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## Fired Groupon CEO's refreshingly blunt memo to employees

By Lillian Cunningham, February 28, 2013



Andrew Mason was fired Thursday from his position as CEO of Groupon. (David Paul Morris/DAVID...)

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Honesty and authenticity are so profoundly lacking in today's leaders that it really is a thrill when a frank memo appears, like the one that freshly ousted Groupon CEO Andrew Mason penned Thursday evening. You can read his departure letter in full below.

Remember Carol Bartz's blunt note to Yahoo employees? ("I am very sad to tell you that I've just been fired over the phone by Yahoo's Chairman of the Board.")

Or when Goldman Sachs employee Greg Smith publicly quit his job in the form of a scathing op-ed in the New York Times? ("Today is my last day at Goldman Sachs. ...And I can honestly say the environment now is as toxic and destructive as I have ever seen it.")

It's a rare and decadent pleasure — with a dollop of schadenfreude on top, of course — to get a taste of the sourness inside big businesses. And it's a reminder that we are, in fact, all human. That there really is a limit to what we're willing to take, and to what we're willing to sugarcoat.

According to research by leadership experts Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner, honesty is the most important attribute Americans look for in their leaders. It comes before "forward-looking," "inspiring" and even "competent." What a shame that it so often takes a dramatic exit for those in power, and for all of us, to say what needed to be said all along.

Following his firing, Mason, who is also one of Groupon's co-founders, shared this note with employees that seems as self-effacing as it does sincere. Here is what he wrote:

*People of Groupon,*

*After four and a half intense and wonderful years as CEO of Groupon, I've decided that I'd like*



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*to spend more time with my family. Just kidding - I was fired today. If you're wondering why... you haven't been paying attention. From controversial metrics in our S1 to our material weakness to two quarters of missing our own expectations and a stock price that's hovering around one quarter of our listing price, the events of the last year and a half speak for themselves. As CEO, I am accountable.*

*You are doing amazing things at Groupon, and you deserve the outside world to give you a second chance. I'm getting in the way of that. A fresh CEO earns you that chance. The board is aligned behind the strategy we've shared over the last few months, and I've never seen you working together more effectively as a global company - it's time to give Groupon a relief valve from the public noise.*

*For those who are concerned about me, please don't be - I love Groupon, and I'm terribly proud of what we've created. I'm OK with having failed at this part of the journey. If Groupon was Battletoads, it would be like I made it all the way to the Terra Tubes without dying on my first ever play through. I am so lucky to have had the opportunity to take the company this far with all of you. I'll now take some time to decompress (FYI I'm looking for a good fat camp to lose my Groupon 40, if anyone has a suggestion), and then maybe I'll figure out how to channel this experience into something productive.*

*If there's one piece of wisdom that this simple pilgrim would like to impart upon you: have the courage to start with the customer. My biggest regrets are the moments that I let a lack of data override my intuition on what's best for our customers. This leadership change gives you some breathing room to break bad habits and deliver sustainable customer happiness - don't waste the opportunity!*

*I will miss you terribly.*

*Love,*

*Andrew*

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**Khartet** wrote:

10:59 AM EST

i think he forgot to mention the failed business model underpinning the whole house of cards.



**anabelle23** wrote:

3/4/2013 10:26 AM EST

Does this mean I won't save 30% on the next 20 pound lobster dinner at Denny's?



**gridpump** wrote:

3/4/2013 10:05 AM EST

Is he a failure for heaping upon the public market a junk company that celebrates giving away goods and services mostly nobody needs at prices that create a loss for the Groupon provider? What about the idiots who BOUGHT the stock when it hit the market? Some of those people, particularly those in mutual funds running people's retirement accounts, are the actual failures.

What part of Groupon makes any sort of fiscal sense if you are not among those ponying up for 70% off your next nail treatment, or 60% off an exfoliation session at Renee's Dead Skin Shack?

As a business model, Groupon is like the leaving's on Renee's floor. Gross and dead.

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