

THE LEADING EDGE

A newsletter by Earl Creps,
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Shaping servant leaders to change the world in the power of the Spirit
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ARCHIVES & IDEAS

Past issues of the Leading Edge are archived at:
http://agts.edu/dmin/leading_edge/index.html
Email your ideas for future issues to: dfegler@agseminary.edu

D.MIN. E-GROUP: OFF AND RUNNING

Our D.Min. e-group has 106 members! The first month of conversation focused on some "best practices" and a lot of discussion on small group ministry. I'm now asking for contributions on the best leadership reading you've done in the last few months.

QUOTABLE: ALL CREATIVITY IS LOCAL

"The centers of energy and creativity in this decade lie at the local, not the national, level... The really innovative ideas for reshaping the church will come from people working in the trenches, addressing the needs of people in their churches and communities, not from denominational officials."

--Donald Miller, Reinventing American Protestantism

LEADERLIFE: THE POWER OF MANAGING ASSUMPTIONS

Excellent leaders manage the assumptions of their organizations. An assumption is an often unspoken foundation on which everything else rests. For example, most church leaders assume that more Sunday Morning attendance is the very definition of success. However, study after study finds that most numerical growth is transfer-based. We are re-churching the de-churched rather than

reaching the un-churched.

Specifically, managing assumptions means the following:

1. Awareness: every organization has them. Some leadership theorists refer to assumptions as “mental models.” Excellent leaders know that their flowchart does not carry the same inspiration as the New Testament. It is a human creation with all the frailties of its authors. The superstructure of the ministry sits on top of ideas (e.g., blended worship will appeal to everyone) that may or may not be accurate or even biblical. Often these unseen concepts reveal themselves in the things we celebrate (e.g., “there’s something for everyone at our church!”), and the things over which we feel disappointment (e.g., “why don’t the young people come out on Sunday night?”) Question the things you take for granted and your mental model will appear in a hurry. The tension here is obvious: leading means being passionately committed to what you are doing, yet constantly open to the idea that it may be completely wrong. The ability live inside this tension is a trait that separates average leaders from excellent leaders.

2. Articulation: it’s easy to let things ride, assuming that the status quo is just how things are meant to be. Excellent leaders identify assumptions, drawing out the organizations mental model, putting it into words that can be communicated to the group. We can change only what we can name. My last church was a combination of renewal Pentecost and purpose-drivenness, a baseball diamond on fire. By understanding ourselves as a congregation trying to integrate power and process we developed a vocabulary for talking about who we were and what we were attempting. Guiding the process of developing this “organizational grammar” is one of things that makes you the leader. If you name it, you own it.

3. Assessment: assumptions have to be tested against Scripture, against facts, and against other values held by the organization. I once pastored a church which I assumed enjoyed a high level of fellowship among the members, only to have several of those members tell me the truth: I was dead wrong, no one actually felt connected to anyone else. We started a cell ministry, which not only met the fellowship need, but freed me up to concentrate on prayer and study. Things got better for everyone because we faced the truth. When traveling, I frequently ask pastors this question: “what percentage of your Sunday morning is present by conversion?” I have gotten blank looks, and sputtering defensiveness, but very few solid answers. Testing assumptions is frequently painful, but always necessary.

My Major Recommendation: involve your leadership team in a mental mapping exercise by answering this question: “what is our theory of how this organization will succeed?” Hang some white paper on the wall and draw out the results. Conclude by having the group compose an assumptions list. Compare those assumptions against Scripture, the reality of your situation, and your more visible values.

Next month: breaking through organizational barriers with counterintuitive thinking.

Blessings!

Earl

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DATA DUMP: EMAIL NEWSLETTER

SmartLeadership free e-mail newsletter

<http://www.SmartLeadership.com>

Smart Leadership's bi-monthly newsletter is a good resource for keeping up with latest leadership literature from the corporate side. Not only good training material, but also a window on what the corporate types in your church are being forced to read for their jobs!

LINKS TO THE FUTURE: WEB RESOURCES

Online discussion for transitioning church leaders

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TransitioningChurches/>

This is an online learning community for congregational leaders interested in dialogue on issues of congregational transition such as staff, committees to teams to communities, philosophies of ministry, use of facilities, multi-campus ministry possibilities, staff evaluations, rethinking our definitions of effectiveness and success, etc

Resources for developing web evangelism

<http://www.gospelcom.net/kregel/e-ministry/>

Andrew Careaga's site on ministry in cyberspace. His newsletter comes highly recommended for those developing internet and other initiatives to younger audiences. His vision is: "Connecting with the Net Generation." Welcome to Millennial land.

Newly updated! Emerging Culture/Emerging Church Resource List

http://agts.edu/faculty/faculty_publications/bibliographies/creps_bibliography/index.html

The Resource List is a free pdf download containing approximately 1150 resources (with an annotated web section) on emerging culture/church issues. One of many resources available free on my page.

WE RECOMMEND: SINGLE ADULT MINISTRIES LEADERSHIP RESOURCE
PACK

Single Adult Ministries Leadership Resource Pack

This CD is packed with statistics, PowerPoint presentation, leadership resources, presentations, and hands-on exercises. For only \$20 it's a bargain and a half. Produced by my old friend Dennis Franck, Single Adult Ministries Director of the Assemblies of God, it's a huge help both for start-up SAM's and for experienced leaders. Order from the SAM office at 417-862-2781 x4125, or by email at: singles@ag.org. Check out Dennis' other resources at <http://singles.ag.org> .

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Please feel free to forward to a friend.

THE LEADING EDGE—cutting a path from today to tomorrow