

“Taking Your Church to the Next Level”
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Kindle Notes by Dave Kraft

The significant problems we face today cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them. Albert Einstein

Other than its basic beliefs and values, the two major forces that impact a church's growth are its age and its size. All organizations and organisms move through predictable stages of birth, growth, maturity, and decline. Larry Greiner, professor of management and organization at the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business, notes, "A company's problems and solutions tend to change markedly as the number of employees and its sales volume increase. A number of myths (fallacies) have grown around the subject of church size. For example, one popular perspective speaks of size "barriers"; however, there is little research data to confirm the existence of size barriers.

"What got you to where you are won't get you to where you want to be."

Sports dynasties develop only when members of the team are inspired to improve in a new way year after year. It is what happens in the time off between seasons that makes winners during the season. So what makes a church durable over the long haul? Why do some churches seem to keep going while others fall into decline? In short, a church's durability comes, first, from the values that guide the creation of its program and ministry; second, from the development of processes designed to encourage the behavior that reflects those values; and third, from leaders who function as architects of the entire process.

Rarely, however, will a new church survive without a central driving mission and a vision that empower the church and its leaders to move into the future. Together the mission and vision become the fuel that drives the church forward.

Another characteristic of the emerging church is the high commitment of early attendees. The use of rented or leased facilities is another characteristic of emerging churches.

Rarely will a new church survive without a central driving mission and a vision that empower the church and its leaders to move into the future. As a church grows larger, it takes a well-defined vision to keep the momentum going.

If an emerging church finds it cannot attract at least 50 people to worship services, the mass is critically low. Churches with fewer than 50 people find it nearly impossible to survive beyond the first two years.

The leadership must also develop healthy patterns of discipleship that effectively reach new people for Christ, connect them to the emerging church body, and train them in their spiritual walk and service. A clear pathway to leadership is still another challenge for the growing church. Growing people create growing churches. If a church cannot design and put into place a process of leadership development, growth will soon overwhelm the current leaders to the point that they burn out. It is important for a church to continue to keep its cash flow current; otherwise the ministry may begin to plateau due to a loss of needed financial support. When it is determined that certain ministries or other areas that drain the church of cash do not provide a return for the expenditures, they should be eliminated.

There is surely nothing quite so useless as doing with great efficiency what should not be done at all. Peter Drucker

“When you're through changing, you're through”-Bruce Barton

During the emerging stage of the congregational life cycle, a church looks to the founding pastor to be a **catalyzer**. An effective catalyzer evidences three essential skills:

1. Vision
2. Communication
3. Motivation

Catalyzers may find it difficult to pastor a congregation beyond the first two or three years unless they are able to adjust their leadership style to that of an **organizer**. Often they become frustrated if they are required to give energy and time to organizing what they have started. If they are unable to recruit a team member to take responsibility for organizing the church, they may move on to start another congregation. True catalyzers are scarce, perhaps numbering only 2-3 percent of all leaders.

In the growing stage (stage two) of the congregational life cycle, a church needs the pastor to be an **organizer**. An organizer has the ability to take a disorderly organization and bring together its jumble of pieces into an orderly form that maximizes its resources. Organizers are in larger supply than catalyzers, perhaps comprising 10-15 percent of all leaders.

The consolidating stage (stage three) requires the skills of an **operator**. An operator likes to manage a stable congregation by making small incremental changes that maintain the basic systems.

It is generally accepted that most church leaders are operators, perhaps numbering around 75 to 80 percent of all leaders.

To experience renewed growth, the church needs a **reorganizer**. A reorganizer has skills similar to those of an organizer but with the added ability to work with a congregation in a declining situation. Reorganizers are also in short supply, perhaps numbering about 5 percent of all church leaders.

The final stage of a congregation's life cycle is the dying stage. By the time a church reaches this point in its life cycle, it needs what may be labeled a **super reorganizer**. Having the basic skills of an organizer, this person has the added ability to bring radical change that results in the rebirth of a church that is near death. Super reorganizers are in extremely short supply, perhaps numbering around 1 to 2 percent of all church leaders.

It is when the church is doing well that church leaders must develop a new vision and direction for ministry if they wish to avoid the normal pattern of plateau and decline. "Our options are to learn this new game ... or to continue practicing our present skills and become the best players in a game that is no longer being played." Larry Wilson

Ministry capital is made up of five core resources:

1. Spiritual
2. Directional
3. Relational
4. Structural
5. Physical

Spiritual resources relate to the soundness of a church's doctrine, values, and beliefs. **Directional** resources involve the quality and experience of the pastor and the leadership team. **Relational** resources are the unity, fellowship, and community experienced by the corporate body in large, medium, and small groups. **Structural** resources comprise organizational philosophy and ways of working together. **Physical** resources are the value of facilities and property, as well as the visibility and accessibility of the church meeting place. For the most part, a good location adds positive capital.

Theodore Caplow. Writing in How to Run Any Organization,

He offers five standard methods for coping with organizational growth: team management, decentralization of operations, standardization of procedures, centralization of financial control, and expansion of communication.

Increasing size of a church congregation appears to be accompanied by a diminution of the average member's sense of obligation to work, give, and participate. One study found four factors of church vitality: youthful vigor, financial giving, increased membership and baptism, and consistent growth. Then he notes that the larger churches outstripped smaller ones on all four measures.

As groups increase in size, the degree of consensus among members concerning goals and especially norms decline. As groups grow, a point is reached when not everyone can interact with everyone else; nor can any one person interact with all the others.

Johnstone discusses several additional issues that organizations face as their size increases: declining norms, increasing deviance, development of specialized roles, greater role of autonomy and coordination, and increasing bureaucracy. The growth problem, according to Womack, is that churches do not expand their organization to fit the needs of the next size of church, and they plateau at predictable size levels. If a church wishes to serve more people, it must first expand its base of organization and ministry.

Churches find that each time they grow a little, their quality lessens, so they must scramble to implement a new organizational system geared to their current size. Churches have more in common by their size than by their denomination, tradition, location, age, or any other single, isolatable factor."

Carl George recommends changes in the roles of the board and staff. Essentially, operational functions must begin to be shifted to the staff, while policy-setting functions remain with the board. Basically, a church's structure allows it to grow to a certain level, after which the church plateaus unless appropriate changes are made. At each step or plateau, a transition in the nature of the organization must occur if the church is to continue to grow to the following step or plateau. When a church attempts to take it to the next size level, more energy is required to make the climb before it settles onto the next plateau.

Many churches have failed to grow because they have not understood this simple rule: Organizational expansion always precedes numerical increase."

Though I have identified ten plateau levels for churches, I find it most helpful to place them in five descriptive categories: relational church, managerial church, organizational church, centralized church, and decentralized church.

Because of their size, most churches are in the **relational church** category; church researchers generally locate 80 percent of all churches in this size category, Thus pastors are not thought of as leaders in a relational church but simply as caregivers. To move from 35 to 85 people in attendance, a church must develop a nursery and preschool, kindergarten, and early elementary classes.

For a church to reach an average of 85 worshipers, it must have a facility that seats between 100 and 125. When a church grows beyond 85 people, it is a prime time to begin a small-group ministry.

A church should plan to offer a minimum of seven small groups for every 100 adults in worship attendance.

Growing from 125 to beyond 200 Breaking the proverbial 200 barrier has proven to be the biggest growth challenge that churches face.

There are key factors that must be implemented before a church is able to break this most difficult barrier, and three of them are related to the pastor.

ADD STAFF

EXPECT AN ADMINISTRATIVE SHEPHERD. For the church to continue to grow, the lead pastor must shift from operating primarily as a caregiving shepherd to being more of an administrative shepherd.

DELEGATE MINISTRY

MOBILIZE LAYPEOPLE

CONTINUALLY EXPAND PROGRAMMING

ADD A SECOND WORSHIP SERVICE

ADD CLASSES

MAINTAIN A SIMPLE DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE

The organization's structure must become more formal but it should not be allowed to become bureaucratic in a way that stifles creativity and the ease of making decisions.

Middle-sized churches are characterized by their organizational structure. As a church grows larger than 200 worshipers, the essential nature of the church changes from focusing on relationships to organizing its growing array of new ministries, people, staff, and facility. It is possible for pastors who are strong caregivers to lead middle-sized churches, but they will need to share leadership with an administrative assistant or an assistant pastor who will handle the bulk of administrative details.

The small staff and volunteer leaders in the middle-sized church are good at doing ministry but some of them find it difficult to build teams and they end up doing most of the work themselves. If the pastor and other leaders do not learn to delegate, this phase of the church's life will wear them out.

Today most churches try to avoid the committee structure if at all possible, preferring to delegate decision making to individuals.

Churches that grow beyond 400 worshipers make the following moves.

- Add Staff
- Senior Pastor Becomes Leader

For a church to grow beyond 400, the senior pastor must begin thinking and functioning as a leader more than an administrator.

Among other things, this means the pastor becomes responsible for long-range planning, directing a multiple staff, casting a vision for the future of the church, preaching consistently fine sermons, and designing systems to reach, win, and keep new people.

- Laypersons Take Responsibility

The church must also start the process of shifting responsibility for pastoral care from the pastors to laypersons.

- Roles of Staff Change

As the senior pastor transitions into more of a leadership role, other pastors and support staff shift into more specialized roles

- Add worship services
- Build on success

One of the keys to taking your church to the next level is to identify the 20 percent of people and ministries that are responsible for your church's growth and build on them.

As a church grows beyond 400 in worship attendance, expectations of staff members begin to change. No longer is their main concern the doing of ministry; now it becomes critical that they build teams of people to help them do ministry. The problem is that doing ministry and building teams require different sets of skills. Some staff members may make the transition well, but others may struggle.

For a church to grow beyond the 800 level, key points of transition must be addressed.

Pastor's Role. The church must begin to define the pastor's role as that of leader rather than manager or caregiver. The staff team must change from being a group of practitioners, who are good at doing the ministry, to a team of specialists, who are excellent at designing ministries, which they lead. If the church continues to grow, but leaders are not developed, eventually leaders will burn out. As leaders burn out, programs will collapse and the church will decline. For a church to grow larger than 800, it must shift caregiving from the pastoral staff to laypersons. This is by far the most important transition point to be made.

As a church grows larger, its complexity increases. This results in several characteristics that differ from those of smaller churches.

The Pastor as Visionary. Thus the pastor must be a strategic thinker or at least build a team around him that can assist in the development of strategy.

Multiple-Level Staff. Thus the young adult pastor is on a pastoral team as well as having his own team-this is a multiple-level staff.

Decision-Making Authority of Staff

Pastor Directed and Board Protected

Adjust Roles of Board and Staff One of the key changes a church must make as it grows is adjusting the roles of the board and staff. Board functions must be separated from staff functions. Essentially, the board has to let go of making the everyday, functional decisions regarding church ministry, programs, staff, budget, and a host of other issues related to the work of the church.

The church board must become a policy-setting board and allow the staff to begin making functional ministry decisions within the policies the board sets.

Adjust Staff Organization The senior pastor must decide either to continue a direct management connection with the larger church staff or to delegate staff management to an executive pastor.

Be Team Builders. The staff must transition from being "practitioners" to "team builders," from being on the team to leading a team.

For a church to grow larger than 1,500, it usually takes a number of key staff members who are able to build ministry teams that will assist in the growth and expansion of the ministry program.

By the time a church reaches 1,500 in size, it will normally employ either an executive pastor or a small executive team who oversee the entire church ministry.

Add Executive Pastors

The most common arrangement is to place two executive pastors over the ministry, with one overseeing ministry staff and one overseeing administrative staff.

The executive team has to be more involved in coaching other staff leaders and doing strategic planning rather than being involved in day-to-day issues.

Select a Staff That Builds Teams

The following are essential facts that we have learned about the impact of a church's size on its DNA.

Numerous and Complex Relationships and Structure; This means that, as a church grows larger, the leaders sense the need to work harder at communication, long-range planning, and building unity.

The Importance of Smaller Units

Specialized Roles and Functions

Specialized Groups When a church becomes large, its subgroups must become more specialized and diverse.

Formalized Roles The larger a church becomes, the more its roles are formalized, and the number of levels of lay and staff roles increases.

Methods of Communication

Key Influencers of Ministry Direction

Potential for Conflict

The larger a church grows, the more the senior pastor and pastoral staff gain authority as the key influencers of ministry direction.

The Need for Decentralized Ministry

Learning from Other Churches

The Need to Plan for the Future

Innovation

Size Matters

Understanding the dynamics of growth: interesting. Knowing where your church is going: priceless.

A fit church is one that balances the spiritual growth of its own people while simultaneously reaching new people for Christ."

Traditionally church leaders practice a pattern of maintenance learning, which is the acquisition of fixed methods, rules, and processes for dealing with known and recurring situations.

It is imperative, however, that we use a different type of learning in times of turbulence and change such as we are now going through. The type of learning that can bring change, renewal, and problem solving is called innovative learning. Innovative learning is the preparation of individuals and organizations to anticipate, participate, and creatively solve the problems of both the present and the future.

There are three primary features of innovative learning.

First, we must anticipate problems,

Secondly, participate in finding solutions.

Thirdly, creatively solve the problems we anticipate, which requires problem detecting, problem understanding, and problem solving.