

The Dangers of Creating A “Leadership Vacuum”

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When a leader is moved (or removed), if there isn't a substitutional plan or leader placed quickly, a "leadership vacuum" is created. This vacuum causes many problems for the "health" of the organization! Here are two examples:

- When the US removed Saddam Husain in Iraq, we didn't replace him with a viable substitute or leadership structure. We've been battling the problems ever since.
- When the US removed Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, we also produced a "leadership vacuum."

Whenever plans are made for a CM leadership change, the leadership structure must be prepared "in the background" before the leadership is changed! This preparation can be done through a successor being “groomed” before the leadership change is made. This is always more effectively done if the current CM leader knows about and is ready for the change. In situations where the CM leader is not “briefed” on the change beforehand, the preparation of the successor must be done “in the background” without the current CM leader knowing. This is **not** the best situation!



Preventing A “Leadership Vacuum”

Count The Cost

1. Carefully, prayerfully, establish the reasons for the change.
2. Consider the “What’s best for the children?” question.
3. Consider the options of a complete leadership change. Can improvements be made using the existing leaders? Are the existing leaders willing to make the adjustments?
4. Consider the “worst case scenario” – are you willing to take the risk for the sake of the reason for change?
5. Are there legal implications for removing, or even moving, the current leader from his/her current position? Could he/she claim “age discrimination,” or “wrongful dismissal” if this is not done carefully? HR needs to be consulted.
6. Is there a documented “paper trail” of consultations and meetings with the current leader that would substantiate a leadership change?

Collaborative Change

The best way to make the change!

IF the current leadership is willing to work WITH the church leadership, for the sake of the children, a collaborative change is possible. In a collaborative change, the current leadership is carefully shown the vision, and hopefully, adopts the vision. This may take longer, but the end result has more positive potential.



1. Affirm the current leadership and their powerful value.
2. Share the vision – sell the positive results!
3. Highlight the current leadership’s role in the successful improvements.
4. Make sure the current leader understands what is at risk (possible removal from the position).
5. Support the current leader’s change in behavior or performance.

Unilateral Change

1. Let the HR department supervise this entire process!
2. If changing the current leadership is the only way to affect the change, then begin building the “substitutional leadership” structure “in the background” before the change is made.
3. A “shift” within the CM team. There is a high danger for conflict with this plan if the current leader becomes hostile. If the current leader remains supportive of the ministry vision and the decision to replace him/her then this “shift” in responsibility can be positive. The options for a “shift” in position might be:
 - a. Supervising a new ministry venture.
 - b. Supervising a portion of the ministry (recruiting, team development, parent support, etc.)
 - c. Hallway greeter / parent ambassador during services.
4. Replacing the current leader with a new CM leader. If the current leader’s positive support is questioned, then the best decision might be to thank him/her for his/her service and remove him/her.
 - a. Make sure the process is well documented including: meetings leading up to this decision, records of the leader’s unwillingness to adjust, conversations that included “warnings,” and any meetings held with the church leadership about the issue.
 - b. Together with at least one other church administrator, meet with the current leader and review the past efforts to effect change and to support the leader’s willingness to improve. Share the sadness in having to make this decision. Clarify the steps that will take place (when will be the last day, etc.). Offer a severance package (within the church’s ability). Thank him/her for the years served.
 - c. Based on the perception of the leader’s ability to remain positive, you may let him/her say “Goodbye” to the CM team as you introduce the new leader. If you question whether he/she can remain positive, you may choose to not do this.
 - d. Call a mandatory meeting of the entire CM team and announce the new CM leader. Remain positive about the former leader. If you have determined that the former leader can remain positive, you may have him/her present and pray for his/her next ministry season.

