to get an area expert to respond to her email, I cautioned her that the trick might backfire:

A friend of mine (let's call him Bob) happens also to work in the technology industry, and the manager for the part of the project he worked on was, to put it nicely, "in the wrong line of work." No matter how many times Bob would explain how the system worked on the whiteboard, his manager never really understood it. And the misunderstandings weren't just of the "oh I missed a little detail" variety; rather, they tended to elicit a "What planet are you from?" sort of reaction. Bob spent many impromptu meetings patiently trying to clear up various degrees of confusion or explaining why some clever new idea won't work because it violates the laws of physics as we currently understand them.

Add to the tenuous grasp on technical concepts the uncanny ability to take all the credit when making presentations to senior management. You know the type of people I'm talking about: They're the sort who manage to skate through school by using their good looks, charming personality, and/or social status to get other people to do their homework for them.

One day, the manager sent out a plan to a large group of people, including some senior managers, and included in the email one of those "Huh?" questions, something akin to "... and it'll connect to the server wirelessly through the parallel port, and—hey Bob, inkjet printers can run off the parallel port, right?"

Bob decided that he'd had enough. He replied to the mail thread with a simple, "Yes, inkjet printers can run off the parallel port."

Somebody else in the group gave Bob a phone call. "Um, Bob, what do inkjet printers have to do with anything?"

Bob answered, "Just making sure there's enough rope."

Bob's colleague replied, "Gotcha."

The manager's tenure ended a few months later.

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