

## TRG LEADERSHIP TOOL

"Practical Means for Dealing with Difficult Times"

On an ongoing basis, this section of our site will feature business tools and planning considerations designed to assist leaders for whom "just keeping up" is not good enough. These notes will focus on sequences of thought and action intended to enhance the positioning for your group, both on a long and short-term basis.

Please check back frequently to review the next tool. Visit our [LEADERSHIP TOOLS ARCHIVE](#) for previous tools.

### DANGEROUS TIMES

Difficult Planning Themes in the New Millennium

*"May you live in interesting times!" - Ancient Chinese Curse*

Driven by rapid advances in technology three critical issue areas that should be considered along with immediate business needs as a part of any comprehensive planning efforts are:

1. National and then Global harmonization of processes, standards, and ultimately laws and their effect on individual businesses
2. A significant shift in base demographics as the functional lifetime of all of us is progressively extended and the Boomers age past the point of dominance in the workforce
3. The ever increasing pace of everything and its troublesome sibling - stress

To this list should now be added two overarching issues that have been apparent for over a century, but which are likely to emerge in short order as among the thorniest of dilemmas for corporate (and for that matter civil) planners. These issues are:

1. The definition of Privacy
2. The definition of Ownership

### Population Pressure

The pressure of increasing populations will mean the emergence of more issues flowing from the impulse of ascendance of groups over individuals and one group over another.

### About Privacy

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While Privacy is generally recognized to be of concern on a number of levels, the degree of potential disruption caused by the inability of individuals or corporations to screen themselves from unwanted intrusion is still largely misunderstood and grossly underestimated.

The current application of old premises appear to assume that Privacy is not a right to be breached cautiously, but a privilege which has no meaning unless carefully defined. Under this way of thinking, a secret that is not aggressively protected inherently falls into the public domain, with the prime example being that as new forms of telecommunication have emerged, it has been necessary to write new and specific laws regarding eavesdropping which appears to be considered permissible until defined as illegal.

The implications reach deep into concepts of competition and invention, as well as into basic obligations to secure and protect the rights and personal liberties of communication between individuals, clients, and dependents. Among the concerns that must be faced by corporations is a premise that any and all equipment in any way connected to the telephone system are under immediate threat of allowable intrusion and manipulation.

These tough notions leave us having to fall back on several sad basic principles of communication:

1. Assume that everything that is spoken through any public medium is spoken publically
2. Affirmatively act to protect any communication which should by its nature be confidential.
3. As each new form or method of communication makes itself available, assume it is totally transparent until there is ample proof that it is secure

Always remember to define what security is in your mind and communicate that to those who need to know.

### **About Ownership**

As difficult as privacy issues may be, they pale by comparison to the struggle to redefine Ownership in the new millennium. With service and intellectual property emerging as the main measure of value, attacks on the core concepts inherent in patents, trademarks, and trade secrets can be expected to continue and intensify. Protecting names and the value of marks will prove a daunting task as borderlines fall to the unstoppable reach of the Internet.

With population increasing unchecked and the demand for space and common services rising, first real estate ownership and then a wide array of tangible property rights will come under increased pressure. The simple act of assessing continuing taxes on property are in fact the leading edge of what is likely to prove a troublesome assumption that ownership itself is not a right but a privilege which must be continuously re-established.

*Case in Point: The Use of ATMs*

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Election results in San Francisco in 1999 regarding the right of Banks to collect fees for the use of ATMs point to an uncomfortable phenomenon in attitudes about publicly accessed private property. The San Francisco public voted to restrict if not eliminate the ability of banks to charge for the use of ATMs, as though these machines were public utilities, ostensibly because they are accessible from public rights of way and connect to a system defined as a public utility (e.g. the telephone system).

Though they are visible and connected to the telephone system that has been defined as a public franchise, ATMs are not publicly owned property, nor have they been financed at the public expense.

The concept of *Ownership* here seems to be that if a service or piece of equipment is readily available for use by the public, it becomes public property *even if it is not originally owned by the public*. In other words, according to this quirky logic, ownership is conveyed simply as a result of use.

This is an inherently dangerous leap in that it clears the path to establish a very hazardous premise: that *Ownership* is a *privilege* granted and managed by the state and not an inherent *right* to be protected by the state.

Since governments derive their authority from the consent of the governed, the argument would seem to go that a majority of the public may elect to disconnect, discontinue or deny the inherent rights of Ownership to any sub-ordinate group of lesser numbers. While the basis of this assertion may be the necessity to protect the well-being of the larger group from those who might claim a right to harm their neighbors, the difficulty arises when the majority elects to repress, deny, or remove the rights of a minority interest or individual.

For additional information regarding Dangerous Times, please visit our [Contact Page](#) and send us an Email or simply call us directly during East Coast business hours on our toll free number 1.800.97-REGIS (1.800.977.3447).