

Executing Your Vision:

The Art of Execution

**By Bill Easum
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Introduction

Executing Your Vision

(Note that specific references in this book by Bill Easum will be notated as BE; those by Scott Musselman will be SM.)

“After this, I will pour out my Spirit on all kinds of people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions.” (Joel 2:28)

Dreams and visions are amazing gifts from God. They are at the heart of God’s plan for our lives. Anyone can have an idea, but not everyone will experience that vision come to fruition. This book explores how to turn visions into reality in a fast-moving world that is changing at an exponential rate.

A lot of books have been written the past few decades on how to lead in an upside-down world. So why should you read another one? That question deserves an answer.

While most church books on navigating change deal with the tactics of change like my (BE) book, *Unfreezing Moves*, this book doesn't focus on tactics. Instead, it focuses on the Achilles’ heel that keeps most leaders from turning their visions into reality.

It takes leadership for a dream to come into being. But before going any further, let’s define how we use the terms “leadership” and “leaders.” Leadership is the art of helping others achieve their potential. Leaders don’t coerce someone to do their will; instead they invite them to join them on a journey of turning a vision into reality. A wonderful metaphor for leadership is that of a spiritual midwife. As a midwife assists parents in the birth of their gift, leaders assist others in the birth of their God-given gift.

In consulting with over seven hundred churches in the past 25 years, one problem clearly stands out above all the rest. Pastors find it hard to execute a vision. Ideas aren’t hard to come by; making them happen is another thing altogether.

In writing this book, we are indebted to several authors whose thoughts you will find sprinkled throughout the pages. They are:

Jumping the Curve, by Imperato and Harari
Execution, by Charan and Bossidy
The Leadership Pipeline, by Charan, Drotter, and Noel
The Conviction to Lead, by Mohler
The Age of the Unthinkable, by Ramo
Just Start, by Schlessinger, Kiefer, and Brown
Surfing the Edge of Chaos, by Pascale, Millemann, and Gioja
Organizing Genius, By Bemis
Leading Change, by Kotter

The Chaotic Age, by Bloom
Leadership without Easy Answers, by Heifetz
Reworking, by Rogers
Out of Control, by Kelly
Playing God, by Crouch
Being the Boss: The 3 Imperatives for Becoming a Great Leader, by Hill and Lineback

The thought process of each of these authors can be found woven between the lines of this book. We are taking many of their ideas, blending them with our experiences, and formulating a way for pastors to be more effective in turning visions into reality.

Because we know your time is precious and limited, we have kept the book short. We also have developed a website to provide you with a place for feedback and questions. We intend to respond to each of your questions. You can find the website at www.effectivechurch.com.

Throughout the book you will find Reflection Points. Take time to actually do the exercise. We know the tendency is to ignore such pieces and read on. Don't shortchange yourself. Do the exercises.

So read away and put one word on your refrigerator – FOCUS

Chapter One

The Key to Everything

We live in a time when it is easy for a dream to become a nightmare. Why is that so? Because we're living in an upside-down world where most things that will be important over the next twenty years have not yet been invented. So if we don't learn how to act quickly on our dreams, the odds are they will become a nightmare.

Few thinking individuals would deny that we're living in a time of radical change. We describe it as one of "radical discontinuity." But no matter what we call it, our world is going through a seismic shift of epic proportions, which makes it even harder to turn a vision into reality.

I (BE) first wrote about this upheaval in my book, *Dancing with Dinosaurs*, where I noted the "crack in history" into which the old world is disappearing, leaving us in a constantly changing world without any rules. Even though the book became a best seller, and all but one of the predictions came true, few leaders adapted to the new world described in the book. That begs the question, "Why do so many churches continue to minister as if nothing has changed?"

The church is burying its head in ostrich-like fashion because even though people know something is happening to their way of life, they haven't fully embraced it. They know it in their

head, but not in their heart. They are like the people who are told by the doctor they are so overweight that if they don't do something about it they will die. Yet they still go out and eat a big bag of French fries. That kind of behavior is deadly, and that is what is happening to the Church of Jesus Christ.

So what's a leader to do who is aware that something radically different is happening in the world and wants to help the church grow? To respond to this question let's explore THE KEY TO EVERYTHING.

The One Key that Changes Everything about Execution

There is one key that must be addressed before the average leader and/or church can thrive. This key is so pervasive to all of life that every chapter in this book will come back to this concept. Every new innovation will be built upon this understanding. So what is it?

The key to everything is to fully embrace the reality and implications that we are living through only the fourth major transition in all of Western Civilization. When people internalize this fact, they will be more open to trying new ideas.

On the surface this key may not seem so monumentally important. But we assure you it is at the heart of why 85% of all churches in the U.S. are in decline. They do not or will not come to grips with the fact that everything is undergoing change (except, of course, the Gospel) and are not willing to turn everything upside-down.

Too many people have a limited knowledge of history that they don't understand the implications of this transition. You know the old saying, "Those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it." Well, that is what is happening today. What we are experiencing is nothing new to history. It has been played out three times before, and each time everything – and we do mean everything – changed. Everything and everyone adapted or became obsolete.

What the Past Tells Us about the Future

Until now, there have only been three major transitions in all of Western Culture. Pause to think on that statement a moment. In all of our recorded history, there have been only three significant transitions for how we understand society. But those three tell us something profound about how to address the incredible changes we experience today if we want our dream to turn into reality instead of a nightmare.

Take a look at the following chart.

First Transition	Second Transition	Third Transition	Fourth Transition
400 A.D	1400 A.D.	1950 A.D.	2000 A.D.

End of Classical Age End of Middle Ages End of Modern Age End of Post Modern Age

Length of Age
1000 years

Length of Age
550 years

Length of Age
50 years

If you are following the chart, something significant should jump out at you. Write it down.

Reflection: Before reading further, write down the meaning of this chart for you and your church. Analyze the chart, and make a list of its implications. One big thing should jump out at you. You will need this list to refer back to later. Please don't look at the next paragraph until you do this.

The first big thing that you should notice is the rate of change. The time between transitions is decreasing dramatically. The length of the Modern Age was half that of the Middle Ages. The Post Modern Age was one-tenth as long as the Modern Age. Change in our definitive cultural expressions is escalating at an exponential rate.

The second thing that should jump out at you is based on this rate of change. It is quite possible that we will experience another major transition within the next ten years. Could we have two major transitions in twenty or thirty years when there have only been three before? What does this say to our heritage of charting our culture's journey through a period of time we label an "age?" Can ten years even constitute an "age?"

If you need further data to prove this point, consider the following:

To reach an audience of 50 million it took:

Radio 38 years
TV 13 years
Internet 4 years
Ipod 3 years
Facebook 2 years

What's next?

We can only conclude that everything is speeding up, and the faster an organization can adapt to change, the more likely it is to turn its vision into reality. When the rate of change in an organization is slower than the world around it, that organization is in trouble.

In early 2014, on Bloomberg TV, The Titans show featured Bill Gates and Mike Bloomberg. Bloomberg said something that all churches should ponder. He said, "*Technology will advance more in the next couple of years than it has since the discovery of the light bulb.*" Now give that some thought. What is the impact of this for leadership?

When it comes to education, it means that printed content is significantly losing relevance, and

flat screens with flat people won't be relevant much longer. That opens the door for everything holographic.

When it comes to worship, it means that if a church can't transform its worship setting on a regular basis, it is no longer relevant to the person under 20 years of age.

When it comes to communication, it means that there has to be a marriage of sights, sounds, and words in a seamless fashion if one wants to get the point across. Just telling a good story will no longer be enough.

For board meetings, it means that setting at a table looking at a spreadsheet will no longer capture the imagination of upcoming generations. They will have to see 3D graphs showing what the information is actually pointing to; what the organization needs to do to capture the future.

Reflection: What thoughts come to mind as you ponder the influence of these statements on the quality and relevancy of your leadership?

Take a Second Look

Now let's look at some of the major issues that occurred at each transition which have an even more direct bearing on the church.

First Transition	Second Transition	Third Transition	Fourth Transition
Polytheism Oral tradition	Monotheism Printing press	Denominationalism Newspapers	Agnosticism/Tolerance Digital

If you are following the chart, several things should jump out at you in the first tier of changes.

Reflection: Before reading further, write down your thoughts about what these changes mean to your ministry.

For one, we are now living in a time of anti-religion. This means several things.

Clergy are no longer the most respected group.

Pastors have to earn the trust of the public.

Infant baptisms are going away.

Denominations will continue to decline.

Church weddings are giving way to civil ceremonies.

Very few people come to church on their own; the church has to go to them.

Several things should jump out at you in the second tier of changes.

Printed newsletters are ineffective.

The Church website, Facebook, Twitter, and Google are the portals of entry for most new people at your church.

More people are worshipping online.

Online giving is replacing passing the offering plate.

Worship is becoming digital.

Sunday school curriculum is becoming more like VBS and Veggie Tales than print.

We're sure you can think of more, but you get the picture.

There are two huge implications.

First, place no longer matters, which is the basis for the multi-site revolution which could become the norm by the mid-point of the century. Online worship will be even more pronounced, and small group ministries that meet in homes will be essential.

Second, the U.S. will no longer be the leading nation of the world. Already, the U.S. is the third largest mission field in the world, making it obvious why we need backyard missionaries.

Two metaphors best describe the discontinuity of our times – national park and jungle. National park is a metaphor for the pre-1950 culture. The jungle is the emerging new world of the fourth transition. Let your imagination run wild thinking about the implications of moving from the national park to the jungle. If you want to see the full picture, see my (BE) book, *Doing Ministry in Hard Times*.

Reflection: Let your mind run wild with these two metaphors, and you will experience the radical changes taking place in our culture.

The Kicker

I (BE) first rolled out these epic transitions and their implications in the fall of 2013 at a retreat that I was doing for a few of the people I was coaching. As we discussed the transitions and the fact that there could be more in the next few decades, one person in the group said, "I think we've already entered the next transition – the Internet is changing everything."

We had a lively discussion on the possibility of the Internet being the next transition; and if that is the case, the rate of change just sped up because now it is possible for us to wear the Internet.

Of course, it is too soon to tell whether this is the next transition or just a refinement of the last transition. But observing the impact of the Internet on just about everything we do suggests we may have already entered the next transition.

Reflection: What do you think about us already being in the next transition?

Jumping the Curve

Most organizations that understand this key know one big thing; you don't wait till something is broken before you fix it, or as someone has said, "*If it ain't broke, fix it.*" While all our natural instincts are to wait until the gradual changes reach a crisis and we have to act, effective organizations take action before it is needed.

This action is called "jumping the curve" as shown in the graphic to the left. The object of jumping the curve is to institute change before it is needed. This requires leaders to keep good metrics on important facets of the organization and monitor them monthly. Before any kind of leveling off is experienced, a new way of action should already be in the pipeline. Anticipating the rate of change is one of the hallmarks of a good organization. That's why intuition is one of the essential qualities of great leaders - more on that later.

Consider the decline of Protestantism in the U.S. It began in the mid-1960's. Very few people talked about it seriously until the 1990's. By then it was too late to jump the curve since there was no curve to jump, only a dramatic downhill spiral from which there is seldom the chance of return. Leaders who understood history would know that the time to jump the curve was the late 1950's. They should have seen it coming. Why? Consider what happened at the midpoint of 1954.

In 1954, New York City became the fault line between the world that was and the world that was arriving. That was the year in which Bill Haley and The Comets unleashed upon the world what would become a vital transitional song – "*Rock Around the Clock.*"

The recording marked a cultural shift and the beginning of the end of a way of life. It caused polite society to blush in anger and teenagers to dance with glee. Even though this was to have a profound effect on Christianity, it went virtually unnoticed by most church leaders. Those few who did take notice did their best to squash it and denounced it as evil or just a fad. It wasn't long before Woodstock, the Jesus movement, the space program, and Haight-Ashbury burst on the scene. In 1953, IBM introduced the first mass produced computer, and in 1968 Hewlett Packard began mass marketing the PC. As Bob Dylan kept reminding us, "*The times they are a-changin.*"

That very same decade, mainline denominations were enjoying the zenith of their prime without a hint of what was to happen to them in less than ten years. Few, if any, were aware that their dream was about to become a nightmare.

That same decade, in Benton, Arkansas, Sam Walton was experimenting with ways to outsell his competitors by offering lower prices. Over the next four decades, what became known as Wall-Mart replaced the neighborhood grocery store, as well as any other store that carried what Wall-Mart sold. The landscape of many rural and urban areas was changed. Big was better. During the same period of time, the rise of the mega-church got underway. Yet during that same period of time, denominations were pushing the importance of the neighborhood church as if the world was still running on 1950 time. In hindsight, such action is difficult to understand. Anyone

keeping tabs on what was happening should have known something radically new was underway.

Reflection: What are the metrics you need to track in your church in order to jump the curve?

A New Way of Seeing Things

The farther we go through transition, the more important it will be for us to begin developing new ways of seeing old things. If the most important things for moving ahead in living life have not yet been invented, and we believe that is true, we will need to change our perspective on just about everything; except Jesus, of course. That will take an unusual amount of intuition – we will get to intuition, trust us.

But what does it mean to develop a new way of seeing old things? Let's answer this question by asking another question. What was the job of the Union Pacific Railroad? Was it in the train business or the transportation business? If you answered "train business," and you were the CEO of Union Pacific, you would miss out on the opportunity of a lifetime; to get in early on the emerging new forms of transportation. If you answered "transportation," then you would have opened yourself to explore all forms of developing transportation, including automobiles, air travel, and even space travel.

Now apply that to the church. When you think of worship, what do you think of – traditional or contemporary? If you answered with either one, you are seeing things as they are rather than how they will be.

A better answer would be "neither." Opting for style is nothing more than being in the "train business." Style isn't what worship is about. Worship is about connecting God and people. Focusing on style is why we have the worship wars. It is why so many churches are missing out on the greatest opportunity of a lifetime – changing the package of worship to fit the transition without changing the Gospel. This is the most important change in our lifetime, but most will fail to make it because they are focused on their preferred style of worship rather than effectively transmitting the message.

If we are going to go through more major transitions in the near future, then we haven't yet seen the style of worship that will ultimately connect upcoming generations to God. But if we see worship as connecting people with God, instead of traditional or contemporary, we have a better chance of being able to see and implement the next form of worship before it becomes the norm.

The bottom line is this. In order to see old things in new ways means we have to get "self" out of the way and, in our place, put the Kingdom. That frees us up to start the process of seeing old things in new ways. Our personal opinions and preferences are the primary threat for us to do so.

The Importance of Intuition

Twenty years ago, I (SM) was a pastor in a large church. We had great programming and a prestigious reputation in the region. However, as I looked around, I didn't see lives being transformed through a spiritual journey with Jesus. Church attendance was declining, but we still had lots of people and money.

I prayed (be careful what you pray for) that God would place me in a church that would make a difference in people's lives. I ended up with a wonderful church where people were willing to experiment with methodology while maintaining theology. The goal was simple, pursue what God's church looks like for the 21st century.

In our consulting, we often run into church people who appear bewildered with the state of affairs of their church. They don't have a clue why their church is now rapidly declining. Welcome to the twilight zone for 85% of the churches in the U.S.

As stated earlier, we are living in a time of transition from what we call the national park to the jungle. National parks are known to be seldom changing, safe places as long as you follow the rules; and there are lots of rules. However, we now have been thrust into a world best described as a jungle. If you've ever been in a jungle, you know the one thing you can say about it is it's not a safe place. It has only one rule, the survival of the fittest. That's the world we live in today.

In a world that can best be described as a jungle, one trait rises to the top – intuition.

Intuition is the most important skill of a leader in the jungle because no one knows for sure what lies around the corner. Since the terrorism of 9/11/2001 and the economic downfall of 2008, no one feels safe or sure of what's coming next. That is the primary difference between the world many of us were born into and the one we are called to minister in today. Such a world requires blazing new trails and taking enormous risks. The only way one can take such risks is by relying on intuition.

Someone asked me (BE) the other day if intuition can be learned. My response surprised the person. "Yes," I responded. I then told the person about a conversation I had with two scientists at a fishing village at the edge of the Darien jungle on the border of Panama and Columbia, two hundred miles from any road, phone lines, or electricity. I had a day off from fishing when these two scientists emerged at our camp from spending two weeks in the jungle studying bugs. They looked and smelled awful.

After they cleaned up, I had a chance to visit with them during dinner. I asked them about their trip and what was the most important thing to know about the jungle. Their response was immediate, "The jungle is never the same from day to day. It changes overnight." That led me to ask, "How do you know where to go?" They replied, "Of course we have a compass (GPS doesn't work in the jungle, I learned), but when we come to what we might call a fork in the road and need to decide which way to go, that's where intuition comes in. The more you travel the jungle, the easier it is to be intuitive about what lies around the corner."

Then I queried, "But you have a map and a compass?" "Yes," they said, "but remember that the

jungle changes every hour. Make a trail today, and it's gone next week. So, even though you have a compass which is fairly accurate, it always needs to be verified. You still have to make some calculated guesses about which way to go to avoid an impasse."

After our conversation, I began to think about my ministry over the years. I was surprised to see the similarities today between ministry and the jungle. When I started out, the national park was a world of probabilities. Today, the jungle is a world of wild cards that mess up every well-conceived plan. How is one to lead in such a world? Intuition offers new ways to see and do old things.

So if intuition is the most needed skill in the jungle, how do we develop or improve our intuition? Remember what the scientist said. *"The more you travel in the jungle, the easier it is to be intuitive about what lies around the corner."* This is why we tell pastors that they spend too much time with church folks, and that they need to spend more time among unchurched young adults – the jungle people.

Reflection: When was the last time you intentionally spent time away from church folks to get a sense of the emerging new world?

The following are some ways to spend time in the jungle.

Spend at least one-half of your time with unconnected people out in the jungle. There is an old saying, "After a person has been in the church three years, they don't know any non-Christians anymore." The same is true with pastors. If you want to know how to traverse the new world, you need to spend more time with non-Christians than you spend with Christians (if you're mainline, the odds are most of your members grew up in the national park world). Using demographic studies can help in understanding who is in your community. But while demographic studies can help, they never take the place of spending time in your community, getting to know it. I (BE) spent every Friday night for eight years at a bar called the Fractured Fox, listening to the stories of people who were either trying to cling to life or running from it.

Read books in several fields outside the realm of religion. This will give you a perspective you would never get in the office and helps you come to more "aha" moments.

Work around the edges of your religious group (denomination, association, or network). You will never find the status quo at the edge, nor will you hear "we've never done it that way before." Maximize the edges by attending events beyond those put on by your denomination, networking with pastors in other traditions, talking with your kids, or visiting new websites.

Watch sitcoms even if it kills you. Knowing and understanding what people are watching gives you an insight into the jungle and helps develop your intuition.

Challenge yourself to dream beyond what you think you are capable of because that is where you meet intuition.

Embrace risk and don't be afraid of mistakes. There is power in a big failure if you are looking for the lessons. Always ask, "What am I learning from this experience that will help me see the future more clearly?" One of the things the scientists said was, "*Sometimes we have to make multiple attempts before we find a path that doesn't wind up at an impasse, and we have to backtrack.*"

Realize that in times of great change, whatever works well today is the seedbed for tomorrow's failure. As soon as you perfect what you are doing, move on to something else. Don't hang on too long to something working well. Keep looking for ways to improve what you're doing.

Trust your gut, not your critics. The first twenty years of my ministry, I (BE) received a lot of criticism from all fronts. I was told I was doing everything all wrong. Yet my congregation was growing faster than most churches in my tribe. All along, I felt in my heart that what I was doing was the right thing to do, but surely my peers couldn't all be wrong. There was a short period of time when I listened to them too much. It caused me to waste some of my earliest years. However, it soon became clear that what I was doing was leading my church to grow, and what they were advocating was resulting in the decline of their churches. So I began to follow my gut and tuned them out. You can do this if you are training yourself to listen to the hopes and dreams of the jungle.

Of course, all of the above is in vain if you aren't augmenting it with a heavy dose of the Holy Spirit. Listening to the still small voice is imperative if you are going to read the signs of the times. I (SM) am often reminded of the age-old translation of Proverbs 29:18 which is "*Without vision, the people perish.*" When I went through seminary, I was appalled at the lack of spiritual discipline by so many students and faculty. While this book is focused on what to do with a vision, we assume that you are finding the time to faithfully follow a spiritual journey which gives rise to such. At the congregation where I am a pastor, we have a membership covenant about how we will be a church that is based on the one-anothers of the Bible. We find our foundation for vision through prayer, reading the Bible, and spiritual conversations. We commend this type of resource for your church as well. Your intuition will be driven by God rather than by others or even your own personal preferences.

If you're training your intuition, when faced with a choice, don't blink, trust your gut, and take a leap. Consider this. How did Mark Zuckerberg know it was worth the time and money to develop Facebook? He didn't, but he understood the signs of the times. He knew people were craving interaction with other people. So he took a huge risk, and look what happened.

What is God calling you to do with your life? If you are training your intuition to read the signs of the times, like the men of Issachar, you are in a better position to take the leap of faith than if you are surrounding yourself with people from the national park.

You might want to put this Scripture where you can't miss seeing it: "*All these men*

understood the signs of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take.” - 1 Chronicles 12:32.

Conclusion

What happened every time an epic transition took place? Everything changed; nothing remained the same. Not only did everything change; it changed at an even more rapid pace than in the past.

So why is this understanding of change the key to everything? It is because most church people will not buy into what appears to be crazy new ideas until they thoroughly understand the world they are living in. People must internalize that everything they have worked for will go down the drain unless they make radical changes. It's that simple.

People change in direct proportion to their discontent. Raise their discontent, and they are more open to change. The higher the discontent, the more change people are willing to make. The more they internalize that everything is turning upside-down, the more people are threatened, and the more they will change.

In case you're not yet convinced to change how you lead, take a look at the following facts:

If you're one in a million in China, there are 1300 people just like you.

China will soon be the largest English-speaking country in the world.

Ten of the most in-demand jobs in 2010 did not exist in 2004.

We are currently educating kids for jobs that don't yet exist.

Today's learner will have 10-14 jobs by the age of 38.

One out of four workers have been in their job less than a year.

One out of eight couples in the U.S. met online.

There are over one billion people active monthly on Facebook.

Facebook is available in 70 languages.

If Facebook were a country, it would be the third largest.

There are 50 million tweets a day.

There are 31 million searches on Google every day; in 2006, there were 2.7 million

The first text was sent in 1992.

Today, the number of texts is more than the total population of the planet.

There were 1,000 Internet devices in 1984; there were 1,000,000 in 1992; there were 1,000,000,000 in 2008.

The amount of technical information is doubling every 2 years.

Half of what a first year college student learns this year will be out of date by their third year.

Digital music sales outstripped physical sales in 2011.

72% of Apple's income didn't exist five years ago.

If those stats don't cause you to pause and think, nothing will. If there is to be any hope, we will have to make the proverbial leap of faith into a strange new way of thinking and acting. If you want to make the leap, don't look for stability, predictability, and order. Instead, embrace

disequilibrium, and feel fortunate to live in such a time as this. Relish the challenges. Say to the challenges – BRING IT ON!

Reflection: Has this chapter opened your eyes to any blind spots in the way you think or act? Write them down before continuing.

Chapter Two

The Art of Execution

There have been many books written in the last decade on the importance of developing mission, vision, and value statements, and then casting vision. Nothing wrong with that. In fact, this is where all great work begins. But...

The problem is these actions will not turn vision into reality. It is one thing to cast a Big, Audacious, Hairy Goal. It is another to make it happen. There is a huge gap between vision and results. It's not the dream that grows a church. It's making the vision happen that grows a church. So what stands between casting the vision and the results, especially when things are changing so rapidly?

Execution is the answer. Execution is what turns vision into reality. Yet very few leaders know how to help their staff execute the vision. As we've said, not knowing how to turn a vision into reality is the Achilles' heel of ineffective leaders.

Here's a truism that you can ignore at your own peril:

Every manager isn't a leader, but every leader is a manager. If you can't manage (execute) the vision, you aren't a leader.

The Achilles' heel of the vast majority of pastors is they can't manage. Even if they have a vision, they can't communicate what is necessary to make it a reality. They are unable to put a strategy together that brings their vision to fruition. Most often they are too busy giving pastoral care. But being a pastor of a church is far more than spiritual care and preaching. In fact, pastoral care isn't even supposed to be part of a pastor's duties. Such care comes from within the congregation. Just read Acts 6 or Ephesians 4. Still, most churches expect their pastors to give spiritual care. The more pastoral support a pastor gives, the more likely the church is to decline.

Let's look at two examples of vision not coming to fruition.

Example One:

In the middle of the night, Pastor Harry had a wonderful vision. He arrived all pumped up at the

church office the next morning for the staff meeting. Harry began the meeting with this exclamation, “God has shown me how to triple the number of disciples who worship here.” He then went on to describe this vision in such detail that his staff could actually see the faces of the new people who would soon fill the building.

They discussed the details of the vision and the joy it could bring to their church and the Kingdom. Then Harry said to the staff, “Go make it happen. If you have problems, come see me.”

A year later, the church not only did not grow, it had dwindled in size. Harry and the staff couldn’t understand why the vision had not become reality. The vision was so good and clear. It should have happened. But it didn’t.

Example Two:

About a decade or more ago, I (BE) worked with a pastor who was relocating the church. He took me out to the spot of land and walked me through it. He described in vivid detail each of the buildings and what would take place in them. He did it so magnificently I actually could see the buildings and the people worshipping and being disciplined. A decade later, the number of people worshipping at that church remained virtually the same as it was at the old location, and the church began selling off some of the land to pay the bills.

Reflection: Why do you think these two visions never materialized? What should the pastor have done differently? Write down your thoughts and compare them with what follows. Don’t look ahead. That will spoil your learning experience.

So what is Execution?

Execution is taking big visions and turning them into results. Execution is a systematic process of tenaciously discussing and sharing clear expectations, setting crisp goals and milestones; then helping staff decide who is doing what, when and how, following through to ensure it’s actually happening by being available for coaching and encouragement.

Now let’s take a look at each of these elements in the context of the two examples above.

Sharing Clear Expectations

In both cases, the vision had already been laid out. So you might think that everyone is clear on the expectations, right? Wrong. A vision can be crystal clear, but yet no one has a clue what you expect them to do to achieve that dream. Both pastors failed to make absolutely clear what each staff person’s responsibility was in making the vision a reality.

It is amazing how many pastors and/or committees hire people without making it clear they expect the new person to grow the area for which they will be responsible. Another thing that

amazes us is that the majority of staff we have surveyed feels that the growth of the church is the lead pastor's sole responsibility.

The lead pastor must make it clear that he or she expects each one of the staff to take responsibility for the growth of their area and help them decide how they will make that growth happen. The expectation is that all staff grow their areas in order that the overall church grows.

My (BE) first Sunday in the restart church where I spent twenty-four years, I told the personnel committee that the first year the church didn't grow I would resign. That is an example of setting out what you expect to happen. It was then up to me to insure that growth happened. I expected the church to grow. In fact, I was betting my entire ministry on it. When I began hiring, I made it clear that growth in their area was a requirement for tenure. My job was to coach and get them the training and resources they needed to make the vision come to fruition.

Now you might think this expectation only applies to program staff. Not so. It should apply to everyone on the staff from the custodian to the office personnel. For instance, we consulted in one church where the chief custodian was responsible for a large prison ministry. There was another church of over two thousand people where there was only one person in the office. Her job was not to do all the work, but to train retired and stay-at-home parents to do the tasks. We're not suggesting you attempt either of these. We're just making the point that, in a thriving church, everyone on the staff should be able to see how their part - no matter how small - fits in and is vital to the overall growth of the church.

Setting Crisp Goals and Milestones

Here is a sample of what we normally see in a church's list of goals.

- Grow the youth program.
- Begin a visioning process.
- Add staff as needed.
- Increase the budget.

None of these are goals; they're wishes. Wishes can't be measured. So the odds are they never happen. Instead, goals are needed that are specific, measurable, achievable, results focused, and timely.

So, here's an example of a crisp goal, or as some call them, S.M.A.R.T. goals.

By next January, grow the youth department by 100% using youth worship on Sunday and small groups that raise up new servant leaders.

When setting goals, make sure you set two of them - a base goal and a stretch goal. The base goal is the actual target that you hold the staff person accountable to. The stretch goal is going beyond what is considered possible under normal circumstances. Stretch goals can't be achieved

by incremental or small improvements, but require extending oneself to the limit to be actualized. The purpose of a stretch goal is to discover the actual limits of the person's potential.

You never know what is impossible until you try to go beyond what is viewed as possible. You will never find out what a person is capable of achieving if you set the goal too low. You always want to set the stretch goal just beyond what you feel they are capable of. Of course, you should remember that this is a stretch goal when it comes time to evaluate performance. It should lead to the uplifting of the human spirit. It should be a goal that inspires those doing work and delight those for whom work is done. It is the kind of goals that is key to staying ahead of our ever-changing world. Stretch goals will be hard to achieve, but they're essential for our health and prosperity.

An example of a stretch goal is when Ed Young, pastor of Fellowship Church, told his worship staff a couple of years ago that he wanted to go to the next level by instituting a holographic type of worship. It had never been done in a church. But by figuring out how to do so, they took worship to a much higher level. The church projected a hologram-like image using six different projectors. It was a few minutes into the message before the congregation figured out what was going on. Ed Young wasn't there. He was a hologram!

Care must be taken when using stretch goals. They can be terribly demotivating, overwhelming and unattainable if they are stretched too far. They can sap a staff's intrinsic motivation. So be careful. Make sure the staff person understands they will not be held accountable for the stretch goal.

It also helps to set some milestones to measure the results along the way. If the goal is to grow the youth department by 100% over the next two years, it makes sense to have quarterly milestones. In other words, you don't want to go a year without making some kind of evaluation of the progress. One milestone might be to have the youth worship functioning within three months. Another might be to have the small groups operating within the first six months. By setting these milestones, you have a way not only to measure, but also to set some deadlines.

If the leader is receiving quarterly or monthly progress reports, problems are addressed before they become serious. If at the end of the first quarter the youth worship isn't operating, adjustments need to be made as to how the youth director is implementing the goal. If after the second quarter no progress has been accomplished, it might be time to consider replacing the person.

Reflection: Pick out some critical ministry in your church that isn't going well and write out a crisp goal with milestones.

Helping Staff Decide When and How

Goals shouldn't come out of thin air. Sure, you may have an "aha" moment, but unless your staff buys into the goal, the odds are it won't happen. So it's important to have conversations

with the staff responsible for achieving the goal. They need the opportunity to express their fears and have their questions answered to fine tune the program or process.

Suppose you and the staff person can't reach an agreement on the goal and milestones. The wise leader will attempt to parse the difference between an honest objection to the goal and simply a fear of attempting something new. The leader has to be willing to listen to the staff person. The leader must avoid unilaterally saying, *"This is the way we're going to do it."* Staff must be part of the decision, and often they will be helpful in refining the goal to where it is manageable. The key here is not to allow the staff person to give in to fear. Over time, your goal is to have staff that have little or no fear when it comes to doing something radically different. Fearless staff people are worth their weight in gold.

But what if a staff person insists on doing something that you know won't work? That's where you say the magical word, "No." It's poor leadership to allow a staff person to pursue a course of action you feel leads nowhere. However, if you're not totally sure it won't work, give the staff person a short leash and say, "Let's try it for x number of days or months, and then re-evaluate it to see if we should continue or discontinue the program or action." So before setting down to discuss how, where, and when to do something, as the leader, you should have some idea of what you think will work. Failure to do so usually doesn't end well.

Reflection: When you present a goal with your staff, how do you do it? Do you have a clearly defined set of expectations, goals, and milestones?

Follow Through Essential for Leading Staff

Follow through is imperative for staffing. If you don't follow through on how the staff is doing, even with the best of staff, the goals are seldom met. Whether you delegate or empower a person to do ministry, it doesn't mean you can abdicate following through to see how the person is doing.

For our purposes, let's quickly define delegation and empowerment. Delegation is saying, *"Here is what I want done, how I want it done, and when I want it done. Keep me in the loop every step of the way."* Empowerment is saying, *"We have agreed on the expectations, make it happen. Come and see me if you have a problem."*

In order to delegate or empower, leaders have to value getting ministry done through others. Bill Tenny-Brittian and I (BE) write about this extensively in the book, *Effective Staffing for Vital Churches*, so we won't go into detail here. But we do need to reiterate that there is one primary reason pastors fail to value getting ministry done through others - they enjoy doing ministry and being needed by their members. Such a value is confining to the growth of both the church and the people. This failure makes the church too dependent on the pastor.

The main challenge of an effective leader is to give the work of actual ministry over to the congregation without abandoning them. Give them too much to do, and they burn out; give them too little to do, and they become dependent and complacent.

Of course, some people require more supervision than others, but everyone needs someone checking in on them. For example, it's common to delegate with a new staff person rather than empower them. Although there can be various levels of delegation, the overall issue is the staff person has to keep the supervisor informed at every step of the way. Whereas, if a person is empowered, they only need to check in when they have a problem or need some advice.

Empowerment is the goal with all staff. But never empower a person until they have proved they will do what they say they will do, the way they say they will do it, and when they say they will do it. Trust has to be earned before anyone is empowered to do ministry. Trust is earned by constantly delivering positive results over and over. It has nothing to do with whether or not you like the person. Trust is built on what they do over time.

Still, it is impossible to overstate the importance for a staff member to know there is a seasoned veteran available when needed. Just to know someone is available you can go to with your problem is of vital importance to staff. The one who is supervising must lead in a way that staff know the supervisor is there for them when they need help.

Reflection: Think back over the past. How many times did you not follow up on your expectations and milestones? What happened? What could you have done differently?

Giving Feedback and Coaching

Part of giving clear expectations is giving people feedback and coaching. The problem is many pastors give the feedback, but don't spend the time coaching and encouraging the person. So when you see a staff person failing, you need to step in and have a conversation. Say something like this: *"Tell me where I failed you because you're not making the grade, and I'm the one who hired you and has been your coach. So tell me where I could have helped you succeed because right now you are failing, and I can't keep someone on the staff that continues to fail. We are at a crossroad; either we figure out how you can succeed, or I have to let you go."*

The goal of any good supervisor is to never have to fire a staff person. Too much time, energy, and money have been put into hiring the person. On the other hand, it is never the goal of a good supervisor to have a staff person who is so needy they become a mission.

Put this on your refrigerator and never stray from it: *"Staff should be on a mission and never be a mission."* If you have someone who constantly under-performs and you have given that person all the help you can, let that person go ASAP. There comes the time when you have to say, *"Enough is enough; I have to let you go."*

Assuming you have provided them the resources needed and coached them, six months is all the time you need to give someone for them to figure out how to move their ministry forward. If by that time they haven't figured it out, it's time to let them go.

Here's where supervision in a church differs from supervision in a business. In a business, a

supervisor can be as ruthless as need be. In a church, a supervisor must always handle accountability and dismissal as gracefully as possible. That is not to say the time never comes when you have to fire someone. Do so with this mentality, “*the quicker, the better.*” Yet, if you are going to err, err on the side of going the second mile to be an encourager to that failing staff person. Everyone deserves a second chance; but no one deserves a third chance.

That begs a question. Why is it so important to let someone go as soon as you decide they can’t do the job? It is because once a staff person becomes aware that you know they can’t do the job and you allow them to stay, they have the opportunity to negatively work their networks. Then when you finally let them go, their networks are more upset than they would have been if you had quickly dismissed the person. Never underestimate this – the longer a person is on the staff, the deeper and wider their sphere of influence and relationship grows, no matter how ineffective they are. Leave an ineffective staff person on too long and you have a big problem on your hands. Of course, with effective people, the longer they are on staff, the deeper the relationships and the more they can accomplish through those relationships.

So what do you see when you look at a staff person? Do you see who they are or what they might become? Obviously, it is best for you to see them as they could become. Isn’t this what Jesus did? He took a rag-tag group of misfits and molded them into the people who would turn the world upside-down. A good leader should be able to do the same.

Potential is something someone will do in the future with the right kind of coaching. If you’re the lead pastor, think of yourself as a coach of a team that could win the Super Bowl of ministry with the right kind of coaching. Roll up your sleeves and become the best coach you can be. If you don’t see this as one of your primary roles, then get out of the way. Let someone else lead.

Be a spiritual midwife. This metaphor should make it clear that the most effective leaders understand they can achieve far more through others than they ever could on their own. Never forget, your staff is your church’s best asset. Help them grow, and your chances of growing your church and the Kingdom improve exponentially. When they are ready and have proven themselves, give them room to spread their wings and fly - even if they outgrow you. You’ll be glad you did.

Reflection: How good are you at giving feedback? How could you improve it? Do you have staff that need help and/or staff that need room to fly?

Holding Staff Accountable

Goals without accountability are a waste of time because staff won’t have a clue as to how they are doing in the eyes of their supervisor. Allowing staff to be in the dark concerning how you feel about their effectiveness is not leadership. Whether you’re unhappy or happy with their performance, they should know it.

When leaders fail to hold staff accountable, whether they are succeeding or failing to achieve the goal, it sends a signal to the rest of the staff. If a failing staff person is allowed to continue just

as they are, it says to the rest of the staff that the goals were never expected to materialize in the first place. If a failing staff person is called into question, sent away for training, or fired, it says to the staff that goals are important. Or if the person is succeeding and receives recognition, it sends a positive signal to the rest of the staff. If effective staff are not given recognition or, worse yet, the lead pastor takes responsibility for their achievements, it sends a signal to the staff that they are taken for granted and the lead pastor isn't to be trusted.

We need to emphasize one more point. If a supervisor allows a failing staff person to stay without getting more training or being replaced, it says to the effective staff who are achieving their goals that the supervisor isn't a leader because he or she didn't take action when needed. When that happens, effective staff begin to bail out and look for another place to serve. Effective staff crave an effective leader. When they decide they don't have one, they look for a new place to serve. On the other hand, if they are ineffective staff, they dig in and try to stay forever because they know they have an easy ride.

Reflection: Here are some questions you should take time to reflect on.

Do I have it in me to hold people accountable?

Can I fire someone and sleep at night even if it is their only income?

Do I avoid uncomfortable conversations with failing staff?

Do I find it difficult to find time to spend with staff who need some help or encouragement?

If I have a staff person who is failing, what have I done to help that person succeed?

Plainly put, the pastor must always ask, *Am I the person for this church at this size or should I move on?*

So what does accountability look like?

According to Scripture, every Christian should be under some form of accountability.

Ultimately, our final accountability is to God. However, this lofty form of accountability needs a structure which looks like this:

- 1) A lead pastor is accountable to a board;
- 2) A staff member is accountable to a lead pastor or an executive pastor; and
- 3) A layperson is usually held accountable to the lead pastor, a staff member, or another layperson of that person's choice or ministry affiliation.

For accountability to be effective, two things must always be present:

- 1) A clearly defined path of accountability - everyone knows who his or her supervisor is; and
- 2) A clearly defined set of expectations agreed upon by both parties.

Staff accountability is always somewhat hierarchical, although any good accountability system should have some form of 360-degree evaluation process. Even in a team setting, where give and take is encouraged, the "buck has to stop" somewhere. When people do not do what they say they will do or when they break a clearly defined expectation or biblical principle, they need to be held accountable. The only reason churches have gotten into the behavioral mess most churches are in today is because no one was held responsible for their inappropriate behavior.

Mutual trust is essential for accountability to be an essential healthy tool for personal growth rather than a sledgehammer held over someone's head. Remember, Scripture abounds with accountability stories from Ananias and Sapphira to Paul's dismissal of Mark. The more wishy-washy accountability is, the less likely that church is to grow.

We put a high premium on what we call "permission-giving." So when we talk about accountability, people want to know how that squares with permission-giving. But there's really no problem because permission-giving is not permissiveness. Permission-giving can only happen within the clearly defined boundaries of objectives and goals. It can't violate the mission and values of a church or the agreed upon goals. So even in a permission-giving environment, accountability is essential for effective and faithful ministry to happen.

Tom Bandy has one of the best examples of how accountability works today as opposed to how it worked in the past:

"Speaking metaphorically, this is the difference between training dogs and raising rabbits. In the old world, we trained dogs (task groups and committees) to fetch, roll over, and do programs. The leash on the dog was the long prescriptive job description that told the task group what they had to do and how they had to do it. If the dog didn't do what you wanted, you jerked the chain, and appealed to the by-laws. If the task group behaved obediently, you gave the dog a pat on the head. The last thing any dog owner wants is a creative dog!

In the new world, we raise rabbits (teams and cell groups). You can't put a leash on a rabbit, but you have to build a fence. These are the boundaries within which the rabbits are free to roam, but beyond which they cannot run. These are the core values, beliefs, vision, and mission of the organization. In addition, you fence off any vegetable patch or other vulnerable area in order to protect safety and confidentiality, guide the rabbits in continuing education, or keep rabbits from getting in each other's way. These are the executive limitations. The very first thing we want is for the rabbits to be as creative and innovative as possible!"

As you can see, clear boundaries have to be in place for accountability to be successful. However, the most effective boundaries are those which are permeable. There must be considerable freedom to act within the given boundaries. Set the boundaries; make sure everyone knows them; and let them run free as long as they stay within the boundaries. So the boundaries have to be clear enough to know if they have been crossed and broad enough to allow a person to be creative.

One of the best books on setting such boundaries is *The Boundaryless Organization* by Ashkenas, Ulrich, Jick, and Kerr. It offers practical hints for how to evaluate the boundaries that are harmful to the health of an organization and to reform the way the church organizes and functions. Step by step, practical help is offered to those church leaders wanting to break old, unhealthy patterns and create new, healthy patterns of behavior.

Let's go back to the example used earlier. *By January 2015, grow the youth department by 100% using youth worship on Sunday and small groups that raise up new servant leaders.* A permeable boundary is *“grow the youth program by 100% over the next three years through worship and small groups...”* Notice nothing is said about how worship and small groups are to be done. There is a clear boundary set with lots of room to roam as long as the focus is on worship and small groups that grow the youth program and raise up new leaders.

Reflection: What are the boundaries in which your staff has a lot of freedom to act?

Understanding Execution

You've read a lot now about execution. So let's do an exercise to see how well you understand the concept.

A Practical Exercise

Joe is responsible for the youth ministry. He and the pastor had a long conversation before setting any goals. The pastor shared a clear expectation - double the number of participating youth within two years. The “hows” were through youth worship and small groups that grow the church and raise up new leaders. Milestones were put in place - 10% the first three months, 30% the next six months, 40% the next six months, and 20% the last three months. He was supposed to report the progress to the pastor at each milestone. After a lengthy conversation, the youth pastor bought into all of the above. At the end of 24 months, the youth group grew by 10% and the youth director was still on the staff.

Reflection: What went wrong? See if you can figure it out before reading further.

The pastor must take the blame for allowing the youth program to linger for two years. The pastor had the reports and knew the youth director was going to miss the agreed upon first milestone. So there should have been a conversation when the first milestone was not reached, with an inquiry about what was going wrong and what could be done to help. After the first quarter, there were two choices – get the youth director some help or let him go. Allowing the person to remain on the staff simply made everyone's job harder, and the pastor ran the risk of losing face with the staff for not taking action.

If things aren't going well at your church, it's best to first look in the mirror and you will always find the solution. What could you be doing wrong or not doing? Perhaps you:

Work in your own tiny silo.

Haven't set clear expectations and goals.

Haven't shared your vision to the point that it sticks.

Haven't selected the right people for the right job.

Allowed non-productive people to stay on the staff too long.

Haven't held staff accountable.

Didn't offer feedback.
Have failed to listen to feedback.
Have excessively dabbled in their day-to-day ministry.
Have delegated or empowered when you shouldn't have.
Abdicated availability.

It has to be one or more of the above. The onus is always on the lead pastor or executive pastor.

Getting Things Done Through Others

In order to execute a vision, anyone responsible for a section of ministry must learn how to hand off some aspects to others while making them feel good about it. Even though you may know you can do it better than anyone else, you can do just so much and the growth stops. Learning how to multiply yourself is one the most important lessons a leader can learn in life.

Yet most pastors have trouble making this shift from depending on self to depending on others to get ministry done. The primary reason is a desire on the part of the leader to be needed. Pastors have actually told us that if they did what was recommended, there would be no reason for them to be a pastor because they like the feeling of being needed. When a leader hoards the responsibility for a ministry, they are robbing others of the joy of fulfilling God's mission in the world.

So what attitude must a leader have to effectively hand-off ministry.

Leaders have to believe that every person feels better about himself or herself when they contribute to the overall success of the organization. This feeling is especially true for Christians. We are made to be involved with God in the great mission of the redemption of creation. No one grows or finds true fulfillment sitting in a pew being hand-fed. Playing the game is ultimately more fulfilling than sitting in the stands watching.

Leaders have to believe in the priesthood of the individual. God has something for every Christian to do with their life. Finding that one thing is the most fulfilling event in a Christian's life.

Leaders have to revel in the success of others and the small part they played in it.

Leaders must match each person to a ministry that feeds them as well as the people they are serving. Too many pastors treat volunteers as if they were pawns in a game to help them grow the church or take a load off them. Not so. Leaders must think of those they are responsible for as servants in search of a God-given mission.

Conclusion

As you can see from this scenario, it is vital that pastors realize they are responsible for the success or failure of the staff. Execution begins and ends with the leader.

Chapter Three

The Role of the Leader in Execution

In a constantly changing world, the role of a leader is also constantly changing. Leaders have to learn new ways of thinking and acting, develop new skills, embrace new paradigms, integrate left and right brain thinking, become skilled politicians, see old things in new ways, and be a team player. If you're serious about growing a church, that very lengthy list should get your attention. So let's try to simplify your role as the leader.

Behind all of the execution items in the previous chapter, two actions of the leader take precedent over all other traits. Here's what they look like.

Leadership Principle #1: Be Focused on the Vision

The essential role of the leader is to stay focused on the vision. Churches have a way of taking everyone's eyes off the prize, especially the pastor. There are so many things to do and so many people who want some of the pastor's time that being able to keep a proper focus is a challenge. Ineffective pastors give into the pressure of the crowd. If the leader allows this to happen to him or her, the same will happen with the staff. So one of the key roles of the leader is to keep everyone focused on the vision and the goal. Like a dog with a bone, the leader relentlessly focuses in on the overall priorities that matter to everyone being able to achieve their goals.

The ability to stay focused when everyone around you is clamoring for their fair share of your time is one of the greatest challenges we've seen in lead pastors, especially in the small to mid-sized church. The smaller the church, the harder it is to stay focused on the vision.

The only way the pastor can remain focused on the vision and avoid the distracting voices of the crowd, without ignoring them, is to always lead from the sideline with one foot in the game. What does that look like?

Perhaps Magic Johnson's greatest contribution to the game of basketball came from his ability to play the game hard while keeping in mind the whole strategy of the game, as if he were in the stands watching the game. He not only knew what he was supposed to do; he also knew what everyone else was supposed to do. He had a 10,000 foot view of the court. That is what the effective leader has to be able to do.

Few people in a church, other than the pastor and perhaps a few key staff, understand the total ramifications of the big vision. They may be able to repeat it verbatim, but few people, if any, will be consumed by it. A lead pastor has to be so consumed by the vision that he or she can see the vision from a 10,000 foot perspective without losing sight of the players. A lead pastor has to be able to bring that vision onto the playing field where each player is sure of his or her roll in the vision.

To keep one's focus on the vision, leaders have to both participate and observe. By seeing the ministry from 10,000 feet, leaders avoid getting caught up in the multitude of voices and the day-to-day issues. They are aware of those voices, and they listen to those voices, but they never allow those voices to detract them from the vision.

Sounds easy? It's not. The threat here is that many pastors have a high mercy gift. The higher the mercy gift pastors have, the easier it is for them to lose focus. Because of their mercy gift, they are more prone to be diverted by one person instead of being consumed by the vision. Or we could put it this way – too many pastors are consumed more by their mercy gift than they are by the vision. The gift of mercy is wonderful, but in the leadership role it can be deadly. A leader can never allow one person to distract from the vision.

Studies show that few people can stay focused on more than four priorities at a time. Most people can focus on only one or two priorities at a time. See the problem? The priorities in a church are legion if you allow everyone to speak into your life. You have to not only choose your priorities, but you also have to choose who you listen to.

I (BE) consulted with a church over two decades ago that had been in decline for thirty years. Once a very large church, it had decreased to around three hundred in worship. After being there for three days, I left them with seven recommendations. I prefaced the seven recommendations with this warning: "Not accomplishing the first recommendation means failure for the church no matter how well you do with the remaining six recommendations."

A year later I received a letter (that was before email). The letter said, "*We've accomplished six out of the seven goals, and we are still declining. We haven't tackled the first recommendation because we're afraid of splitting the church (the first recommendation was starting a new indigenous service). What advice do you have?*"

I wrote back, and I filled the entire letter with one word over and over - "Focus." Then I finished the letter with something like this: "*Accomplish the first recommendation! Failure to do so will mean you will fail as pastor of that church.*" The pastor finally took my advice, and when he left some twenty years later, the worship attendance was above eleven hundred. All because of one tiny word that is so hard for most pastors – FOCUS!

What does it mean to have focus? Focus is the ability to shut out every other option, voice, choice, or direction. It is the ability to be so sure about what you are doing and where you are going that nothing can distract you. Focus for a leader is like putting blinders on a horse. The blinders keep the horse focused on one thing, looking forward - not seeing all the hazards or competition that surrounds it. To be a leader in today's noisy world, you have to have this kind of focus.

Reflection: So what are the four priorities on which you have to stay focused? Take a moment to think about them, and write them down. Then choose one of them as your real priority for the moment. What is your strategy for making it happen?

Leadership Principle #2: Keep the Staff Focused

A follow-up priority of the lead pastor is to keep the staff focused on the execution of the vision. Staff are like anyone else. They can get distracted, especially if they have needy people in their area of responsibility. Holding people accountable to executing the vision is essential. If you don't measure it, it isn't important, and it won't get done.

Reflection: How are you doing with keeping your focus on the vision? Does the vision dictate how you spend your time or does something else? Does your Staff stay focused on the vision?

What Does it Take to Keep One Focused

Keeping focused on a few priorities when everyone around you has a different opinion or wants something different requires an enormous amount of confidence that comes only from emotional stability on the part of the leader. So let's unpack what that means.

EQ Trumps IQ

Some pastors are smarter than most, and yet they can't figure out how to help their church grow. Some pastors are not as smart as others, and their church is growing. What's the difference?

Our experience, and that of many others, tells us that the difference doesn't have as much to do with IQ (Intelligence Quotient) as it does with EQ (Emotional Quotient). For example, Einstein was a genius, but he wasn't a leader. Stop for a moment, and let that statement soak in.

Although a high IQ certainly doesn't hurt, it isn't the main ingredient in growing a church or being a leader. How much a person knows is great if you're playing a game of trivia or trying to solve a mathematical problem, but it takes a back seat to EQ when it comes to leadership and execution. What matters is how badly you want something to happen, and how much you believe in your vision. EQ is something you have to either learn or have it thrust upon you like

a religious experience. In the case of a pastor, it can be a recently attended seminar, a recently read book, or an all-encompassing call that focuses the pastor on the great commission.

EQ is what moves others to action, and moving people to action is a defining role for a leader. So it's often not what you say, but how you say it. Consider the following famous words that rocked nations.

Martin Luther: "Here I stand. I can do no other."

Martin Luther King: "I have a dream."

Ronald Reagan: "Mr Gorbachev, tear down this wall."

Winston Churchill: "We have nothing to fear, but fear itself."

These men had the courage of their conviction, and stood by their vision to the point that it moved mountains. That's the power of the motivation that comes from EQ.

EQ has two components: what it does to you, and what it does to others. When it is intense, it gives you the courage to stand by your conviction and prompts others to join in. EQ also allows a leader to receive criticism without taking it personal or, worse, taking it home.

Of course, like most things, a powerful EQ can be used for both good and ill. Hitler would be a case in point. He had tremendous EQ, and the masses flocked to him. Unfortunately, many pastors use such examples as excuses for not using the power of EQ to encourage church members to do what the Scriptures say needs to be done. But that's their problem. Effective leaders know that the use of power is a neutral action. It can be good or bad, but failure to exercise one's God-given ability is a serious mistake for any leader. A good leader has to use power when controllers or bullies try to hijack the vision and turn the church inward on itself, becoming more of a club than a church. More on the use of power later.

Of course IQ is important, and we don't mean to belittle it. But IQ doesn't move mountains, and we've got mountains to move these days. The results of several studies done in some major corporations have shown that EQ is 80 to 90% of that which separates the average leader from the exceptional leader.

Reflect on these questions: How much do you believe in your vision? How much does your staff believe in the vision? To what length are you willing to go to make it happen, and how much have the leaders bought into the vision? How well does the staff understand the expectations and goals. How much does the staff believe in the goals?

The problem is, instead of asking the above questions, most pastors and boards ask questions like this. Will it work? Is it feasible? Can we do it? Can we afford it? The problem is, in such an uncertain time as ours, no one knows the answers to these questions. So instead of thinking through a problem, leaders have to feel their way along. Once having all the possible data, leaders have to let intuition and faith take over to guide their decision. In times like these, you won't know what will work until you take action. As Nike says, "Just do it." Take that first step. See what happens. You either fail and learn a lesson about what doesn't work (which gives you

a leg up on what might work) or you succeed and move ahead as if you knew what you were doing all the time. Either way, you are on the road to being more effective.

Case in point. Do you think Jeff Bezos knew his Amazon venture would work? No way, because no one else had done it. But did he believe it would work? So much so that he put up all the money he had. What allowed him to take such a bold action? His intuition told him he had to do it, and he totally believed it would work.

When I (BE) restarted the church I stayed at for 24 years, I went without a salary for a year. Why? Not because I knew the church would grow, but because I believed our strategy would work. I've seen many church planters do the same. They start out using their own money to start the church. They spend all of their savings; not because they know it's a shoe-in, but because they passionately believe in what they are doing. In fact, they believe it is what God put them on this planet to accomplish.

So how do you know if your EQ is high enough? That's a tough question to answer, but let's try.

How self-aware are you? By that we mean three things: 1) How in tune are you with your feelings and how they impact your performance; 2) Do you know your limitations, being open to candidly talking about them; and 3) Do you lean into your strengths more than trying to improve your weaknesses? This is why we constantly remind pastors to trust their gut and never abandon their call. It is also why the sharper the call a pastor has, the more likely a person is to be an exceptional leader.

How in control are you of your daily life? Are you calm under pressure and never seem to be rattled? Are you able to adapt when necessary to reach a goal? When confronted with new options or information, are you able to suspend judgment long enough to give an intelligent response? Are you pragmatic in your goals with higher standards for yourself than for others? Are you confident enough to seek ways to improve your performance?

How socially aware are you? Do you have enough empathy with people that you tune into what they are feeling? Are you politically astute enough to be able to read key power relationships? Are you constantly monitoring the well-being of those you are responsible for?

How do you manage relationships? Do your actions inspire others to act? Are you adept at cultivating other people's abilities? When faced with opposition, can you still inspire courage and help others stand their ground? Do you always seem to be able to manage conflict by drawing out the best in others? Are you collegial in your relationships, fostering teamwork and collaboration?

Of course very few people have all of these gifts, but the more of them a person has, the higher their EQ will be.

Reflection: As you look over the list, can you see how EQ prepares a person to lead far more than IQ? Which one of the list is your greatest strength?

Learning to Develop Intuition

It should be clear by now that traditional thinking and acting aren't going to give us the results we seek. We have to first know the facts. Then once we've gathered the data, we take action based on our best guess – we're back to the foundational leadership quality of intuition.

Just like skills, intuition can be developed. And just like with skills, some people will develop intuition more than others. In both cases, if a person doesn't work on them, they don't develop. Our experience with pastors is they are some of the least intuitive people. However, it may not be fully their fault.

The primary reason pastors have trouble with developing intuition is the way we have been taught to learn or, should we say, taught not to learn. Most ministerial education today is the teacher talks and the students diligently listen while taking copious notes.

There is a name for this kind of learning – it's called "passive learning." Passive learning doesn't teach us how to analyze. We learn the facts, but not what they mean to our everyday life. That's why, in this book, you have been asked several times to stop reading and reflect on what you have just read. People learn more about what works by doing rather than by hearing or reading.

Case in point: why do you think Mark Zuckerberg and Bill Gates dropped out of Harvard to follow their vision? They intuitively believed that their dreams were more important than a Harvard education.

I (SM) have a mainline Christianity background. But sixteen years ago I had this nagging gut feeling that I was supposed to pursue a program at the Wagner Leadership Institute in Colorado Springs, a Spirit-driven seminary that would be far outside what had been my comfort zone. C. Peter Wagner started this institution in his senior years because he wanted to develop something other than the style in which he had taught through the years at Fuller Seminary.

I'll be honest. I hated to speak spontaneous prayers. That's not good when you are a pastor. I felt my unscripted prayers sounded stilted. I had no idea why God seemed to want me to go to this institution. But I went, nonetheless.

The learning practice was far different than that of my past. What I came away with was a powerful new sense of prayer that now drives all of my life. These people didn't teach me to pray. They put me in an experience where I was mentored to become the person of prayer God wanted. So, especially at a time when the questions are many and the answers seem few, we encourage you to step out of your comfort zone for the sake of Jesus, which leads us to the issue of how you are utilizing the methods of this book.

Our bet is most of you haven't stop reading and reflected on the questions. So you will get to the end of the book and have your head full of information, but you still may not be better prepared

to turn a vision into reality. Have you done the exercises so far? If not, we encourage you to go back and do the reflections now.

Reflection: Analyze your preaching. Do you preach for a specific response from the congregation? If not, you are encouraging passive listening which seldom leads to action.

Pastors need to take part in “active learning” which prepares one to read the signs of the times and know how to act intuitively. Active learning is an approach to instruction in which students engage the material they study through reading, writing, talking, listening, reflecting, and doing. Active learning has been described as a process whereby students engage in a higher order of thinking tasks such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Active learning stands in contrast to "standard" models of instruction in which teachers do most of the talking and students passively take it in. A passive approach to books or lectures is much less efficient than an active one in which you ask and answer mental questions, challenge the author, and relate the material to your own experience.

Math is one of the best examples of active learning. Students are required to solve a problem. They have been instructed how to solve it, but they must demonstrate they understand the concepts. Even today, pastors are rarely asked to solve potential ministry issues at traditional seminaries. If you do the reflections throughout this book, you have a great opportunity for personal growth. You might improve your intuition.

From the graphic to the left, you will see how instruction improves with actual participation on the part of the student.

You will hear us say: *“You don’t think your way into a new way of thinking; you act your way into a new way of thinking.”* If we don’t know for sure what will work in the new world, all we can do is take a leap of faith. Maybe that’s why Jesus sent the disciples out two by two to gain hands-on experience in the most important thing they would do when he left – make disciples.

Another Elephant in the Room

By this time you are probably thinking, “But aren’t you giving too much power to the pastor?” Our unequivocal answer is “No.”

We’ve met pastors who want their church to grow, but don’t want to be the leader because they don’t want to exercise any power or authority. The problem is this never works. Growth takes a leader who is so convinced of the outcome that he or she influences others to jump on board and use their gifts to help make the vision happen.

What many don’t understand is that in a church someone always exercises power, either for good or bad. In the absence of a leader who exercises good power, controllers or bullies usually step into the vacuum and exercise bad power. That always causes a church to stall or decline. Please don’t suggest that pastors should refrain from using power because of instances when such leaders have abused their position. Lay people have misused power far more times and

much more detrimentally than pastors. So use the power God has given you, always remembering that what has been given can be taken away if it is abused.

Power Versus Authority

At this point, it's important to define how we understand power. The kind of power most pastors are afraid of is having the ability to make others conform to something against their will. In this understanding, power comes from some form of dominance based on coercion. That's not the way we're using the term "power."

To us, power is much more like authority. Authority is based on relationships that are voluntary and conscious. Authority emerges when leaders consistently demonstrate they have the best interest of others in mind so that people are willing to join them on the journey. The wrong use of power constrains a person's will, while the right use of power encourages and transforms their will. Knowing the difference is a part of what makes a leader effective. This is a person who isn't afraid to use the power that comes from being given authority.

The old world mentality located authority/power in a *role* rather than a *person*. In the past, the pastor had respect and therefore some amount of authority just by being the pastor. Today's crowd is slow to give power and authority to a role. Now power/authority has to be earned by a person. People have to trust leaders enough to ascribe authority to them. Never mind that some higher organizational power such as a denomination or seminary has granted authority to them. They want to see that person in action. Pastors must show people what they can do and how they can do it. Then people will consider granting them authority.

In the past, authority was more of straight line than it is today. Children obeyed their parents. Employees did what their employer told them to do, and so on. Authority was invested in rules. But today the kind of authority that leads to power is more relational than linear. It is earned by what the leader does over time as well as how the leader invests in the potential of others.

Here is the tricky part. Instead of authority coming from what a person takes, now it comes from what a person gives. The leader who delegates and empowers others to achieve, even beyond the leader, is the one who gains respect and authority.

The effective pastor knows that the best way to succeed is to help others succeed. The effective pastor knows that the path to authority does not come by way of the degree on the wall, but by how consistently over time he or she leads - the more effective the leader, the more authority is granted.

One of the best books over the past decade on authority and how it develops is *Reworking Authority* by Larry Hirschhorn. It is helpful in explaining to parents, grandparents, CEO's, and pastors why they don't receive the respect they often feel they deserve.

Here is a quote from the inside front cover of the book:

“For many companies (church), the past decade has been marked by a sense of turbulence and redefinition. The growing role of information technologies and service businesses has prompted companies (churches) to reconsider how they are structured and even what business they are in. These changes have also affected how people work, what skills they need, and what kinds of careers they expect. One critical change in how people work, Larry Hirschhorn argues, is that in a psychological sense they are expected to bring more of themselves to their jobs. This change makes it necessary to create a new kind of authority – one in which superiors acknowledge their dependence on subordinates, subordinates can challenge their superiors, and both are able to show vulnerability.”

How then, you ask, does a leader gain respect, authority, or power? The answer is simple - by consistently doing the things that lead the organization to greater effectiveness, by empowering people to reach the zenith of their potential. Leaders gain a following by consistently pointing out the direction to a better future and by developing leaders that thrive. There it is again. The spiritual midwife metaphor in action.

There is new book on power, by Andy Crouch, *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power*, which offers some further insight on the goal of authority. Here is a quote for your consideration.

Why is power a gift? Because power is for flourishing. When power is used well, people and the whole cosmos come more alive to what they were meant to be. And flourishing is the test of power.

When used to further the Kingdom, whether you call it power or authority, it is a gift from God that we dare not let go unused. To share the Gospel in a way that people thrive is the most powerful act a person can make. We hope you will begin thinking about power as a gift from God and not be afraid to use it wisely.

Reflection: How do you feel about the use of power/authority? Are you reluctant to use it? Are you afraid of abusing it?

Leading Without Ruling

If we understand the issues involved with power and authority, then we know that there is a covenant built into authority. People give authority to a leader. It is retained so long as the leader continues leading in the way that earned him or her that authority.

In their book, *Accountability*, Lebow and Spitzer write, “The key is to find a way to lead people without ruling them.” For us, the key to leading people without ruling them is two-fold: 1) To have a vision so compelling that people are enthralled by it; and 2) They are then free to work in self-organized, self-governed, self-destructing teams. I (BE) talked about how this happens in my book *Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers*. I still think this is a valid way to lead. And it takes us full circle – without a compelling vision any form of leadership is of little value.

Don't be afraid to exercise power, but be careful not to abuse it. The temptation to do so grows with tenure. The longer you are pastor of a church, the more tempted you can be to abuse your authority. You've earned credibility, and have been given authority. This is where the temptation emerges. Never try to overuse your status and privilege as the leader. Remember what is given can be taken away. God doesn't honor the abuse of power.

Leading Can't be Avoided

No matter how you feel about the elephant in the room, to be successful as a leader you have to lead. We have learned that if a problem exists, it *always* resides at the feet of the leader. For example: if the choir has a problem, it is the choir director's fault. If the children's area is not going well, it is the children's director's fault. Change the leader, and the ministry has a chance to improve.

I (BE) had this truth driven home to me my first few years of my re-start effort. I started a preschool the second year, and two years later there were only four children. The new church was drowning in red ink. I replaced the director, and the third year eighty-five children enrolled. Remember – the problem is always the leader.

There are two questions you have to ask yourself. They are: "*Who am I?*" and "*What did God put me here to do?*" You have to be able to answer these two questions in order to develop the type of passion it takes to lead. If you know who you are, you have some hint of your limitations or weaknesses. If you know what God put you here for, you have a holy passion or desire to make it happen.

I (SM) mentioned before that I essentially asked these questions of myself twenty years ago. It was a transforming moment when a vision pointed me in the direction of a new reality. Make no mistake, this is the ministry of Jesus who requires you to pick up a cross to execute your vision. It is bumpy. There will be conflict. People will leave your church. You must remain focused and grounded in spiritual discipline with your sight on the destination.

God shows in the Bible that he honors persistence. That is a part of leading without distraction. Twenty years ago, Bill Easum was an icon to me. I read his words more than those of anyone else. Now I am co-authoring a book with him and a partner in the church consulting firm he started. I sure didn't see that coming, and that is the delight of your vision coming to God's desired fruition.

Reflection: Remember the last time you had to exercise your authority. How did it make you feel, and what did you learn about yourself?

The Seduction of Leadership

Now we need to explain the difference between a manager and a leader, showing how an overemphasis on management has seduced pastors and churches away from the primary vision of making disciples.

Management is the process of keeping the machinery of an organization running smoothly. As such, it includes such items as budgeting, planning, organizing, and problem-solving. Leadership, in contrast, is the process of defining the future, setting the direction, aligning people with the vision, finding the right people, putting them in the right place, and inspiring them to execute the goals. You might say these two processes are two sides of the same coin.

Now let's talk about these two processes in the light of the Key to Everything.

With the rise of large institutions in the 20th century, the greatest need was for managers who could hold it all together. For every entrepreneur, the culture needed hundreds of managers. So management programs were created to turn out better managers. As a result, very little emphasis was given to leadership. This lack of emphasis was especially true in seminaries.

Now shift gears to today. Because of the speed and discontinuity of change, the need has shifted. Now the pressing need of the church is for people who can lead the church into the emerging new world. But it is universally agreed upon by church officials that the number of pastors who can lead in this manner is significantly lacking.

Reflection: Which trait is your strongest, management or leadership; or do you possess both of them?

Two Primary Examples

The best way to explain what has happened in most churches is to use the example of the average new church start. In the beginning, the pastor and the church are outward focused. The emphasis is on reaching out and bringing in new people. Because there is no infrastructure and many of the people are new to Christianity, the pastor has to assume the role of leader and isn't expected to change spiritual diapers. If the pastor is successful, the church grows to the point it is financially viable.

It's at this point that the seduction occurs. The church members want the pastor to spend more time taking care of them and developing programs. Denominational officials start urging the pastor to charter the church and develop committees. Increasingly, the pastor's attention turns from being outward focused to spending more and more time managing the internal machinery of the church - taking care of the members. Guess what? The church stops growing, and decline sets in.

The sad truth is too many pastors have poor management skills. They haven't had any training, and their passion is more for people than organization. As a result, they rarely succeed at much more than being a pastoral care giver. Over time, even the word "leader" causes raised eyebrows and suspicion.

An example of seduction occurred in my (BE) tribe – The United Methodist Church. U.S. Methodism was one of the most successful missionary movements in history. Over a few decades, the Methodist Church reached from the East to West Coast. The primary vehicle of this movement was the itinerant circuit rider. They would ride in and preach, then ride out to the next church. They didn't take care of the flock; the flock took care of itself. None of these circuit riders had any training. They just had a passion to spread the Gospel.

But in the mid-to-late 1950's, my tribe decided clergy needed to be formally educated and began requiring seminary training. As they graduated, they were given a church and taught how to care for a congregation. Over time they were given a bigger church. The more they played the party line and politics, the higher they moved in the system until some became bishops.

Most of these pastors who became bishops were good at managing an organized church. Very few of them were a part of a growing church; they just managed what they had been given. Now, as bishops, they honor and understand management, but pastors who are strong leaders often threaten them to the point they speak of them as mavericks. See the depth of the problem – leadership is not only suspect, to some it's the enemy.

Reflection: Have you been seduced into simply managing the institution; and if so, what are you going to do about it?

Addressing the Leadership Vacuum

So how do we address this leadership vacuum? Well, first we must agree that leadership is more caught than taught. We're convinced the desire for leadership comes from a deep sense of call – a call so clear and overpowering that it erases all forms of fear. It's like Jesus told the disciples, "For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say." In other words, a person is so pumped that they have no choice but to lead.

Now that all sounds easy, doesn't it? But we assure you it's not. There's more to it than just the call, even if it all begins there. Let's take a look at what leadership entails in a changing world like ours.

Leading between Transitions

Earlier we said, "*Leaders are managers; but not all managers are leaders. If you can't manage, then get out of the way.*" This isn't the way most people think of pastors.

The myth is that pastors are shepherds who take care of people. In reality, that is far from the New Testament plan for pastors. The New Testament expects pastors to equip people to take care of each other. Effective pastors are good managers as well as leaders, or they have learned they need an executive pastor who functions as a manager, like Jethro did for Moses. The

problem is that most churches don't get big enough to afford an executive pastor. So the problem continues, and the church declines.

Leading a church is hard enough without having to manage the outcome during a major transition in history. But that is where pastors find themselves today if they are trying to grow a church. It's not that we just have to manage; we have to manage on the fly. We don't have the luxury of taking time out to think about our next move. Instead we must act our way into the future. Please focus on this last sentence. Keep this in your head - you act your way into the future; you don't think your way into the future. Taking action is at the heart of being a leader.

One of the things that has bugged us over the years about pastors is their inability to act; that is, to act when action is needed. They know something needs to be done, but they won't do it. Ever had that problem?

Say for example a church is out of worship space, and the pastor knows an additional service is in order. But a year, two years, three years pass, and still the additional service isn't started. The pastor has given it a lot of thought. Several meetings have been held to talk about how to do the service, but it never gets done. There are always more people to get on board first.

Or take another example. One of the staff members has been performing poorly for some time. The pastor has talked with the person several times, but still the staff person performs poorly. Several years go by, and that same person remains on the staff. The pastor simply can't fire the person.

The reasons for inaction are legion, but one stands out above all the rest. Most pastors don't have a burning *desire* to fulfill God's mission for the church that consumes their every waking moment. They enjoy ministry because it makes them feel good and fulfilled, but seeing the great commission filled in their lifetime isn't something that consumes them.

When Moses went up into the mountain to seek out God, do you think anything would have distracted him from his search? When Jesus went to the cross, do you think there was anything that would have derailed him? When Paul set out to change the world, do you think anyone could have convinced him otherwise? The answer is simple. No. What about you?

When you set out to get something accomplished that you know should be done, can you put aside everything else and make yourself totally free of any distractions? Effective leaders will not allow anything to distract them from their quest to accomplish what they know is the right thing to do.

Desire for Kingdom growth is the goal for effective church leadership - desire to please God, desire to accomplish what God put you here to do, and desire to see the Kingdom come on earth. Desire is the most potent weapon we have against an inability to act.

Now here are some questions for you to consider. What do you dream about at night? What do you think about when you wake up? What keeps you awake at night? What occupies most of your day? What is the one thing you want to happen more than anything else? The totality of

those questions is what you desire. And if they are all different, then more than likely a Kingdom desire isn't present in your life, and you're not effectively leading your church.

There was a pastor who knew that a parking lot was standing in the way of his church growing. He *really* wanted that parking lot. He knew it was one of his main goals. The problem is the everyday responsibilities got in the way. He was easily distracted from the goal. He couldn't stay focused on it to the point that his desire to see it happen overshadowed everything else. He wanted it, needed it, but he didn't desire it.

You see, church leadership boils down to one thing – how badly do you want your church to grow? Or how convinced are you that the church is the sign of God's Kingdom on earth?

What is it you desire the most in life - a great marriage, a healthy life, a good car, or doing God's will? Where does God's will stack up in your life? More specifically, when you know something needs to be done to advance the Kingdom, do you desire it enough to not allow anything to get in the way of its fulfillment?

Reflection: Are you able to act without thinking about it for a long time?

Two Axioms for Acting

1) Distractions dilute passion. Don't kid yourself. Distractions can derail even the most focused person, especially in a church setting where so many members are still in spiritual diapers and expect the pastor to help change them.

2) Focus fuels passion. The more a person focuses on something, the more that person is passionate about seeing it fulfilled, and the quicker that person acts. When passion for something consumes a person's waking moments, the odds are that something is going to happen.

So how does one become consumed with passion for a particular action?

Here are some principles that lead to pastors taking action:

You get what you look for.

The more you look, the more you see.

The more you see, the more options you see.

The more options you see, the more excited you get.

The more excited you get, the more passionate you become.

The more passionate you become, the more likely you are to act.

But it all breaks down if you don't first look beyond your nose.

Now that sounds simple doesn't it? So why can the principles break down?

The principles begin to unwind with the first two principles. Let's use the new worship service example again. When the idea of an additional service surfaces, most pastors will not, notice we

did not say cannot, set aside enough time to focus on the idea. After all, there is so much to do; so many meetings; so many people to care for. The pastor knows what needs to be done, but isn't willing to focus on it to the point that it becomes a reality.

But now take on the role of the pastor who knows that an additional service is essential to the future of the church. The more you think and pray about it, the more you work toward the completion of the project, even at the expense of other important duties. At first, there isn't a clue how, when, or where this service will take place. All you know is that it has to happen. The more you focus on the service, the more options you see. The service could be in the worship center or the fellowship hall, or in a strip mall down the street. It could be by remote or you could rotate speaking at one service early and the other service late. With so many options staring you in the face, you now get excited. This service really is a possibility. We can do this! You get so excited that you bypass the committees, gather the musicians, print the flyers and start the service.

Reflection: When was the last time you bypassed procedure and just did it?

Three Elements of Managing through Transition

Today's world requires leaders to manage three elements of change if they want to keep themselves sane and their church growing. Let's take a look at them.

1) Leaders Must Manage Themselves. Pastors or executive pastors have to be flexible on non-essentials and stubborn on the essentials. Let's use worship again as the example. If a person is looking, it is impossible to miss the rise of new styles of music and the use of visuals in our culture, especially among those who are younger. To be an effective manager of worship, pastors must embrace these even if they don't like them, and still remain true to their biblical convictions. They have to be comfortable with the idea that the style of worship has nothing whatsoever to do with any biblical position. Any style can convey the Gospel. Unless you can agree with this last statement, your future is in jeopardy.

This means pastors must learn how to put their own opinions and prejudices aside in order to respond to the emerging culture. The good manager wants the culture to grow into their style rather than their style to grow into the culture. The effective pastor is always adapting ahead of the culture while remaining steadfast in basic biblical principles.

Willow Creek Church is a good example of allowing the culture to grow into them. They focused on seeker worship long before the media picked up on the secularization of the U.S. They intuitively knew that a growing number of people wouldn't respond to traditional forms of worship. As the choice of style continued to ramp up, they instituted a new culture for a new generation of worship.

But it's been our experience that too many pastors design worship in the style they prefer rather than anticipating the culture and rapidly changing. I (BE) remember interviewing Adam Hamilton, pastor of the Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City. COR began with a

traditional form of worship. When I asked Adam about it, he said, *“If I had started this church on the other side of town, it most likely would have been a country western style of worship.”*

Those who will set the pace of the future will adapt ahead of the culture. They will read the signs of the time, let their intuition take over, and ride the wave into the future.

2) Leaders Must Manage Their Networks. One of the things we are quickly learning about the new world is that two minds are better than one, and four are better than two, and so on. The new world is so complicated. It’s rare to find the solo leader who functions totally in his or her vacuum. Most of the great leaders we’ve seen surround themselves with a host of gifted people who are on the same quest as the leader. So don’t be afraid of gifted people. Instead, surround yourself with them. The more gifted your networks, the more likely you and the church are to succeed in its mission.

These networks can be friends, co-workers, or enemies. In our case, we are mostly referring to paid and unpaid staff. They are your church’s most valuable resource. If you learn how to network them, you have significantly raised your ability to accomplish things. With the right relationships, you can generate success. But success won’t happen overnight. In fact, it may take years for you to have success. That’s why it is important for you to continuously build relationships. Once you have established credibility and trust within your networks, you can reach out to them for help.

To get started, make a list of all the various people, groups, websites, churches, etc. that form your web of networks. Don’t forget social media; it’s not just social; it’s taking networking to the next level.

Next, rate them by the extent of their influence. Some will be wider than others. Some will be more influential monetarily. Some will be limited in both reach and influence. Those will be the ones with whom you will spend less time.

For the positive and active networks, take advantage of their collective experience. You will be surprised how much people want to help. However, before you ask for help, make sure that you are first providing value to your networks. Spend time nurturing those relationships and being there for them when they need you.

You will be amazed at what can happen when you leverage your network. Having gathered a group of gifted people, leaders now manage them in ways to bring out the collective best.

3) Leaders Must Manage a Great Team. For our purpose, we will define a team as *“a small group of people with complimentary skills, who have affinity for one another, who are invited, not elected, by an individual to: achieve a common goal which supersedes individual interests; integrate their skills; and hold each other accountable to the goal.”*

The most important thing to understand about a great team is that it is an entrepreneurial partnership between the leader and the group. If our world were still predictable and slowly evolving, we would not need to have teams that functioned like entrepreneurial partnerships. We would need a task group, an agency, a staff of professionals, or maybe even a committee. But that's not the way our world is.

If we want to find our way in the cultural jungle of blur, flux, and speed, we need an entrepreneurial "A" team. These teams are made up of autonomous individuals who choose to form alliances and networks with others. It is the role of the leader to insure these teams promote the vision of the church.

Great teams work best in web-like organizations that function around a clearly defined and agreed upon DNA - Mission, Vision, Values, and Beliefs. They do poorly in highly rigid, top-down hierarchical organizations. Therefore, the leader has to be able to lead without ruling. The problem is that pastors often either keep hands-off or micro-manage. Either style is deadly into today's world.

Still, at the center of every great team, we find a great leader. A great leader makes a mediocre team great, and a mediocre leader makes a great team mediocre. Teams are only effective when there is the presence and influence of a strong leader. Teams do not replace the need for an entrepreneurial individual at the center of the organization.

In their book, *The Paradox Principles*, the Price Waterhouse team reported on their study of several major successful organizations. In this study, they found that every organization with an effective team-based ministry had an extremely strong leader at the center of the organization. Our experience is that in the absence of a strong leader, the negative aspects of the organization always take control.

To get started evaluating your teams, make a list of the most valuable players - both paid and unpaid leaders. Once you have this list, rate them from one to ten; with one being the absolute best person who needs no supervision and ten being a person who needs a lot of supervision. Start reconfiguring your staff so that most of them are 1s to 3s. You do not have the luxury to spend your time with the others, no matter how much you might like them.

Reflection: Which of the three areas of management give you the most trouble?

Never Look in the Rear-View Mirror

We can't lead or manage by looking in the rear-view mirror, because what once worked probably won't work today. We have to anticipate the future and make our call accordingly. This is taking a calculated risk. That's where management and intuition cross paths. Statistics are one thing. Interpreting statistics in light of a fluid culture is another. Knowledge, plus intuition, are the way to lead and manage.

Which way are you looking?

Chapter Four

The Effect of Radical Change on Organizations

Living at such a unique time of historical transition means we must change everything, including how we organize. In order to survive in today's environment, organizations have to be able to quickly adapt to the new environment. That means major change.

No one organizational style will work from church to church. The shape of the organization will vary depending on the surrounding environment and vision of the church. That means we need to develop new ways to look at local church organizations.

Organizations often find it hardest to reorganize in times of great change. They may have done well until now. So they are blinded to the changes around them, and they find it doubly hard to see old things in new ways.

Take, for example, Mainline Protestantism. For two hundred years, it and the Roman Catholic Church dominated the U.S. religious landscape. Now both are in disarray, primarily because they ignored the recent cultural transitions. Their success blinded them to the changes all around them. Let's dig deeper and single out two denominations that are in free fall due to their inability to change.

The United Methodist Church was a success because of its itinerant system of deploying pastors from church to church by horseback. The Lutheran Church, my (SM) tribe, was a success because it gave immigrants coming from Europe a spiritual home away from home. Today, both denominations are in rapid decline. In the United Methodist Church, we believe this is largely because it insists on moving its pastors from church to church even though the move is not necessary or prudent for the church. In the Lutheran Church, it is because the boats don't come from Europe anymore.

The United Methodist itinerant system worked because the people settled in one place while the circuit riders rode from place to place. The itinerant preacher was only a method of carrying out the vision. It wasn't the vision. Over time, however, it became ingrained as the vision even though it hasn't worked since WWII.

While the boats no longer come from Europe, the Lutheran Church is primed and ready if more immigrants should come. Because it was a church for immigrants, it finds it impossible to gain a passion for evangelism, even though one branch includes the word "Evangelical" in its name.

Both denominations were so successful that they were blinded to the radical changes going on around them, and thus they have been unable to change.

The Organic Metaphor

It is useful to use metaphors when trying to get at the impact radical change has on an organization. While one could use many metaphors to explore this effect, we have chosen to use an organic metaphor and look at organizations as living beings. Just as the human species has to adapt to a changing environment to survive, organizations have to adapt, morph, and even mutate in order to survive and, hopefully, thrive.

In previous days, organizations were looked upon as machines. All one had to do was fix it. Tweaking was mostly the name of the game. Order, stability, and predictability were the goals. Most churches are still structured like machines.

But now organizations have become organic and unpredictable, not moving forward in a straight line. They have unforeseen consequences about which no one can plan. That uncertainty leads to fear.

Fear has a way of taking the EQ out of the picture and stifling innovation. That is why the effective leader relishes radical change. If you're afraid of risk, you probably won't do well in the new world.

The organic metaphor is at the heart of what is wrong with established denominations. They function like machines where one model of governance is imposed on every church regardless of situation. That's one of the reasons independent churches are often better positioned for our current cultural environment.

For denominational churches, the temptation is to try to turn around their decline by tweaking the existing systems rather than thinking from a fresh perspective. Recall the biblical issue of putting new wine in old wine-skins.

I (SM) had an experience of this with the church where I am a pastor. As I have said, we have done a lot of experimenting. Ultimately, that meant we made organizational changes which required a new constitution. Our judicatory leaders were very helpful and encouraging. But the

biggest problem was that our denominational model constitution demands that the governing board be called a church council.

We wanted it to be a smaller group called a vision team - to lessen the notion of a controlling board and focus clearly on the task of vision alone. Well, our constitution now says that we have a church council. But then our by-laws state that in our church, though, we are going to call the council a vision team. So there.

The point is that this task took far too much time and effort. Why is it deemed necessary for my denomination to have all its boards called councils? What are the implications of this for far greater issues, then, which deal with how we understand what it means to be church in general and address the dramatic needs of our day?

The organic metaphor forces us to focus on adaptation, learning, and transformation as opposed to revitalization and restructuring. We are way beyond the ability to survive by simply tweaking or restructuring.

Reflection: Which metaphor best describes your church – machine or organic?

Learning Organizations Are Critical

Using the organic metaphor again, organizations have a human-like living, breathing quality that has to morph with the environment. As we move from one transition to another, the bottom line for an organization is this – organizations that thrive will be learning organizations.

Although there is a lot of disagreement on the definition of a learning organization, we will use Peter Senge's:

“Learning organizations [are] organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together.”

One of the things we know about living things is they are always growing and adapting. The same is true for organizations. Organizations must be constantly learning if they want to thrive in times of transition. In fact, learning is at the heart of an effective organization. In uncertain times, when all we know for sure is that nothing is for sure, we need organizations that are able to constantly renew and reinvent themselves. Without the habit of learning, the vision will never be executed.

It is for this reason that learning organizations honor their mistakes, learn from them, and do not try to hide them. They will make mistakes and learn from them before others even notice the issue. They will continually defy conventional wisdom and will see the need to learn; not as a weakness, but as the only way to exist.

Remember EQ trumps IQ? Learning organizations will focus on identifying how to read the signs of the times. As EQ develops, leaders step out and risk looking foolish by saying, “Just because it has worked for us in the past, I’m not sure it will work going forward.” In a way, the more we develop our EQ, the less we know and the more passionate we are about what we don’t know.

The equation that works best in changing times is research/development x intuition = desired results. People who follow their intuition don’t do it in a vacuum. Instead, they are very aware of what is going on around them. They take “what is” and ask “what will be” without any preconceived idea of their final decision.

So what are some general assumptions for learning organizations that rely on data and intuition in times of radical change like we described in Chapter One?

Adaptive Systems are Essential

Our society and all of its institutions are now in a *continuous* process of transformation. We must learn to understand, guide, influence, and manage these transformations. We must make the capacity for undertaking them integral to ourselves and to our institutions. As we learn more about the new world and how it might function, we shift the emphasis and structure of our organization. The systems we rely on to grow the church and Kingdom will have to change.

Systems are different from strategic plans. Systems are a way of doing things that will cause a person to learn from mistakes; do trial and error. For our purposes, most churches operate in a single site system; that is, one church in one location. That has been the way of doing church for centuries, but no more.

An excellent example of an adaptive learning system is the rise of the multi-site church. At first, it emerged as an act of desperation as single site churches grew to the point they were out of room. So they experimented with off-site worship. Why did they do this? Because their desire would not let them hang out a “No Vacancy” sign, and their intuition suggested the multi-site approach might work. Their desire was based on their calling, and their intuition was based on the data that came out of how the church functioned in New Testament times.

What they learned from following their passion and institution was that multi-site churches:

- Grow faster than church plants.
- Have more actual first-time believers.
- Are less expensive.
- Have more lay participation.
- Are more effective than adding on to to the first campus.
- Make it easier to reach a different culture or place.

Now multi-sites are becoming so prevalent they may become the norm in a few decades. None

of this would happen in a stable, non-learning organization where “we’ve never done it this way before” was the culture.

We must become able not only to transform our institutions in response to changing situations and requirements; we must also invent and develop institutions which are learning systems capable of bringing about their own continual transformation.

An example of such a system is what we did at every staff meeting when I (BE) was a pastor. We examined the progress of every new person who signed in, and then assigned someone to check up on them the following week. Our goal was two-fold: 1) To pursue their return and staying; and 2) To learn why they did or didn't. Then we would work on improving the things that we learned weren't working.

Another system was what I called the “Span of Influence.” Notice it isn't “span of control.” Innovation never happens when an organization is under control. However, there is a need for supervision, coaching, and oversight. The less centralized the decision-making, the more likely a church is to thrive. In a decentralized organization, action can be taken more quickly to solve problems at lower organizational levels, more people provide input into decisions, and employees are less likely to feel alienated. The fewer people reporting to the center, the more likely new ways of carrying out the overall vision will quickly emerge.

I was consulting with a church several years ago where every staff person, all twenty-four of them, were reporting to the lead pastor. The church was growing, but not nearly as fast as the lead pastor wanted. After spending a week with them, I was able to convince them that a span of influence of four was better than what they were doing. We reduced the span of influence to where no one, including the pastor, had more than four people reporting to them. The church exploded with growth over the next two decades. When the lead pastor, or anyone on the staff, has more people than this reporting to them, that person is likely to become a bottleneck for the growth of the church.

When you keep the span of influence to four, especially for the lead pastor, he or she now has the time to envision and strategize about the future. In addition, staff are now required to grow their leadership skills as they learn to supervise as well.

The more a church uses this system...

The less likely any one person is to become a bottleneck.

The more likely innovation is to occur.

The more likely staff will grow their leadership skills in their area of ministry.

Reflection: How adept is your church at learning from what is going on around it and make middle of the road changes in rapid fashion?

Decentralization is Fundamental

Rapid change requires decentralized organizations. The world of the top-down, command and control center type of leadership is quickly going away. In its place is a decentralized, self-organizing, self-starting, team-based, collaborative structure. The less supervision needed, without abdicating authority, the better. When the vision is embedded throughout the organization, there is little need for top-down control. In place of control, staff need living role models of effectiveness.

In such an organization, diversity is valued over homogeneity; flexible networks are valued over silo type departments; mission statements replace job descriptions; and clear expectations replace heavy-handed rules and surveillance.

Unlike the machine-oriented organization with boxes and lines, organic organizations are seen as a collection of complementary and interrelated subsystems bound together by a vision. Just as the brain delegates cognitive matters to different parts of itself, so the organic organization diffuses decision-making throughout the staff. It can do this only because the vision is sufficiently embedded in every staff person.

Previously, the business world spoke of “formalization.” Formalization refers to the degree to which jobs within the organization are standardized. A highly formalized job gives the person a minimum amount of discretion over what is to be done, when it is to be done, and how he or she should do it. Employees can be expected to handle the same input in exactly the same way.

In today’s world, we are finding “low formalization” to be more effective. In low formalization, job behaviors are relatively non-programmed and employees have a great deal of freedom to exercise discretion in their work.

Now compare this to job descriptions in churches. Most of them confine the staff to certain tasks or areas of ministry. When people are hired to fulfill a job description in a world that is radically changing, it is not uncommon to hear, “That’s not in my job description.” In the world we are moving into, job descriptions will curtail both the growth of a church and staff. It’s better to hire based on joining a journey with an undermined destination. If you are going to have job descriptions, then always put in the clause “*and anything else the goals require.*”

When I (BE) hired someone, I asked the person to share with me his or her spiritual journey, and then I showed that person our mission statement. If the person resonated with it, I told them to go home and write their job description in a way that would fulfill the vision. When they returned, if what they came up with seemed appropriate to the vision, they were hired with one caveat – everything in the job description may change as the church changed.

When you hire this way, two important things take place: 1) The new staff person has bought into and understands the vision; and 2) The new staff person has had major input into how he or she will fulfill their part of the vision.

Embrace Disequilibrium

In times of epic change, organizations must be willing to abandon familiar organizational behaviors and principles, learning to embrace disequilibrium. That's right, embrace disequilibrium. Stability and the status quo are disastrous for organizations. Perhaps, in a few decades, the pace of transitions will slow or even stop, and we will know what kind of a world this major transition will become. But that is not so for the indefinite future.

Organizations change in direct proportion to their discontentment with the status quo. For that reason, in changing times, it is essential to keep an organization stirred up with a measure of discontent regarding the way things are. Ministry-as-usual is the main enemy in times of great change. Ministry-as-usual is not a safe harbor from the storms of disruption; it is a dead end. In other words, the cost of the status quo is greater than the risk of major change.

About seven years ago, I (SM) ran out of vision for our church. That had never been a problem before. It was most distressing. We are a church of neverending discontent. We always want to connect one more person to Jesus. But I didn't have the sense of what was next to help make that happen.

So I decided to check out what Bill Easum was up to. I discovered that he had a partner, Bill Tenny-Brittian, who had recently moved to within only thirty miles from me. That seemed like a rather clear word from God.

There was some fear in this, however. What would Bill TB think of me? What would he think of our church? All that needs to be said is that his recommendations took 200 pages.

Again, this was a bumpy journey. Some people left. I had a health problem. I told a couple staff people they no longer had a job. We did a renovation that ended up costing far more than the estimates. I dramatically changed how I understood myself as a pastor. We changed the organization of the church in revolutionary ways.

We now may just be the most hospitable church in town; not because I say so, but because our first time guests say so. Our church is far more aligned with God's desires today than it was seven years ago. I celebrate that. At that moment, I had to humbly accept that I needed some outside assistance for the current iteration of the vision to be executed.

Tweaking is Senseless

Never tweak a strategy or program just to keep the status quo afloat. Doing so dulls the organization to the changes going on around it and makes it content with or resigned to the way things are. Nothing could be worse in times of major change. When an organization is content, it is less likely to realize the amount of change taking place around it. It is reluctant to being driven to experimentation, thus making adaptation impossible. So being out of equilibrium is the prelude to both understanding and adapting to the changing environment.

A good example of how disequilibrium helps foster change is seen in the way pilots are trained. One of the exercises student pilots have to do is go "under the hood" and allow the instructor to

try to disorientate them by turning the plane up-down-and-around, and then handing the stick to the student who quickly has to change everything to get the plane back on level. The student has to figure out where the horizon is, reorient the plane, and return to being on course.

However, many pastors, churches, and denominations continue to struggle to keep the status quo. Instead of throwing everything out and starting over, they are trying to build on a faulty way of organizing and leading that no longer works. Like the student pilot who freezes instead of making the necessary changes, the church crashes and burns.

Case in point. Not long ago, we worked with a denomination that experienced a split over a social issue. Enough of their tribe left the denomination that they decided to plant a number of new churches. But instead of starting from scratch, they kept the same leadership, structure, and way of doing business (even though they said they didn't). They tried to tweak them. The problem was their church plants weren't plants, but they tried to treat them as such - an example of trying to tweak the status quo just a bit and hoping for a different outcome. Care to guess what happened?

Let's not kid ourselves - change for the sake of change is the prelude to failure. It's one thing to make a major change based on solid intuition; it's another to fall victim to inconsistency. If you are going to instigate disequilibrium, you must remain constant in your practices, expectations, and priorities. Like the pilot, you must figure out how to return to the desired course.

Staff is an Investment Not a Cost

In the Modern Age, employees were considered a cost. Organizations considered the cost ratio between how many workers and profit. Unfortunately, too many church leaders still consider staff to be a necessary cost of doing ministry; the fewer the better.

Today, the effective organizations realize that their employees are their greatest assets. They invest in their growth by providing lifetime learning experiences. While the Modern Age invested in machines, now the world has begun investing more time, energy, and money in people. Churches ought to do the same. Wise churches set aside money for each staff person to be able to attend conferences, hire a coach, or whatever will grow their potential.

So instead of thinking cost ratio, the effective church considers the relational ratio when evaluating how much they are spending on staff. Relational ratio suggests that the purpose of staff isn't to generate programs, but to grow people. The more effective a church staff is, both paid and unpaid, the more relationships are established, and the more likely people are to be retained long enough to be apprenticed into a disciple.

Collective Collaboration Results in Innovation

The larger the group of people involved in a project, the more freedom they have to act on their own, and the greater the possibility of innovation happening. Some call this the "hive mind."

The concept comes from the way bees function when they move. Bees swarm in unison as if guided by some overriding passion. Effective teamwork is like a swarm of bees moving together, seemingly one mind and body.

Innovation occurs when: 1) The primary controlling factor is the vision and not a board; 2) Self-organizing, self-governing, and self-dissolving teams are free to experiment; 3) The vision is decentralized and adaptation is fostered; and 4) Effective teamwork is in place.

Let us digress for a moment and say that line-item budgets are a great way to kill initiative and innovation. If you look at most churches, you will find a budget that spells out how to spend the money item by item. If and when one of the line items is overspent, leaders get unhappy. This method worked in a predictable world. But we no longer live in such a world. A church doesn't know from one month to another what it will need to do, much less year by year.

The best method is to decide what is needed at the moment to make the vision happen, and then set out to find the funds. Even if a church does an annual budget drive, it shouldn't allocate the money to line items. Money should be kept in one big pool with one exception – a mortgage payment if the church has one. Even money for staff should not be considered a fixed item. Salary should be up for grabs every year depending on a person's effectiveness. That way, as the money is needed, it can be used without jumping through hoops.

The Smaller the Organization the Quicker the Adaptation

The larger an organization, the harder it is to turn it around or to make major decisions. The smaller the organization, the easier it is to turn around or make a major decision. So it makes sense to keep the organization small in changing times.

The best example of an effective organization is a mom and pop store. Mom and pop can make rapid major decisions while eating dinner or lying in bed. But take an organization like the church that has to go through several committees and then a board in order to make a major decision. Or a denomination that meets only once every four years to make a major decision. In such cases, decision-making takes forever. Notice the missing word – *rapid*. Large organizations simply can't make rapid decisions unless the board gives the CEO the power to make such decisions. You seldom see that freedom to act in a congregation. That's why in times of great change, church boards should be kept under seven people. Three people would be better, with none of them members of the church, except the lead pastor. That's also why effective churches don't need any standing committees. All that is needed is a board that sets policy, holds the pastor accountable, and gets out of the way.

There is a great example of this with a church that has a board of three people, all pastors of other churches. One quick conference call is all that is necessary to make a decision, no matter how large. Because the other pastors have their own congregations to lead, they aren't likely going to meddle in day-to-day issues. In fifteen years, the church grew from ten people to over 10,000 in worship. At last count, it has over ten locations.

Reflection: What is the size of your board? Can it make a million dollar decision in one meeting?

Moving toward the Edge of Chaos

In times of major change, organizations need to move toward the edge of chaos. They need to feed off of innovation and experimentation. They can't be afraid of making a mistake. They must be willing to go down paths not yet traveled and explore ideas and solutions that have never been tried. When that happens, the bulk of people experience confusion and a feeling of chaos. If your church isn't feeling such, you're still trying to live out the status quo. You're stuck in an age that no longer exists.

A biblical example of this is when the Israelites left Egypt for Canaan. You would think anything would be better than making bricks out of mud. But as soon as the celebration of freedom wore off, confusion and chaos reared their ugly heads. *"Were there no graves in Egypt that you brought us out into the wilderness to die?"*

The "finding life at the edge of chaos" concept is difficult for established churches with a long-standing tradition in the way things are done. For some leaders, it is almost heresy to talk about changing. In a relatively slow moving world like the one we've transitioned from, the church could pride itself on being a bulwark of stability, but not so any more. Remember the chart? The rate of change has escalated. Again, let that sink in. Has your church changed as much in the past decade or two as our culture has?

Emerging from a Core Vision

Examine the effective churches in the world and you will see that most of them emerged out of a single vision of a single person who had the self-confidence to empower others to execute that vision. Effective organizations do not just happen. They emerge out of the cauldron of a burning, passionate vision.

So the question you must ask is "How on fire am I?" The quote from John Wesley is still at the heart of it all. When people asked him why so many came to hear him preach, he said, *"I set myself on fire and people come watch me burn."* That's the kind of passion from which great organizations and movements emerge.

New Shapes and Forms Are Commonplace

When living organisms adapt to the environment, they self-organize allowing new forms and shapes to emerge out of the chaos. Here are several examples of how organizations and innovations morph in times of great change.

A great example of this adaptation was the Protestant Reformation. No one had any idea of where the Church was going or if there even would be a Church because of all the splintering. But new denominations emerged to form a new type of Church. The same thing is happening today.

Another contemporary example was the way Dee Hock organized VISA. He saw the coming revolution in technology and the Internet. So he started a virtual organization with no standing office or location - just accounts in banks.

The primary things by which we will soon live our lives haven't even been dreamed of yet. Some leaders will execute their dreams and make them reality. All of us will be changed by it.

Embedding the Vision is the Ultimate Goal

As we saw in the chart of Chapter One, throughout most of history change has been a series of evolutionary and incremental changes interrupted by a radical discontinuity between one age and another. We clearly seem to be living in one of those periods of radical discontinuity. In such times, evolutionary and incremental changes are senseless.

Today, if an organization is to succeed, an adaptive spirit has to be embedded in the system itself. The organization must become so radically disconnected with the past that it's open to all possibilities. Or to put it in spiritual terms, it is open to the unpredictable moving of the Holy Spirit. With no shackles to the past, it is free to follow the Spirit wherever it leads. Such freedom requires an awesome vision of the future and confidence in God's leadership. Surely we learned that from the Gospels and the book of Revelation. All things are moving forward to the climax – the rule of God over everything and everyone.

In the meantime, we find ourselves left with a world in transition. Like a monk looking at his first hardbound book, or today's 90 year old using a computer for the first time, we are staring at a new, unfamiliar world. This new world requires different skills, but more importantly, it requires an inquiring mind that is open to anything that revolves around the God-given vision left for us by Jesus – "*Go make disciples.*"

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Turning vision into reality will be quite a feat in a time like ours. We can't go about ministry as if it is 1950, or 1975, or even 2000. Those dates are long past. Our cultural changes are speeding

through history at a rate which is only escalating, the likes of which humankind has never experienced in the past.

For our churches to thrive, they must be willing to change how they think and do things, even if they are thriving at the moment. Pastors will have to learn new skills and see what isn't yet seen, trying new ways for communicating the Good News even if they don't like it. New expectations will have to be clearly communicated and staff held accountable to those expectations. Organizations will have to learn how to execute on the fly without being burdened by rules and regulations. Instead of thinking our way into the future, we will have to act our way into new forms of thinking.

Most churches will have trouble with all this change. They will try to stabilize their systems, tweak their structure, and most of all, continue to believe that things will get back to normal in time.

We hope you are not making this mistake. Our hope is that you are now able to see old things in new ways and are willing to take a major leap of faith into the new transition. The more adventurous you are by nature, the more you will enjoy the ride. We feel for those who like things the way they are. We applaud those who are willing to stick their necks out and try new, crazy things for the Gospel.

And as you go forward, taking the things that might help point the way, remember the promise Jesus made to us, "*I will be with you.*" What more do we need?

For further reading:

Easum, *Leadership on the OtherSide*, Abingdon - the spiritual midwife.

Easum, *Dancing with Dinosaurs*, Abingdon.

Easum and Tenny-Brittian, *Doing Ministry in Hard Times*, Abingdon Press -
National Park and Jungle.

Easum and Tenny-Brittian, *Effective Staffing for Vital Churches*, Baker.

Easum, *Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers*, Abingdon.