



What the Private Sector Can Learn from the Public Sector

The private sector is often held up as a model of efficiency and effectiveness. But it would do well to learn from the public sector about a phenomenon that may eventually drive organizational life across all sectors.

Democratic governments have always sought the *consent of the governed*. Organizations don't since they are not set up nor intended to be democracies. But there is a conundrum about organizational life in a democratic society that must give us pause. Employees do not have the same rights as citizens. Rhetoric to the contrary, they cannot hold opinions different from and are not equal to those in power. The freedom people take as a matter of course in society at large does not exist inside the work place.

Even if organizations are not democracies, can this conundrum continue? As workers begin to understand their true worth in an information economy, will they not increasingly insist they be treated more like citizens and less like employees? What will happen as knowledge workers approach the clout of citizens in their power to determine the success or failure of their leaders? The consent of the governed may become the hallmark not just of government but of successful organizations as well.

Frances

Frances will be speaking at the Canadian Society of Association Executives (CSAE) in October in Montreal.

Great organizations don't necessarily make fewer mistakes, they just make them faster and learn more from them.

Robert Sutton, professor, Stanford University

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