

New Year Resolution?

This Winter 2008 newsletter looks at the quote on the right and ways in which Christian Training is (or could be) included in the fulfilling of its sentiment. This January is a great opportunity to reflect on our work and to see whether it is the best we can really do and to make some commitments to how we can improve our "performance" and the "performance" of others

**"Do your best.
Work from your
heart for your
real Master,
for God..."**
Colossians 3:22

Do your best!

The bible quote is taken from "The Message", the rest of the passage from the NIV is: **Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.**

We are all slaves of sorts – to our congregation, our boss, our organisation, ourselves, time – and all we are expected to do is work with all our hearts in the things we do. This doesn't just mean getting our heads down and getting on with things but also looking at ways in which we can improve our work and our effectiveness.

Someone said to me the other week that they were involved in an "apologetic" ministry because they were frequently saying "sorry" for things they hadn't been able to do. This is ok if we are doing something about improving our effectiveness but it is a lame excuse for not being at our best. I read in a book last year a great little quote – "Great artists have their ups and downs. Only the mediocre are always at their best!" Doing our best doesn't accept mediocrity as a norm but looks at ways of continuously improving.

One last question – when was the last time you looked at improving your performance?

Being the Best

Christian Training is involved in a programme of training to meet the needs of "mission reps" to become the best they can be. Here is an extract from the literature that is being used to promote the programme.

'Being the Best' is a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme for all those who represent mission in the churches of England. The programme in four venues around the country will be linked to the 'reps meetings' that have been organised over the years to provide sharing, encouragement, prayer support and the opportunity to plan joint activities together. This important aspect of the 'reps' getting together will continue and the CPD programme will be incorporated into the day to avoid additional travelling and the need to allocate an extra day.

The stereotype of the missionary in the pith helmet, civilising the heathen of Africa, may have long since disappeared from the average, evangelical church in the UK. There is no doubt that audio and DVD presentation by mission agencies have improved tremendously in recent years and many are now of a high standard.

However, the individuals sent round to do 'deputation' have too often been a disaster. The experience of trying to avoid or having to survive a sad, outdated, unimaginative mission presentation is still dreaded by many Christians. 'Boring' is the word that immediately springs to mind for so many. Maybe you know of church leaders who are angry about the standard of presentations to which their congregations have been subjected. We need presenters who are trained to communicate their passion for mission in a dynamic way to a twenty first century audience.

A considerable improvement is needed in two areas:

- Firstly, we need to improve the quality of mission presentations.
- Secondly, and probably more importantly, we need to restore confidence by Christians and church leaders in mission presentations.

If we don't redeem the reputation of mission presentations, church members will never hear of all that God is doing in his world and the many opportunities for them to be involved.

We want the 'Being the Best' programme to be recognised by and to serve UK churches. Hopefully, there will be a growing confidence in churches to invite those who have participated in the course.

The programme starts in February and places are still available.

**"Being the Best" is a new initiative
from Global Connections and more
information can be found on their
website at:
www.globalconnections.co.uk**



How to improve your organisation

There are many different tools, approaches and systems that can help improve performance. Here are just four ideas that may help. It would be very unwise to do all these things at once – you may wish to focus on just one idea for the next few months and then move on to another depending on which is most appropriate to you and your organisation. You (and your colleagues) are best placed to understand your organisation's current situation: needs, current issues, available resources, external context, and the time pressures faced. Below is outlined the main benefits of the four approaches and the situations in which they can be particularly helpful. This should help you decide which, if any, to do first.

1. Think Ahead

Every organisation needs to spend a little time thinking about its purpose, its recent successes and failures and its plans for the future. Without a sense of direction, any organisation can lose its way. Organisations that occasionally look up and plan ahead are much more likely to achieve their goals.

2. Assure Quality

Quality organisations are self-critical and honest, learning-focused and open to change, and driven by continual improvement. Quality organisations want to offer the best service they can, and to run themselves in a professional and competent way.

3. Track Progress

Tracking progress is about generating useful, reliable evidence about an organisation's achievements and failures. This evidence helps you spot changes that need to be made, motivates the team, and convinces others of the value of your organisation. The two main techniques involved in tracking progress - called monitoring and evaluation. You can track your activities, the ministries that result from your activities (or outputs), or the changes and benefits for your beneficiaries that result from your outputs (or outcomes).

4. Share Learning

A valuable technique for improving performance is learning from others by sharing and comparing processes, successes and failures. Sometimes called benchmarking, this technique simply involves finding one or more appropriate organisations and deciding on a focus for your comparison. This can be as simple or as complex as you wish and you can share information of any type.



How to improve you

Here are nine questions you might like to ask yourself as you look to improve yourself.

1. Has the past year been good/bad/satisfactory and why?
2. What would you consider to be your most important achievements during the year?
3. What do you like and dislike about your work?
4. What elements of your work do you find most difficult?
5. What elements of your job interest you the most and least?
6. What do you consider to be your most important aims and tasks in the next year?
7. What action could be taken to improve your performance in your work, by you and others?
8. What kind of work would you like to be doing in one/two/five years time?
9. What sort of training/experiences would benefit you in the next year?

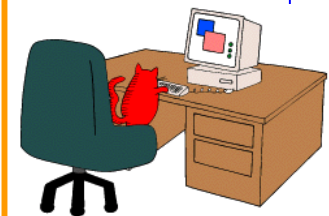
If you want to talk through your answers to these questions please do get in touch with me (contact details above).

My Performance Appraisal

This is a spoof performance appraisal generated by "Dilbert" – it is just for fun. What do you think Catbert (HR Director) is really saying in this?

Performance Appraisal for Mr. Boley:

His usefulness to the division is self evident as he works behind the scenes. It is important to note that the possibility of hiring more employees like Mr. Boley should be discussed immediately. His work sets him apart from his peers as he was tasked with many assignments this year. I find that Mr. Boley never appears stressed about his work. He handles assignments with unlooked-for creativity. Moreover, Mr. Boley sets a compelling example for the younger employees.



Catbert's performance appraisal was generated on www.dilbert.com