

Skill Development

What the church needs today is not just people who have a great understanding of the bible but people who have high skill levels that are willing to use those skills for the glory of God.

"God has given gifts to each of you from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Manage them well so that God's generosity can flow through you. Are you called to be a speaker? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Are you called to help others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then God will be given glory in everything through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 4:10, 11)

God gives us gifts, talents and skills, all we have to do is use them with all the ability we have. This means that we should look at ways in which we can develop our skills and continue to practice them.

This Christian Training Autumn 2008 newsletter looks at a few ways we can develop our skills and ensure that learning and skill development is encouraged and enabled in our organisations.

On the next page is a 20 statement checklist which you may wish to look at with others in your organisation and see how you are doing.

I hear, I forget
I see, I remember
I do, I understand
- Chinese Proverb

Just Do It!

Some of the most powerful learning comes from real life experiences. It is often unplanned and ad hoc. It has an important place in any skill development, and can be more powerful still if given recognition, and supported and shaped in a useful way. People have different preferences when it comes to learning. Some people want to know the theory first and read about it before doing, but others enjoy leaping in and doing. Nevertheless, "doing" is a key element in any learning experience – putting skills into practice. Learning by doing is very powerful, but it is only part of the full picture, and we need to be careful to give equal weight to all facets of learning. There is a useful place for both being immersed in a situation and learning through being involved and doing, and a useful place for doing some preparation and learning beforehand (as well as thinking through the experience afterwards).

Learning to drive is a good example, where learning the theory from the Highway Code and the practice from being behind the wheel both have their place. You take the theory test first, and only once you have passed that can you book a practical test. This recognises that there is value in having packed away some useful knowledge about the task and situation before you face it for real.

We need to recognise, and give credit, to both formal and non-formal learning, to both learning on the job and learning from training courses.

Skills Audit



Getting the right mix of skills, experiences and qualities is a key ingredient in building an effective organisation. A skills audit is a tool to help you discover what skills, knowledge or experience you have within your organisation and ensure that skills, talents and gifts are used for the Kingdom of God.

Existing members of your church or mission may possess a range of skills or knowledge that may never have been identified or called upon by the organisation. A Skills Audit would identify skill gaps (where outside help might be useful) and where individuals will complement each other, enhancing what is already there and increasing the diversity of both skills and perspectives. If we know what qualities we possess ourselves, and what qualities others possess, we can pool our talents.

"Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly" (Romans 12:3-8)

A Skills Audit doesn't just apply to spiritual gifts but can be used to look at other abilities and talents. You could do a basic skills audit by asking everyone in your organisation to identify the skills they possess or alternatively by looking at the skills you need in your organisation and matching them with the people. If you need any ideas for going about this please do get in touch.



"I didn't actually catch anything, but I do feel I gained some valuable experience."

A Developing Organisation?

Is your church or mission a developing organisation? A flexible organisation where people will accept and adapt to new ideas and changes through a shared vision.

Environment

To make the most of the individuals within an organisation and fulfil the mission and vision of the ministry a flexible, organic structure must be formed, a structure which encourages innovations. It is necessary for leaders to take on a philosophy where they; encourage openness, reflectivity and accept error and uncertainty. Individuals need to be able to question decisions without the fear of reprimand. This questioning can often highlight problems at an early stage and reduce time consuming errors.

Empowerment

In a "developing organisation" the focus of control shifts from leaders to individuals. The individuals become responsible for their own actions; but the leaders do not lose their involvement. They still need to encourage, enthuse and co-ordinate teams. Equal participation must be allowed at all levels so that people can learn from each other simultaneously. This is unlike "traditional" church which generally involves a top-down structure (classroom-type example) which is time consuming and less effective.

Developing My Skills

You may not be part of a Developing Organisation and have never had your skills audited so how can you develop your own skills if the help of others is not available. Follow these eight steps and see where that takes you along the journey:

1. Know what your target looks like – what are you trying to achieve?
2. Know where you stand against the target – seek out feedback.
3. Have a reason to develop – be motivated.
4. Get specific about what you want to learn.
5. Create a plan – and put your plan in writing.
6. Meet your learning need with every method available.
7. Make sense of all learning experiences. Think about what you did, what you read, what you learned. What were the lessons?
8. Finally, develop a sense of "learning agility" – learn anything, anywhere and by any means.



A Developing Organisation? A checklist

What does a "Developing Organisation" look like? Here are some ideas.

A Developing Organisation:

- Thrives on Change
- Is not scared of new ideas
- Encourages experimentation
- Recognises visionaries
- Is not afraid of failure
- Reviews things that work and those that don't
- Monitors, reviews, concludes, changes
- Weighs up ideas from all sorts of other organisations
- Keeps its eyes open for new ways of doing things
- Discusses what is best for the people being served
- Wants everyone to participate to some extent
- Invests in training
- Shares responsibility
- Removes any hierarchy
- Boosts morale at every opportunity
- Appreciates the effort of others
- Knows its goals and objectives
- Knows how near it is to achieving its goals and objectives
- Cares for each individual
- Explores ways of providing care for everyone

How does your organisation shape up? There are 20 different statements here, what do you think is a good score? Over 10? Between 15 and 18? Twenty out of twenty?



So what about putting some of this newsletter into practice. People talk about being a student at the "University of Life", and as it is the time for students to start their courses I thought I could sign up to this university by keeping a "learning log" over the next few months to see what I can learn from life and identify some key lessons for myself. I'll let you know how I get on.

Brian