



Lack of transparency, input sets stage for disaster

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What happened to transparency?

Whether we are talking about business and industry, colleges and universities or government at all levels, we are currently witnessing a very troubling trend toward greater secrecy, particularly by those in senior administrative and managerial positions.

Remember when many companies began to distance themselves from hierarchies and adopt a team approach to the decision-making process? Productivity, quality, commitment and morale all rose dramatically and the organizations that incorporated the strategy benefited immeasurably.

Beginning around the turn of the century, however, we started to see the return of a more sinister leadership style. Those in power slowly but surely began to exert ever more control because “we know what’s best” and “somebody has to take charge.”

I find both assertions highly suspect.

What we are experiencing is actually nothing new. Dictators have always tried to justify the hold they exert over their followers by carefully controlling access to information – especially the architecture surrounding the decision-making process.

The danger here is very real. At all levels, from academic departments to board rooms at Fortune 500 companies to the hallowed halls of Congress, we are seeing decisions being made without the involvement of those who will ultimately be affected by those decisions.

No decision should ever be made without having all stakeholders at the table – and making them privy to all the information, conversations and criteria that will be used to make that decision. In my book, transparency trumps confidentiality.

Leaders should always have to explain, in detail and with specifics, the rationale behind everything they do – including all personnel, budgetary and programmatic decisions.

When key decisions are made by a relatively small number of people who have access to information not shared with those who will be affected by those decisions, the stage is set for disaster.

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