



Happy New Year from Leader's Insight!

An Insight on Transparency

Families are not that much different from work teams. Perhaps I should say it the other way around, but as we complete the holidays with an emphasis on family those relationships seem most pronounced. There are so many dynamics around the extended family, or families in our lives. But, as an organization is made up of many subgroups and various relationships there is an amazing correlation.

I continue to hear about transparency as I move through my days in various organizations... "There is no transparency here;" "All we want is a little more transparency;" "If leadership was just a little more transparent..." If so, then what? Would that truly resolve your concerns? And, take just a minute to reflect on your own transparency...with those you're supposedly closest to – family. Ever say, or hear, "Remember don't tell Grandma about that;" "Don't say anything to your sister about her divorce – you know it's a sore subject;" "You shouldn't bring anything up to Uncle Rob about not working in 2 years;" etc. etc. And, even in our work lives, I am quite sure you will remember the time you conveniently left out some facts with the boss or a co-worker in order to insure being seen in a better light. Where is that transparency we say we want? How transparent were you day-to-day in 2010? When we ask for transparency what is it we're really asking for?

I am reminded of the many things I hear on the news and think, "Why are they saying that on national news for all of the terrorists to hear?" And, I'm forced to weigh the value of transparency versus safety and security.

Perhaps transparency is just one of the great paradoxes. We want it when we want it, but not when our values say it's not the right thing, and we want to give it when we feel it is most in service to our own needs, although that is typically unconscious.

The next time you have the urge to fret about the lack of transparency, you might consider what you're really asking for, and what you really want. Is there a better way to express those desires? Maybe it's time to consider these ideas on a per issue basis. Then I can see the value in expressing to the boss, "I think we could have provided more transparency around "X" as we might not have had to deal with so much push back on our decision, what do you think?" Of course, this requires that you be open to the response and continue the dialogue in an adult manner. This mature/adult conversation will likely bring you respect and increase your credibility, and build an image you can be proud of. Doing your own debrief on such a conversation and being honest about when you might have slipped into a "childish" drama, or a more parental, "you should have," will enable greater and greater success.

How will you propagate transparency in your life?

I hope you will have a successful and more transparent year in 2011...but remember, be careful what you ask for.

Janet

Janet S. Steinwedel, Ph.D.