



Leadership Governance, Tech and You

The world in which we live changes at an incredible speed - daily. For the first time in history, that change is being driven not by politics or social shifts but by technology. If our businesses don't keep pace with that change we may well join the dinosaurs and the Mauritian Dodo in the history books as extinct business people. So, a somewhat different 'take' then, on the topic of leadership and governance.

The last mail ship carrying huge sacks filled with letters and parcels between Southampton, UK and South Africa, sailed in 1977. Since then, faxes, e-mail, mobile phones, actuality TV reporting, Skype and Social Media have made the world more connected and therefore 'smaller' than it's ever been. News and information travels quickly, virally (spreading just like a disease virus) and has the capacity to build or break reputations in a very short space of time.

The old Public Relations (PR) days of having someone to 'control' what was said about you or your organisation

in the media, are gone. Today, anyone with access to the Internet can write, sometimes anonymously, about you or your product to great effect in an unrestrained and sometimes damaging way. Yes, you can pursue the Internet Service Provider (ISP) and demand the release of details about the writer, but that's hundreds of thousands of rands later and a high court order.

The easier and more sensible route is to lead and run one's business as an ethical entity from day one. If you mess up at some point, your clients and the public will forgive you if there's a track record of good governance

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and ethical behaviour - provided you use the three key PR principles:

- 1) Admit there’s been a mistake or problem and apologise for it.
- 2) Tell them what you’re doing right now to fix it.
- 3) Tell them what you’re doing to prevent a recurrence in the future.

Reputation is worth an absolute fortune. It takes a long time to acquire and build based on how you run your business. Companies today are often more highly rated and they have higher share prices when their leadership is perceived to be strong and dynamic.

What’s needed in leadership today is an acceptance that the way we ‘did things’ 20 years ago is absolutely not the way young people today do, or wish to do them. Get involved with Social Media (facebook, blogs, podcasts, Wikis, Twitter or other facets of it) to understand how young people communicate and what they’re communicating about. What makes them tick? Why is it that they don’t automatically ‘respect’ you and yet respect is such a big ‘thing’ among them? Puzzling isn’t it? Go do what Mr. Price and other perceptive companies do. Involve young people in the strategic brainstorming for your business. Ask them what they’d do in your place. What would they change? What would they add? What would they recommend more of? Remember, they’re your customer in the next few years. This is the essence of good leadership today: being someone who can connect at all levels. Who is genuinely respectful of diversity. Who is open to new ideas and other ways of thinking and doing. If you haven’t yet read Jim Collins’ book *Good to Great* – do so. You’ll understand why some companies consistently outperform their competitors. The short answer is they’re led by people who operate in a genuine and inclusive manner. Who are low on ego and high on collaboration. The old days of ‘I’ve been in this business for years and I know how this works’ dictatorial leadership are gone.

Let’s pull these leadership/governance threads together. The quickest way to address governance is to think: Would I be proud to have my closest family, friends and associates know what I’m doing? If the answer is not a flat-out ‘yes’ – chances are you’re sailing in grey, choppy and potentially very dangerous waters. The media invasiveness and the ability of just one discontented staff member to ‘leak’ something to a news medium has changed our world forever. You could wake up to read about your own ruin in the morning newspapers. Be alert and receptive to change!

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