# III. Managing Change

by

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American society has baeen depersonalized to include only brief encounters with other (Hestenes, 1987): the clerk at McDonald's the collector in the toll booth and the reader of the gas/electric meter. Even cash can be obtained from one's bank account by using a plastic card rather than interacting with a teller! People are, therefore, often not sufficiently prepared by societal contacts to endure the kind of relational exchange necessary to produce planned change.

No one likes change, and those who do would rather dictate it than work through a process that results in it. In our "microwave culture" we expect change to be immediate. If soup and a sandwich is desired it can be a reality within 3 to 5 minutes and devoured in 5 to 8 minutes. Having satisfied the hunger pains, the consumer is off to slay other dragons instantaneously

Any tampering with the status quo brings with it uncertainty and doubts about its replacement, no matter how logical and needed the change might be. Most people fear the unknown end-results of change. The process of planned change should not be employed for every decision. To change from using small paper clips to larger ones is not radical enough to warrant experiencing the process of planned change. But it should be entered into when decisions made will impact a large number of people and/or long-term decisions requiring the support and commitment of many. In the church, such decisions that would benefit from experiencing an approach to planned change could be: long-range planning, designing organizational modifications, selecting curriculum, establishing outreach ministries, providing support groups and others, *ad infinitum.*

Bennis and Nanus (1987, 21) state, "Managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing." Wise leaders will approach the process of planned change (the right thing) as one that involves a variety of people who will manage the tasks (do things right) necessary for implementing change.

Havelock (1973, 11) outlines a process of successful planned change, which contains six stages. His stages include:

I. Building a Relationship

II. Diagnosing the Problem

III. Acquiring Relevant Resources

IV. Choosing the Solution

V. Gaining Acceptance

VI. Stablizing the Innovation and Generating Self-Renewal

These stages and church-relateed applications of them are outlined below.

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## Building a Relationship

There is an adage that purports, "If you intend to change something in a new setting, do so within six months while the 'honeymoon' phase of the relationship exists." Whoever imparted that questionable morsel of wisdom undoubtedly never enjoyed a long tenure in any position.

Before any significant change can be accomplished, the leader or initiator of change must have built trusting and reliable relationships with those in the church. This cannot be accomplished adequately in six months! Change of any magnitude is usually associated with conflict and a wise leader, doing the right things, will undertake these issues carefully. Leaders/pastors should remember that people don't work for them. They do not need to ask, "How High?" when one says "Jump!" They (in fact, all of us) work for the Lord Christ to bring him honor and glory. If that fact pervaded the thinking in the church, conflict in the midst of change would be significantly reduced.

Planned change is a group process undertaken to accomplish some specific task that is too complex to be done alone. To do it effectively requires a climate of trust and acceptance to be evident. Attempting planned change without having spent time with people in developing a meaningful relationship is akin to walking the plank. Safety is assured only as long as the plank exists! The quality of the relationship lengthens the plank.

## Diagnosing the Problem

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it" is the battle cry for those who want to avoid change. If manufacturing firms believed that motto, entire research and development departments would be dismantled and become defunct. What would happen to their product lines? Ultimately they would be replaced by new companies making innovations to "their" outdated products. Manufactureres must constantly be evaluating their products and redesigning them for efficiency, durability and effectiveness. To keep pace with the needs of society, the church must replicate these ideas and constantly be evaluating its programs.

Through honest evaluation, leaders become aware of those programs that need attention for the purpose of refining the ministry focus. Evaluation is crucial for identifying problems that exist.

A critical component in the evaluation process is defining or revising the organizational Mission Statement. Every organization needs to know and articulate its mission. This articulated Mission Statement becomes the propellant for every ministry or program that emerges from the organization. The mission statement answers the question "Who are we?" and delineates the reason for existence. Once the mission is stated, no program should be undertaken unless it reflects that Statement. Each program designed tc fulfill the Mission Statement should have a succinct purpose or "Why do this particular thing?" Answering the question "By when and by whom will it be done?" results in making the goals measurable and attainable.

When all of these questions are addressed by an interacting group of people who desire that the mission of the organization be achieved, identification of

problem areas becomes readily apparent. The process of planned change has been initiated by this evaluation, discussion of potential problems and possible needs that exist. The means through which these can be remedied, redesigned or discarded, provides an indication of the needed resources to accomplish the change or plan in the organization.

Acquiring Relevant Resources

Knowing what is needed and when is the wisdom in managerial science. Accumulating the right combinations of people, curriculum and other printed materials which results in meeting the stated purpose of a program enhances the likelihood of achieving the mission of the total organization. Each facet of the organization must meet its purpose if the organization is to survive and thrive. But to become an effective organization, leaders must be willing to remove or redesign whatever it is that doesn't function properly.

Sometimes an objective, outside consultant should be engaged to assist in conducting the evaluation. This person has no passion or vested interest in the organization's specific program but becomes the facilitator for the group process of planned change. In lieu of a consultant, materials are available to be used by a group and can also be effective when used by sensitive and responsive leaders. (Examples are: Mealey's, *Effective Team Building for Managers*: Engstrom's, *Ministry Planning and Goal Setting*; and Bartel's *Congregational Goals Discovery Plan*. These are somewhat tedious but can be used effectively to accomplish the planning objective.)

Choosing the Solution

In this stage, Havelock (1973) instructs leaders to experience four steps:

A. Derive implications from research
B. Generate a range of solution ideas
C. Test solutions for feasibility
D. Adapt the solutions to the local setting

The church needs to begin to develop a greater appreciation for what is gleaned through research. For example, considerable information is known through research in the area of designing new facilities or renovating old ones. There is much that can be learned from research about how the environment of rooms impacts learning. Much is known about effective teaching methods and using instructional methods to the fullest, and yet the church is frequently the last place where these are employed.

Understanding gained through research can elucidate a variety of solutions to problems if leaders in the church will take the time to search out these resources. Once these resources are gathered together, brainstorming could be employed to generate alternative solutions. Although field-testing every solution is not always practical, to select one solution over another without testing either of them in real-life situations is only asking for problems.

After solutions are field-tested, adaptations of them sometimes need to oc-

cur to assure a reasonable "fit" within the organization. In advance of implementation, developing a series of criteria by which to evaluate the compatibility or success of the plan will assit in the leader's remaining objective about the solution. The criteria would differ based upon the type of change instituted, but these can then be utilized in the final stage of planned change, evaluating the innovation.

## Gaining Acceptance

As Bennis and Nanus (1987) say, if "leaders do the right things" then leaders should explore the options available and be able to justify and document why they selected a particular option. Perhaps in making a presentation to the body who will ultimately accept the change, leaders might select two options and allow the adopting group to select the best course of action. If a particular direction must be "sold" to the group and tremendous persuasion is required for them to accept the plan, then the leader must question whether this is a good plan (Roberts, 1985)! The plan must be accepted or "owned" by the larger group affected by the proposed solution. Previously, the proposed plan was just that — a proposed plan. But acceptance of an idea requires the participation of a larger group, and therefore how the proposed solution is presented to the adopting group is a critical essential stage of planned change. The preparation for such discussions should receive as much, if not more, attention as any of the previous stages.

A period of time in which to "try out" the planned change should be agreed upon. The leader of planned change should understand that the more people who are involved in the process at this juncture, the more likely will be the successful implementation of the plan. Involvement breeds commitment and no plan can succeed without people who believe in it.

## Stablizing the Innovation and Generating Self-Renewal

After acceptance of the planned change has been achieved, implementation of the proposed plan has become a reality and an agreed upon period of time has passed since the inception, the time has come for evaluation of the plan as experienced by the organization. Determining the criteria for evaluation (see Choosing the Solution for suggestions) should be agreed upon at some point in the planning process, but at this juncture in planned change the results need to be measurable.

## A Case Study

The following is an actual scenario of planned change within a church setting. As the story progresses, review the stages of planned change and watch for signs of evidence for each stage.

After two years as Director of Christian Education (DCE) in a large church (3200 member), the DCE realized that to expand the course offerings in the adult division of the Sunday school would require some major changes. There was a dearth of leadership in adult classes because there were only seven classes

with a combined attendance of 700. The adult division of the Sunday school contained three large classes (mini-churches of approximately 200 each). The teachers of these classes never changed, except for an occasional substitute, and the course content was selected by the teacher.

The church did not have a Mission Statement but the Christian Education Department had established its purpose: "Be in partnership with the home and family for the purpose of teaching and learning. Across the age level divisions, our biblical intruction is to know God, His attibutes and character."

To enable the fulfillment of its purpose, the Christain Education Committee determined that it needed to identify and train new teachers, select a broader conspectus of courses, design a three-year cycle for rotation of classes and teachers and allocate classroom space based upon the number of people registered for each class.

A needs assessment was distributed among the adult population to determine what courses would attract people to attend Sunday school if they were not already in the habit of coming, as well as courses that regular attenders desired to study. Based upon that information, the Christian Education Committee was able to group the studies into four basic areas: biblical, doctrinal, Christian living and special classes.

To accomplish its goals of creating more adult teachers and to provide class offerings that covered a comprehensive spectrum with qualified teachers, the adult curriculum was expanded from seven classes to twelve. This enabled the curriculum to be cycled every three years. The classes offered were a variety of lengths; some were taught for one, two or three quarters. No class lasted the entire year, thus enabling teachers to be periodically under the instruction of another person.

Selecting this solution to an identified problem in the Christian Education program did not happen quickly. The plans for instituting such a radical restructuring took one year to complete. The public relations aspect of this change cannot be minimized. Current teachers needed to accept this as the direction to move, Sunday school participants had to see the multiple educational options open to them in this format and potential teachers had to be trained in effective teaching methods. None of these items happened easily or without much time spent in listening and refining the plan.

The new structure was initiated in September and was to complete two full years in operation before a review of its success was to be conducted. The number of courses offered moved from twelve to twenty-one. Part of the acceptance of the structure came as a result of offering courses that people requested, all the while providing others that the Christian Education Committee felt were needed. The committee determined the courses to be taught, the duration of the class and the teacher who taught.

After two years in this format the evaluation proved that the Committee had accomplished its objective of expanding the curriculum taught by qualified instructors but at a loss of community or body among some participants. The changes initiated after this two-year trial period involved establishing some

classes as permanent groupings and others as rotating electives. People could choose whether to remain with a consistent group and have the content change periodically, or flow in and out of classes of their choice.

## Conclusions

Churches need to explore areas of ministry that could benefit from the experience of planned change. Planned change takes time — usually more time than people are willing to commmit to a project. But, as has been said, "Anything worth doing is worth doing well." When it is the Lord Jesus Christ who is served and honored by the work of the church, it seems incumbent upon the leaders to do things decently and in order, thoroughly and very well. Moving through the stages of planned change in an organization will produce change that is acceptable, even welcome, to people.

## Summary of CALM

CALM I workshops are offered at Ashland Theological Seminary as RETREATS in continuing education. (RETREATS stands for Revitalizing Evangelistic Thrust Through Education at Ashland Theological Seminary.) At least once a year, two days will be set aside for leaders from any denomination to experience this process. CALM II is also a reality. This involves on-site consultation with the governing board of the local church. An inventory is administered that examines the team building issues within the group. The CALM team believes that as Jesus trained the disciples to be a team of co-workers, church boards and committees should be instructed likewise.

### Church Administration for Leadership and Management

CALM was designed to assist the building up of the church and the people who function together in the local church. As we serve God together, may we do so faithfully, full of the knowledge that he is glorified in our efforts together.

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