

# Information- transparency cycle: voracious demand



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**INFORMATION-TRANSPARENCY CYCLE: VORACIOUS DEMAND** Information is the lifeblood of an increasingly transparent world. It has progressed from cave drawings depicting the movement of animal herds and the appropriate hunting techniques to the global information warehouse of information, re-supplied continuously and instantaneously, with basically free, unlimited rights of consumption. From information available only to those few nomads who stumbled into the right cave for the right time, the world has moved to a vast information storehouse on virtually any subject, available inexpensively or free, at the time and place demanded.

The Information-Transparency Cycle (I-T Cycle) is self-regulating, self-funded, and answers to no superior power. The I-T Cycle has become the most important, cybernetic (or closed loop, self-regulating) system in the history of the world. It is an insatiable system, capable of knowing all, telling all, and forgetting nothing. And rather than just dumping more and more information into a global mass of ineffable digits, technology is also “Google-ing” it into user-friendly, congenial, and amiable bites of knowledge that are easily digested by even the least sophisticated palate.

Thus, at the risk of mixing metaphors, technology has, simultaneously, created an entire new landscape and become the “seeing eye dog” for those who demand to know where we’ve been and where we’re going, but are unable to navigate the massive landscape alone. The information-transparency cycle is simultaneously an organization, an economy, and a way of life. It is both the fuel and the major mechanism of modern life. It operates independently and is answerable to no authority, but most important, it is unstoppable. In the Global Information-Transparency Cycle: 1.

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Information is instantly collected in almost every subject or activity. .

Information is easily compiled, probed, analyzed, scrutinized, jittered, refined, prioritized, studied and stored, and manipulated. 3. Information is directly and cheaply distributed to individuals or organizations globally. 4.

Reaction is immediate to what is there – or what is missing. 5. More information is demanded, no more information is collected. INFORMATION

TRANSPARENCY The global Information-Transparency Cycle is critically dependent on the ever decreasing cost of information technology, or what authors McInerney and White, in *Future Wealth*, refer to as the “ free fall in the cost of information”.

While such a free fall in information apparent costs is daily more has been paid until now to its impact on the state of transparency of people, places, things, ideas, ideologies, and actions. In every walk of life, whichever way you turn, technologically has dramatically increased transparency. The Transparency Imperative Today, information is a commodity; it is cheap and abundant, but rather than satisfying the world’s voracious information appetite, it stimulates a hunger for more and more and more and in fact, the demand for information has become insatiable.

The I-P Cycle, described above, feds this voracious appetite. The fuel that drives the I-T Cycle is an endless supply of near free information. The machine that grinds it out is inexpensive, ubiquitous information technology in the form of telecommunications, computers, very tiny digital cameras and recording devices, personal digital assistants (PDAs) microscopic sensors, and hundreds of other digital devices for the collection, manipulation, storage and transmission of information. The I-T Cycle moved very slowly

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over several millennia but has been ratcheting up to supersonic speeds in the last 50 years.

Observing both the speed and global deployment of this new electronic technology, Marshall McLuhan described it as global information central nervous system. McLuhan's biological metaphor is prescient apt like food and water, information has become something we can't seem to live without. Rather than being rich, optimal luxury, information has become one of life's vital necessities. Information stimulates the appetite for the relentless and unceasing demand for more and more transparency. It truly has become the globe's central nervous system.

The I-T Cycle, in the endless information gathering, manipulating, storing, disseminating, archiving, retrieving... and then starting over with more and deeper gathering has created the new Transparency Imperative. The public's right to know is steadily and inexorably eroding the secret, opaque lives of individuals and organizations. The Transparency Imperative unleashes a perverse mechanism: The more we know, the more we demand to know; the more we demand to know, the more there seems to be to disclose.

The cycle seems endless. And the ever-decreasing cost of information technology suggests there is no end in sight. Transparency: Power to the People Technology has empowered both decision makers and consumers with a wealth of information that would have been unheard of just a decade ago. Some of these developments have humble beginnings: The bar code allowed sales data to be recorded and distributed almost instantly, whether for books, CDs, clothing, cosmetics, etc.

For consumers, shopping around no longer needs to entail lots of driving time or phone calls; shoppers simply click and read. In the business-to-business world, sophisticated worldwide exchanges are in place for nearly every price-sensitive product, with prices and terms for the world to see. Many business organizations allow customers to check prices on a corporate website, even for complex software license configurations. Charities are ranked on the percentage of donor money going overhead.

Parents know which school system rank the highest on standardized tests or college admissions. Potential clients can find out how well a law firm has done in court or which hospital have the best track record in treating a specific condition. In all these cases, as well as those involving reports on government leaders and institutions, the information is available for all to see and is archived for future reference. Transparency has put power in the hands of the stakeholders and consumers. It has changed the producer-consumer paradigm forever.