

Food for Thought

July 2008

Consensus is a Road to Mediocrity

Food for Thought is our way of sharing interesting concepts on corporate leadership and management with others who might find it useful. The thoughts offered are intended to be controversial and thought provoking. They always follow our motto of helping develop logical leadership.

Consensus enjoys time honored reverence as a noble and egalitarian approach to decision making. But does it really yield a superior decision or just a more palatable one? We posit that, in a corporate environment, consensus is usually achieved through one of four fallacious means and the resulting decisions lead to mediocrity.

The central hypothesis of consensus-based decision making is that constructive, collaborative conversations will render the best solution self-evident to all. But in today's corporate world, where speed and agility are critical, if the best option for a difficult decision has uniquely distinguished itself to be self evident then management might well be guilty of procrastination. With decisions having to be made sooner and quicker, apparent consensus is often reached through one of these fallacious means, resulting in a mediocre decision:

- **Deference to authority:** Even a casual opinion of the boss can quickly lead to a consensus decision. You have just over-paid for one person's opinion.
- **Compromise:** Distinguish between the creation of a superior solution, with input from all, and the creation of a compromise solution, accommodating the interests of all. The former creates value; the latter leads to mediocrity.
- **Bartering:** When honest reservations and disagreements are suppressed from expression so that the favor might be returned in a future decision of greater importance, value has shifted from corporate goals to individual agendas.

- Apathy: When repeated meetings and conversations - regurgitating the same arguments over and over again - do not lead to a consensus, it is surprising how many people simply give up and consensus ensues. The loud and obnoxious, rather than the best argument, usually wins.

So, is there a better form of decision making that preserves the value of constructive collaborative conversations but is not subject to the pitfalls of consensus? We have detailed the thoughts expressed here and a proposed solution, along with numerous real life examples, in an article with the provocative title above. If you are interested in the article please contact us for a complimentary copy.

We have received many responses to our Food for Thought mailings, asking if you can freely share and forward these thoughts. Indeed you can. All we ask is that a clear attribution to LogiStyle and our contact information are included. For the interested reader, we have archived some of our recent Food for Thought mailings at our website, and can be viewed at [LogiStyle: Food for Thought Archive](#). As always, we welcome your comments. We hope your business is doing well. If we can be of any assistance please feel free to call – even, if just to chat.

Best Regards,

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