



Autumn 2009

# Christian Training

building up the body of Christ

## A new type of leadership is needed today

A recent survey of hundreds of "learning and development" professionals has found that a new type of leadership is needed in today's changing business environment; the unity of opinion was overwhelming, as the survey revealed that this was the view of 91 per cent of respondents.

The poll also revealed that 49 per cent believe that the greatest priority in skills development is the ability to think flexibly and creatively, with motivation and staff engagement close behind it (47 per cent stated that is also a key area). These were followed by change management skills (40 per cent), business skills and acumen (26 per cent), enhanced communication skills and empathy (24 per cent) and the ability to influence (20 per cent).

How much of this can be applied to church and mission agencies? Certainly we should not accept that we have got it all sorted out and that we have nothing more to learn. Paul in Romans 12 writes this:

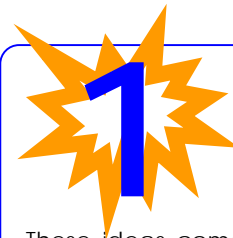
"Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, 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...If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously".

One of the sponsors of the survey said: *"The findings of the survey reinforce what we know from our discussions with Learning & Development practitioners and experts. Leadership is a highly topical subject for people in all walks of life from politicians to the general public, and the current economic situation is forcing people in positions of leadership to adapt and learn new skills sets in order to be effective in their role and deliver the results that UK businesses currently need."*

This Autumn 2009 newsletter will look at three ways that leadership could be developed that come straight out of the survey.

- 1 Equipping leaders with the skills to lead through difficult times
- 2 The role of leaders in driving change and engagement
- 3 Building a coaching culture

How many of them apply to you?



## Equipping leaders with the skills to lead through difficult times

These ideas come from some research I've completed in business circles and I'm not entirely sure how they apply to difficulties that are faced by churches or missions. Please read through the seven ideas and let me know what you think.

**Communicate frequently** - clearly, credibly and candidly. During difficult times, communication is more important than ever. Ambiguity and uncertainty equate to stress. If you go silent, people will make up their own stories about what's really going on with you, these rumours often generate negativity.

**Keep connected.** Manage by walking around. You can't afford during times like these not to know what's really going on. Be diligent in seeking out information, even the bad news. It's a mistake during a crisis to hide, be visible and keep checking to see how people are doing.

**Pay attention to task and people;** be alert to their emotions. Don't fall into the trap of thinking all is well or that your team will simply need to "deal with it." Develop a proactive plan to recognize, identify and deal with current challenges and emotions. Set time aside to allow people to vent and talk about their anxieties and challenges.

**Be the anchor in the storm;** display calm confidence and optimism. Model what you want from your team. This is your golden opportunity to truly lead by example and live your values.

**Keep your team focused.** Identify the single most important priority goal that everyone needs to commit to in order to weather the storm. Make sure everyone understands it and is clear what their part will be.

**Engage hearts and minds.** Facilitate a session to get all hands on deck. Bring the team together to brainstorm creative solutions for the game plan. Focus on core strengths and values, vision and how to keep confidence high.

**Stay the course.** Reinforce the plan with follow-up, recognition, redefining expectations and adequate resource support for weathering the storm. Everyone's extra effort should be noted and recognized.

Remember that "if God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously". This doesn't mean that we can sit back and think that we have arrived! We could ask those around us (who we can trust) to see whether there are any practical ways we can lead others through difficult times.





## The role of leaders in driving change and engagement

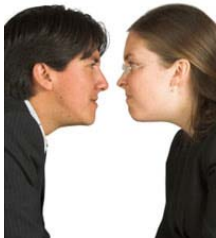
Change happens! There is no way that we are going to develop and grow unless we allow changes in our lives. I was running a “Change Management” workshop for a group of church leaders and we had a quick brainstorm of individuals and communities in the bible who were noted for change. The list included:

Abraham	Jonah
Paul	Peter
Nicodemus	Nineveh
Children of Israel	The early church

You may have others that you could add to this short list.

Leaders have an important role in managing change and yet it is an area that is a real challenge to us. Change means that we have to step out of our comfort zone and work in un-explored areas; this causes reactions in people that are difficult to manage.

The responses could include:



“They say something like this every year – it is soon forgotten”  
“After all the effort I’ve taken and now they will take it all away”  
“They have no idea what’s really happening”  
“They never listen to us”  
“It’s just the new vicar trying to make an impression”  
“They’ve been wasting money for years – now they want even more”  
“They are bound to reorganize my work”  
“All this could have been sorted out ages ago”

The reality is that individual’s reactions to change come in four main ways:

1. Misunderstandings
2. Objections
3. Personal consequences
4. Emotional mistrust

As leaders we need to develop ways of dealing with all these reactions and ensuring that we drive change through the engagement of the people we are leading. The easiest thing is to refuse to change – but is this right when going through difficult times?

“Here is Edward Bear, coming downstairs now, bump, bump, bump, on the back of his head, behind Christopher Robin. It is, as far as he knows, the only way of coming downstairs, but sometimes he feels that there really is another way if only he could stop bumping for a moment and think of it. And then he feels that perhaps there isn’t” - AA Milne



## Building a coaching culture

The leader’s role in creating an environment where innovation flourishes

On a Radio 4 phone-in programme a couple of weeks ago a business consultant was asked what he felt was important to do in these difficult economic times. He said “love your customers and innovate!” In God’s kingdom we could be doing the same thing – love our community/mission field and innovate! Churches and mission agencies love their community/mission field in many different and successful ways. But what about innovating? A way of ensuring that innovation occurs is to develop a “coaching culture”. Maybe a bit of business jargon but what is this and how can this be developed in our teams?

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development offers this definition of coaching: “Developing a person’s skills and knowledge so that their job performance improves, hopefully leading to the achievement of organisational objectives. It targets high performance and improvement at work, although it may also have an impact on an individual’s private life. It usually lasts for a short period and focuses on specific skills and goals.” So a coaching culture within an organisation is a culture where not only formal coaching occurs but also where most people use coaching behaviours as a means of managing, influencing and communicating with each other.

The bible puts this as:

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24)  
“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:11)



One of the first steps to introducing a coaching culture is to increase the acceptance of coaching by offering it to key individuals. Coaching can offer support to developing leadership teams as well as established teams who wish to improve their collective performance. Once coaching is accepted it can then be cascaded throughout the church or mission agency by providing training in coaching skills.

Have you already taken these first steps? If not, should you?

Thanks for reading this Christian Training newsletter. I do hope you found something in it useful for your work or ministry. If you have any feedback for me please do get in touch – contact details at the top of this page.