



GREG SCHNEIDERS

Next president must bring US comms into the 21st century

First elected in 2000, George W. Bush may well be remembered as the 20th century's last president rather than the new century's first one. In their recent book, *Wikinomics*, Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams describe the technological, economic, and social forces that will transform 21st century life. They identify four characteristics that will mark successful 21st century organizations:

Being open. "Rather than something to be feared, transparency is a powerful new force for... success."

Peering. "Could [government] make better decisions if [it] were to tap the insights of a broader and more representative body of participants?"

Sharing. "Walled gardens of content... shut out the real opportunities for customer-driven innovation."

Acting globally. "The next 20 years of globalization will profoundly shake up the status quo."

Now let's consider how the current administration has fared on each of these principles.

Being open. Vice President Dick Cheney recently captured this administration's obsession with secrecy in an act so absurd it defies parody. Claiming to be neither a creature of the executive nor the legislative branch of government, Cheney asserted that he was beyond the federal rules governing control of classified information. But this is just the latest in an ongoing saga of secret policy deliberation, secret prisons, secret wiretaps, and secret torture.

Peering. This administration has believed from the start that it had all the wisdom needed to run the government and transform the world. As its Iraq policy faltered, the administration consistently dismissed and

ridiculed policy suggestions from the military (e.g., General Shinseki), Congress (e.g., Congressman John Murtha [D-PA]), and a host of experts and commentators outside of government. Even those inside the Inner Circle, like then-Secretary of State Colin Powell, were shunned if they deviated from the company line.

Sharing. In business, sharing usually involves intellectual property. In government and politics, sharing is about power. This administration has steadfastly opposed sharing political power at home with Congress and abroad with our allies and world organizations. "My way or the highway" has been their mantra and the world is increasingly opting for the highway.

Acting globally. Even 20th century presidents from Wilson to JFK to George H.W. Bush understood the wisdom of enlisting global coalitions to support our most ambitious and challenging foreign-policy goals. But this administration has adopted a go-it-alone tack. The results have been nothing short of disastrous.

The president elected in 2008 will face a daunting task of undoing the damage of the past eight years. No matter the party, that next commander-in-chief will have a far greater chance of success if he or she adopts the principles of 21st century success outlined in *Wikinomics*. The world has truly changed. Recognizing, embracing, and exploiting that change isn't a matter of being hip or fuzzy headed. It's a matter of survival. ■

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