



Leading with a Developmental Bias: Capturing a Biblical Perspective on People Development

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Whenever I spend more than an hour with colleagues in MemCare or missionary training, a story of spiritual or leadership abuse almost always surfaces. Not as gossip, but as a heart-felt plea for assistance. We dive in, dissect the situation, try to analyze the causes, share resources, and end up in prayer. We recognize that unless the Spirit intervenes the situation will only get worse.

Have you ever stepped into one of those conversations? In a local church or a mission agency?

Let me share this week's menu of cases.

The original team in which Paul and Sue arrived to teach in a Bible School disintegrates around them. The team leader returned to the States and the couple finds themselves alone, isolated in a small city of a huge nation in turmoil, with a child with significant learning disabilities. They are young and inexperienced, and what they came to do is no longer an option. Their organization does little to assist them in reforming a team, or to find a suitable locale to which to relocate. Seven years later they keep busy experimenting with new venues of ministry, none of them in their spiritual "sweet spot," and none very effective.

Dan and Laura, a veteran couple with over 25 years in Asia, relocate Stateside to work in the home office, but are never helped to sculpt a meaningful role aligned with their rich experience, maturation, and wisdom. Left alone, they find meaningful ministry after several years doing itinerant teaching globally with another organization, while still members of their original agency.

Craig and Barb, a veteran couple of 25 years in Latin America, still shouldering the baggage of residual family-of-origin, marital discord, and field conflict issues, return to the States but receive little proactive assistance or intervention from their organization. They resettle across the country from the home office, and launch a new ministry back in Latin America on their own. Despite pleas from one spouse for marital assistance, the regional leader takes no action for over two years.

Sara, a 35 year old translator working in Africa discovers that her translating partner is lesbian and she expresses concern to her team leader. When nothing is done for weeks, months, and years, and after repeated dialogue among team members and the team leader, the team disintegrates. As a result the translation work halts, and team members disperse around the world. The workers dwindle away with no organizational assistance in processing what happened.

This article has been forged in the crucible of cross-cultural mission in which I have been submerged since childhood. I write out of personal experience.^{fn3} And I have seen more than I have felt. By that I mean, I have no axe to grind or wounds to expunge in this article. Rather I write out of my observational experience as a "reflective practitioner" (Schon). Over the last 40 years, working in over 40 countries, with over 100 mission organizations. I've discovered the wisdom of that sage of cross-cultural engagement, Yogi Berra, who observed, "You can see a lot just by looking."

This is an inquiry into the "epistemology of practice" in cross-cultural mission (Schon, viii). My heart has become heavy, not with the pain in my life, but with the woundings and hurt which I have observed in every region of the world, among missionaries who serve with well-known and reputable mission agencies, supported by well-known churches.

Where we minister: our organizational context

Both church and mission organizations (although not monolithic) use, neglect, or abuse people by any one of the following behaviors:

- ✓ Placing people into roles for which they were not adequately assessed or trained (not paying attention to their Gifting or temperament);
- ✓ Leaving people in roles with inadequate supervision, nurture or development. We tend to neglect missionaries and field leaders more than we abuse. It is a sad fact, that we often do not practice the insights we know about good oversight. We often fail to act because we don't think that management of people can be developmental. We have old ideas that management is control, not the nurturing of people. Even the best organizations tend to neglect. They think training takes care of all the issues – many of which only holistic supervision can address (Harder, 2011);
- ✓ Neglecting people by providing inadequate stewardship, alignment or affirmation;
- ✓ Devoting insufficient funds and resources to people development; or
- ✓ Providing inadequate assistance in areas of MemCare, development, MK education advising, conflict resolution, abusive leadership, etc.

These are all symptoms of organizations that lack a development perspective. These are the ugly reasons missionaries leave the field unexpectedly and are reported as “unintended attrition” (Taylor, 1996).

But I must add this disclaimer: I am not at all addressing or critiquing churches and agencies that are already flat-out trying to do their best to nurture, care for and develop their people—except to encourage them and say: *“Keep up the good work!”*

Our focus in this article is to explore how do we **refocus our organizational culture** to be better **stewards** of the people God has entrusted to us?

Our goal is to stimulate discussion in the global church-mission community to the end that more churches and agencies might strive to become developmentally biased organizations, with the impact that the majority of their members would be **intentionally growing as healthy and effective servants**, not only task-driven, but contentedly serving to glorify Christ in alignment with their God-given gifts and Spirit-directed Calling.

People First

People are an organization's most important resource. A commitment to people development must be a core value, resulting in a culture that values the development of people as highly as accomplishing the organization's mission. Unfortunately, many ministry organizations don't seem to fully comprehend the impact of their organizational culture in creating an environment in which people thrive. This awareness is an essential prerequisite to leading with a developmental bias.

Hans Finzel, former CEO of World Venture, describes the role of leaders in creating the right leadership culture: *“Leaders are the main creators, keepers and breeders of the organizational climate in their organizations...Leaders of an organization create the cultural values that are the trademark of the group...Leaders influence the effectiveness of followers”* (Finzel,1).

Definitions

The following definitions will help the reader interpret the selected vocabulary used in this article about organizations, organizational culture, organizational values and people development.

Organizational culture is the ethos of the place—the combined practices and behaviors of an organization that grow out of the core values, attitudes and practices of its leaders. It's the “feel” of the place; the difference between a free-wheeling, entrepreneurial organization that catalyzes innovative ministry and high loyalty; and one in which members feel controlled, undervalued, used, and often abused. Practices grow out of values when practice is intentional. But in too many cases, missions are not intentional. So practice grows out of how leaders behave under stress or neglect; i.e. what they don't do. In the ideal, every mission leader I know desires to shape an organization culture of internal consistency, where the organizational values bleed into the processes and lived out in their procedures on a daily basis. Yet, a chasm continues to exist between what leaders say they value and what they do.

In his Foreword to the very thoughtful volume, *Nurture that is Christian* (Wilhoit and Dettoni, 1995), Christian Educator Ted Ward, makes an important point for Christian Education that is equally true for Christian leadership in churches and mission organizations. Simply put, Ward contends that the educational theories Christian educators select to guide their work “*must be in harmony with the rudiments of Christian values and ideation*” (7). Without integrating Biblical studies and Christian theology into the very DNA of their education ministry, they may attempt to draw from secular theories that “cannot be reconciled with the scriptural base of Christianity” (8). Ward then makes this evaluation of a developmental perspective: “*Developmentalism passes this test rather well, especially if Christian definitions and supernatural components of the person are recognized alongside the inherent naturalism from which developmentalism springs*” (8).

Similarly, this article seeks to make the point that Christian leaders in churches and mission organizations must also construct a theory of leadership and organizational development that is in harmony with the essentials of Biblical values and ideation. Biblical truth and theology must be integrated into the very DNA of their organizations. We believe the core principles of biblical Developmentalism offer the strongest foundation for the framing the structure and practices of Christian churches and mission organizations.

Development implies facilitating what is innate, viz., first, growth from less to more mature, and second, constant activity that leads to knowledge (cognitive), feeling (affective), doing (behavioral), and being (existential). That is, a change of one's core is necessary, not merely conforming one's behavior to predetermined task objectives.

Christian educator John Dettoni further explains the distinctives of a developmental perspective: “*Development focuses on helping people to grow and mature as God has called them to be, within their areas of giftedness, talents, and life situations. The whole person is the focus of development, not just the pre-determined behavior of the "teacher" or missionary trainer. Becoming mature is the outcome, and maturing is more than just pre-determined behaviors. It is the growth and development of the whole person, physical, cognitive, social, affective, moral, and spiritual into full maturity "...measuring up to the full stature of Christ*” (Eph 4:13 NLT). (Dettoni, 3-4).

While training is oriented towards discrete data, the concrete, and easily observed behavior, development is concerned for the whole person, recognizing that discrete data are just part of the whole, not the whole itself. Development is concerned for the person, not just his/her behaviors.

This article will not delineate the criteria for theory in Christian business and organizational development, but refers the reader to Ward's excellent discussion of Developmentalism in the Foreword cited above (10-17). Just as the concepts and models are still emerging in Christian education, so they are in the arena of Christian leadership and management. Ward summarizes: “In effect, developmentalism is a meta-theory that explains the connections, similarities, and contrasts among particular developmental theories, each of which explains components of the whole” (14). In line with Ward's direction, I suggest that a developmental bent or perspective on how people work together in organizations, offers the best theoretical base from which to architect the processes and practices for both church and mission organizations.

It is the plea of this article that both the Church and Mission need leaders who help people learn, grow, and develop. Christian organizations do not need leaders who lack a developmental

perspective, and tend to see church and mission ministry as more task-oriented than people-oriented. This is a false dichotomy. To be focused and effective as an apostolic leader of a sodality does not require wearing blinders to the vital importance of people development.

A *developmental bias* is a core organizational values commitment that places the development of people as highly as accomplishing the organization's mission. Developmentally-biased organizations are learning organizations at four levels: strategic thinking as an organization; executive leadership who practice learning; teams who do the same; as well as individuals. If we focus too much on the individual, group functioning may negate what the individual is learning and wanting to practice in ministry.

A *developmentally-aware organization* is one that balances its concern for task leadership, relational leadership, and inspirational leadership by accomplishing its mission while also insisting that their people reach their divine potential. Developmentally aware organizations are very focused on effective service to reach the mission, yet know that people are the key. Effective people are grown – they don't just appear.

People (staff) and leader development refer to an intentional organizational plan and program which results in the consistent life-long development of all of its people and its leaders.

Steward-leaders are relational managers of the (gifts of the) people they lead in a context of relationships. Steward-leaders create the organizational culture and lead from an organic-relational perspective.-A primary concern is "people development," not just people productivity.

This article also assumes that the biblical ethos and culture of local churches (*modalic* structures) is the same as mobile missionary bands or apostolic teams (*sodalic* structures, which today we call mission organizations). The ethos of both may be characterized by the Body Life practices and principles for the church in Acts 2:42-47, and clarified in the Pauline corpus. Their character and ethos are the same, while their structures are different—determined by their purpose. The primary role of leaders in the Body of Christ—whether in local churches or mission organizations (the Church in mission), is to steward the gifts of members (each other) in a context of committed relationships. We call this *Body Life leadership*: Paul's "One Another" commands describe attitudinal silicon that lubricate relationships in "life together," and how the gifts function in synergy to build loving unity among team members, whether in a local church or on an apostolic team.

Organizational culture and leadership are two sides of the same coin. Leaders first create cultures when they create groups and organizations. The bottom line for leaders is that they must become aware of their own organizational culture in which they work, or those cultures will manage them (Finzel). Leaders who influence an organization toward developmental awareness help create its organizational culture and lead with a developmental bias.

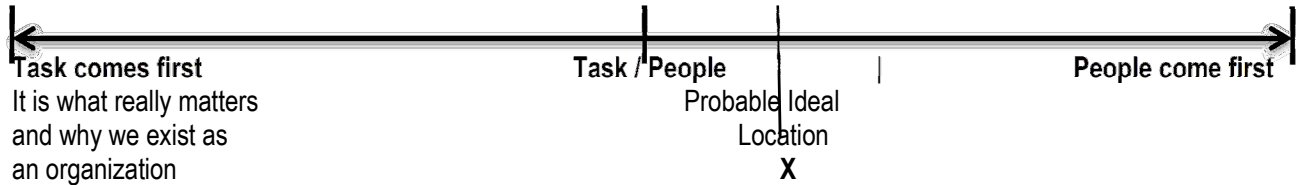
It may help to think of organizations along a continuum with high task orientation on the left of the continuum, and high regard for people and relational leadership on the right. Under each extreme are listed the behavioral symptoms of that position.ⁱ (Clinton, 2009, 2)

Developmental Continuum for Evaluating Organizational Culture

Low interest in
developing people;
high interest in task

High interest in task,
but recognizing the importance of
people development to accomplish
the task

High interest in
developing people;
lower interest in task



Symptoms	Symptoms
1. Little or no budget for development	1. Major allocations of resources for people development
2. Make major personnel decisions based upon upon organization's needs,	2. Aware of people, their developmental needs, and their God-given potential
3. Not aware of people potential or of developmental needs of the individual	3. Very proactive about training (formal and non-formal) provided in timely fashion; strong mentoring fabric interwoven into lifestyle
4. Big back door—low retention	4. Open new roles and career tracks; willing to sculpt roles to fit people; high retention; "Fit and flourish" mentality

☒ **Reflect:** It may help the reader to contextualize this discussion, to take a minute to reflect on where your organization falls on the continuum. Mentally place an "X" on the spot. Is your organization more people-oriented or task-oriented?

The *symptoms* help identify what it means to lead from a *task-oriented bias* (the left of the continuum) or from a *relational-oriented bias* (the right end of the continuum). Both extremes have their problems. At the left, people are being used, although the task may be accomplished. At the right, people are being developed, although the task is not the only objective.

A leader with a developmental bias leads from somewhere slightly to the right of center. An X marks the spot on the continuum which we believe represents an ideal balance or creative tension between giving attention to both the goal (task) and the people working to accomplish the task. In the Gospels we see Jesus investing three years equipping and releasing the disciples into short-term developmental ministry assignments, interspersed with intense times of fellowship, debriefing, teaching, and disciping. When he sent the Holy Spirit in power (Acts 1:4-8), he was confident they, his disciples now apostles, were adequate—in the Spirit—for the task of discipling the nations, as long as they remained in Body Life relationship (John 14-17). It is from Jesus that we discover the pattern of equipping before releasing, being and doing, and ministry that flows out of being in intimate relationship with Abba.

It is not difficult to observe certain generational tendencies in these leadership orientations, depending upon the age of the leaders. Yet organizations, like people, cannot be put into a single box or painted with the same brush. We must recognize the downside of moving to either extreme. Task-oriented leaders often miss and misuse their people, while people-friendly leaders often err on the extreme of not keeping a biblical ministry goal clearly in mind. Without a clear vision many people wander in self-absorbed concern about becoming community.

Just as the nature and purpose of the church preceded the establishment of the New Testament church and its activities; so the needs of people in church and mission ministry today must precede the organization, institutionalization, and program activities of the Church and its mission (Dettoni, 2).

To state this caution another way, it may be just as problematic in moving toward balance from the extreme right side of the continuum—a touchy-feely organization that loves and cares for its people, but easily loses sight of its original vision for ministry task! For example, some agencies (and churches we know) are much more relationally-oriented than task-oriented. With fewer Boomers and more Millennials in the years ahead, this will become a more common situation in many of our churches and organizations than the tendency toward task of the Boomer generation (Harder, 2013).

The latest reports from the house church movement reminds us that biblical community is best lived out when the group maintains a sense of apostolic focus. Task and people orientation must find a creative, Spirit-led symbiosis.

The mDNA of Developmentally-biased Organizations

I am indebted to church movement specialist Alan Hirsch for his insightful articulation of the components of the “Apostolic Genius” of the New Testament (the built-in life force and guiding mechanisms of God’s people) as “*missional DNA*,” or *mDNA* for short (Hirsch, 18-26). He has artfully captured for us both the developmental and missional constituent elements of DNA that must be held in biblical balance for a church or mission organization to “blaze up” to accomplish their God-given purpose.

What are the core characteristics of a developmentally-aware organization (i.e., one which has leaders who nurture the organizational culture and lead with a developmental bias)? How can a Christian organization fulfill its biblical mandate to steward the people and their gifts in pursuit of kingdom ministry? The following seven characteristics define the growth-enhancing mDNA of a developmental organization. They are seven simple but interrelating elements of mDNA which enable and support developmental structures. Following Clinton (1996), I have tried to distill them to the absolutely irreducible components (Hirsch, 24).

People Priority

- 1. People development as a critical priority.** At the center of every developmental organization exists a very simple credo—we see people development as just as important as the tasks the organization is to accomplish. Stewardship of the gifts of staff is just as important as the stewardship of financial and material resources. This value must be imbedded in the *mDNA* of the organization and its leaders. This is a biblical, relational stewardship issue! Creating high-trust, grace-filled environments where people feel safe to fail and succeed is a leadership priority (see Thrall et al. 1999; Thrall et al 2004).

One could argue that there are as many instances of the opposite being true—i.e. consider how many inefficient and ineffective organizations you know that may be warmly relational, but are not productive in accomplishing their stated ministry tasks and goals. Although in this article we are focusing more on finding the proper balance between people development and task-orientation, we must at least acknowledge that there are problems on this side as well.

- 2. Resource allocation for development.** The most evident indicator of an organization’s true values commitment is this: sufficient resources, both financial and human, are dedicated to the development of people. It is more than stewardship of finances or goods and real estate. Relational stewardship becomes a biblical priority. It values organic, relational stewardship of Spirit-gifted people. Decisions for their lives are made on the basis of biblical developmental thinking—*how can we best steward their lives? How do we best steward the gifts of members in*

the context of body life relationships? This will mean earmarking organizational and individual financial resources for education and development of staff, as well as finding and assigning the right staff into roles which guide and support people-centered development.

Staff Development vs. Member Care: Recent missions history reveals that when training and development functions (departments) are under the same organizational leader as Member Care, the bulk of the resources invariably go to Member Care because they are urgent and present. While training and development look to the future and are important, they are seldom urgent. They can't compete for resources in a "tyranny-of-the-urgent" mentality. The easiest solution is to keep the training and development function organically linked in planning, staffing, and budgeting with Member Care to maintain a critical symbiotic balance, but not subservient to the urgent.

People Development Perspectives

3. **Lifetime Perspective:** How do you help people discover their ministry identity and then track them over their lifetime to maximize their holistic development? (Clinton, 2012). Take a holistic, whole-life perspective on the development of each individual in the organization. Learn where he or she is in development, what is happening, what shaping is needed, and what developmental assignments (with the appropriate support) will facilitate the person's growth toward realized potential.

Refocusing people to discover their ministry identity (clarify their spiritual gifts, personal values, calling, and ministry burden and passion) empowers individuals to discover their "role alignment." It is this perspective that leads organizations to track (not control) their staff and leaders over a lifetime. It is the ongoing growth and development of staff which makes periodic "role sculpting" necessary. Ministry roles must be artfully adjusted to assure they continue to "fit" the maturing character and skills of each individual. It also encourages organizations to create an integrated offering of development enhancing "programs," including designing growth-filled furloughs, providing study leaves and Sabbaticals, and structuring mid-career assessments in times of life change, transition, and clarified ultimate contribution. We will describe a full menu of such offerings below.

4. **Future perfect thinking** (Davis, 1987) concerning individuals and divisions. In what ways do you coach and nurture your people with an eye to the future? Based on your view of the future, how do you operate differently now? (i.e. develop your staff for the future). What will these people look like when they fully reach their potential? "Future perfect" developers come alongside staff to empower them to become the people God created them to be. They create space and time for giving developmental assignments to prepare younger and emerging leaders for the decision-making and responsibility for the future. The Jesus model suggests that we also make room for failure and be willing to offer grace and second chances when developmental challenges don't initially meet organizational expectations. We accept and process failures, not because who people are at this moment—but for who we can see them to be in Christ—in the future!

Means to Enhance People Development

5. **Learning posture.** The organization maintains and promotes a learning posture among all its people. It encourages growth in every way—via formal, non-formal, and informal learning and training models. It commits funding to this end (including budget, proactive planning with each individual, study leaves, training, Sabbaticals, and modeling of a learning posture at all levels of leadership), without placing undue burden on the individual member. The organization works

diligently to create organic, relational pathways in which individuals and teams across a wide spectrum of diversity can pursue growth and development in sync with the Holy Spirit.

The leaders knowingly admit that no one organization can have the expertise to respond to all their leader and member needs. So they intentionally identify individuals and organizations who can provide the needed training, coaching, counseling, etc., and communicate these resources to each leader and member and the way they can access them.

6. **Relational empowerment.** The organization utilizes coaching and mentoring to develop leaders by releasing them to discover and accomplish their God-given calling. This operates best in environments of high trust and safety—communities of grace, not those focused on control or performance (Thrall, et al, 1999). This kind of environment recognizes that mentoring is the major means of developing middle and upper-level leaders. Mentoring (pouring in) and coaching (drawing out) is practiced and modeled at all levels of leadership (Stanley and Clinton).

The developmental organization provides nurture in the form of coaches, peer support, and oversight to explore and grow holistically (spiritual intimacy, emotional health, family health, physical health, financial/support health). Both internal and external resources are provided for this nurture and development. To what extent is your organization a “safe-place learning community”? (see Thrall et al, 1999) To what extent does your organization have a culture of coaching and mentoring? To what extent have you provided for re-training for your leaders and supervisors?

In this dimension, team leaders and supervisors must be equipped to serve as steward-leaders of the gifts of team members in a context of relationships. Team leaders rely upon the biblical practice of “sober estimation” (Rom 12:1-3) to know their team members, and to “equip and release” them find their roles of optimum kingdom contribution based upon their spiritual gifts, calling, and passion (see Ford, 2013, 219-232).

Retention and Organizational Flexibility

7. **Open up new roles and career tracks.** The organization is constantly opening new roles and developing innovative career tracks because it believes that “ministry flows out of being.” As people develop uniquely, they may not find roles that fit them perfectly. Roles must be adjusted to accommodate the growth and maturation of the person. New roles must be created and “sculpted” to fit the developing people if the organization wants to keep them. Such organizations will retain more of their developed leaders instead of training them and supplying other organizations with these highly-qualified people.

The organization intentionally grooms its leaders to facilitate the development and effectiveness of each person for whom they have oversight. This allows the training and development of missionaries to take place amidst life and ministry, not in something designed by few. This is the critical reproduction factor, indispensable to all mission organizations. To what extent does your organization and its leaders see continuing leader replication as a primary ministry goal? To what extent are roles “sculpted” in your organization to fit both the natural and spiritual wiring of your people? vs. a “*plug-and-play*” approach where people are plugged into roles for which they may be ill-suited?

Joining a mission is no longer a lifetime commitment. So organizations must recognize and accept the value that possibly a significant investment in the lives of today’s staff is not just “development” for their role or roles within your organization now, but a kingdom investment for their “post-church/agency” life and ministry—for a lifetime.

When we talk to existing leaders—regardless of their generation—we find that almost all are seeking developmentally-aware organizations. They want to know if someone will take a deep concern for their long-term holistic growth and development. Will someone take the time to get to know them so they can be stewarded in a context of relationships for maximum kingdom impact?

If current leaders are to recruit and retain emerging leaders, we must recognize the importance of leading with a developmental bias. We do not say this simply because the rising corps of leaders are expecting and demanding this, but because it is biblical. Developing leaders was what Jesus was about as he prepared the disciples for the most strategic task of history. If God is in the business of developing leaders, perhaps *his* priority should become the priority of more Christian leaders and organizations.

The transition in moving an existing church or organization toward a more development mindset demands a carefully planned and intentional change strategy. It necessitates a participatory exploration and discovery process that might take months if not more than a year. The following topics and questions have proven helpful to organizations that have attempted this organizational paradigm shift:

Key Topics for a DNA Discussion:

1. What internal processes need to be created to nurture staff development?
2. What organizational initiatives are needed to create a culture of growth and development?
3. How can the entire supervisory structure become more thoroughly developmental with appropriate accountability?
4. What kind of people with what Giftings are needed to lead such an process?
5. How can individual work plans be aligned with organizational directions?
6. How can clear communication be initiated and empowered?
7. What efficient core systems processes must be designed or redesigned?
8. What training for competent steward-leaders must be implemented?
9. Who will oversee the organization's legal compliance?

Twin dynamics of organizational developmental-effectiveness

There are at least two synergistic dynamics at work in and throughout a developmentally aware organization.

The first dynamic encompasses the numerous Organizational Values and Processes which create the *mDNA* to nurture whole people development. To illustrate the life-shaping and practical ways in which churches and mission organizations are developing their people effectively today, we describe below an array of specific approaches to nurture staff development which organizations have designed. The focus is on *what organizations can do*. Each of the examples provided illustrate the organization putting into intentional operation practices that consistently reveal that people are the chief asset in fulfilling the organization's purpose.

The second dynamic flows out of the organizational values, and focuses on staff and leader development—not through program but through Staff Capacity Development. Empowering staff development involves creating a safe-place, grace-filled environment leading to proactive ownership, relevant learning and sustainable impact. It focuses on *what individuals* (staff and leaders) *can do*. The organization facilitates training and development, but the individual must own his or her responsibility to grow as a holistic servant of Christ.

Dettoni clarifies how a developmental perspective focuses an organization's concern to empower individual growth and development: *"Development encourages persons to make decisions and to be responsible for their own learning, growth, and development as they are able. People are the focus of development. Learning occurs in order to help a person become a more mature human being and to reduce less mature states that retard more complete integration..."* (Dettoni, 4).

Organizational Offerings: *What organizations can do*

Initially, organizational leaders must prayerfully work together to create an organizational culture of learning and development. Out of such a safe-place learning environment will flow developmental offerings like the following:

1. Design pre-field and on-field Apprenticeships and Internships appropriate to each ministry role (on a team). Contextualize them to the particular region, city and area of work. Match new missionaries with veteran workers who natural "mentor" and understand the dynamics of "process coaching." What most newcomers need is not primarily expertise, but an alongside encourager and coach to help them learn to solve problems and design solutions on their own.
2. Offer regular developmental staff training on a consistent, on-going basis that is regularly attuned to actual "felt needs" of both men and women in the home office and in the field.
3. Integrate a Personal Development Plan (PDP) into the Role/Position Focus Description of each staff, integral to their job. This annual planning process cannot just be a short-term "add-on" or to "fix" whatever has been wrong. It must be designed and customized to each different ministry setting, and be linked to essential spiritual, ministry and knowledge formation. And you may need not just one but a combination of development plans. A recognition of Body Life reminds us that someone who is mentoring us in one area might need to be mentored by us in another area! That's what "peer mentoring" is all about!
4. Provide a holistic and interactive leader development and training process. Generic staff development is good, but is probably not adequate to keep organizational leaders on the cutting edge of leadership practice and mission strategy. A "blended approach" utilizing both live, face-to-face training in cohorts as well as an array of distance learning options is optimal. Don't depend on either live training or distance learning approaches. Research indicates that a blended approach will have maximum impact for organizational leaders (ASTD, 2004).
5. Design intentional leader "Onboarding" processes for new leaders. The Onboarding process is the designation for experiences and learnings that prepare prospective leaders for their next assignment. Like an on-ramp to a freeway provides sufficient space for gaining speed to merge with fast-moving traffic, so onboarding for leaders gives them space, fuel, and guided assistance to prepare them to "ramp up" their leadership capacity to be at full speed when they assume their next role (see Harder's 2011 EMQ article and series of blogs on the Onboarding process for mission leaders.)
6. Involved in the Onboarding process for leaders is the need to create "developmental assignments" for prospective leaders. The Center for Creative Leadership's research-based model for leader development identifies "developmental assignments" as the all-too-frequent missing ingredient in effective leader development processes. Veterans have a good handle on the range of experiences and skills that effective missionaries must develop, but they are rarely asked to design "next step" ministry assignments through which newer workers can gain exposure, experience, and the requisite learning. Alongside "process coaching" is vital to ensure a "stretch" assignment fits the person and accomplishes its developmental purposes (CCL,1998).

7. Provide appropriate supervision and “process coaching” (Harder, 1992). Just as younger students need teachers, adult learners need alongside coaches. “Process coaches” help facilitate adequate processing and debriefing of what one is learning in the crucible of ministry, team relationships, and field leadership activities. Jesus’ consistent pattern of debriefing the twelve following each short-term ministry foray (Mt 13:10-34, 36-52; 17:19-21; Mk 4:10-20; 6:50-51; Lk 5:4-11; 10:17-20; Jn 4:27-38; 6:60-69, etc.), models for us the critical importance of just-in-time training and just-after debriefing. Learners often need help in deducing lessons from experience, integrating learnings from experience into their lives and ministry, and making learnings from experience practical. Alongside coaches are best situated to help people recognize, articulate and apply learnings emerging from their shared group experiences. Not to provide such learning assistance, is to risk losing the richness and depth of the learning experience (Ward, et al, 1974).
8. Design annual evaluations which provide a setting for “grappling” with issues as well as appropriate and genuine affirmation. Consistent, interactive evaluations integrated into the flow of planning, implementation and accountability for staff are critical to closing the loop on the learning cycle. Evaluations are not about control, or gathering data for donors—solely. Rather, appropriate ministry metrics must imbed the values the organization is seeking to practice, and be gathered in a manner that is thoroughly humane, encouraging and which contribute to greater self-awareness and renewed motivation for growth and service (see Harder’s 1992 “Process Time” model for one-on-one evaluative conversations).
9. Offer life-long learning opportunities and graduate study incentives and options. Christian leaders must recognize their role in encouraging life-long learning and creating organizations which creatively fund and provide a range of learning opportunities they cannot fully provide inside their organizations. Graduate study is just such an example. The key is not paying for the entire program, and giving staff years off to complete the degree; but rather to encourage the benefits of life-long learning with incentives such as partial scholarships, book allowances, and specialized funds for professional education.
10. Create a Coaching and Mentoring culture. The Navigators are just one organization that has, in the last three years, shaped their organization culture to emphasize and offer developmental coaching. Their *Thrive* leader development program has as one component the equipping of volunteer staff to serve as internal Development Resource Persons (DRP) or coaches for other staff desiring such assistance. Annual coach training and tune-ups are provided all interested staff. A critical training program that has aided this movement, is the “CORE Coach Training” (see Webb). This kind of intensive training customized for the Christian market helps organizations create an infrastructure that facilitates ongoing staff development.
11. Offer Mid-Career Assessments to all staff desiring the after two-terms. Church Resource Ministries (CRM) launched its two-day “group discernment” process for veteran staff with over seven years of field ministry in 1996. A team of colleagues and team leader, led by a trained staff development facilitator, spend two days of active listening and praying with the missionary couple to help them discern whether the role they are in is the right “fit” and the best stewardship of their lives going forward. Most staff are greatly affirmed, and typically roles are appropriately re-sculpted (to be more suitable to maturity and emerging gifts and passion) coming out of the MCA process. Some are led to make minor adjustments and to keep moving in the same direction, while others are released to explore totally new ventures of ministry (Hoke, 2010).
12. Facilitate Sabbaticals every seven years: It is estimated that only 15-20 mission organizations of the 900+ North American sending agencies have any kind of Sabbatical policy in place.

This is another indicator of the lack of a developmental bias in most mission organization. Recent missions history has revealed the reality that cross-cultural service is a crucible for character development or for chaotic crashes. Sabbaticals focused on replenishment, silence, solitude, and intentional time with God seem to be especially needed by veterans of both church and mission ministry. A simple policy establishes guidelines, requirements and procedures. Those organizations who have been offering them for more than 10 years (like The Evangelical Free Church of America, The Navigators, CRM, etc.) vocally attest to their efficacy and the rich long-term return on the investment in time away (Hoke, 2010).

13. Use skilled consultants when specialized assistance and advice is needed. When the appropriate level of expertise is not available within an organization, especially developmental assistance, the availability of skilled consultants help bring solutions home. There are numerous individual consultants like Dr. Ken Harder (GMI) in research, David Dougherty (OMF) in leader development who are available for leadership and organizational consulting. Recently, MissioNexus has assembled a panel of consultants in HR, training, leadership, development of women, finance and other areas, who bring the highest level of professional competence to the doors of church-mission organizations (see MissioNexus' Professional Services Group website).

Let us illustrate some of the creative advances being made. Some of the most innovative and promising developmental approaches offered by North American mission agencies include the following:

Overseas Mission Fellowship's (OMF) Leadership Development Program (LDP). E. David Dougherty, working closely with international director Dan Bacon, designed a multi-level and multi-year staff and leader development program that became a "best practice" among mission organizations by 2001. A key was a developmental commitment to shape personal character and spirituality as well as the leaders' ministry skills and strategic thinking over several years, not overnight (see OMF).

International Team's (IT) nine-module distance Leader Development "The Journey Begins" program. Concerned in 2012 with upgrading the leadership skills of all field leaders, IT appointed Anna Pavey to find a creative, a cost-effective solution. Pavey involved over 60 organizational leaders in a creative distance learning program which offered weekly sessions of video input, group conversations, and peer coaching for the nine-month curriculum.. Though limited by finances from ever meeting face-to-face, this program models for other organizations what can be done with limited funds and relying solely upon on-line learning options (see International Teams).

African Inland Mission's (AIM) Training in Ministry Outreach (TIMO) was designed to train long-term missionaries in team settings, in order to make disciples of the lost. Over the last 25 years, its effectiveness has transformed AIM's cross-cultural church planting efforts, while achieving an equally stellar level of sustaining upwards of an 80% retention level within AIM and other agencies. Widely considered a "best practice" in missionary training, AIM's program dynamics are readily available for others to learn from (see TIMO).

International Mission Board's (IMB) International Center of Excellence in Leadership (ICEL) program for staff and leader development. Working with a team of missionaries and trainers as far back as the mid-90s, Dr. Lloyd Rogers participated in the design and now leads the IMB's varied array of on-line learning modules. Titles range from "Church Planting Movements" to book discussions on missions topics designed to support continuing education of missionaries in their field context (see ICEL).

One Challenge International (OCi) Recognizing that many incoming candidates and younger missionaries lacked a basic level of spiritual self-awareness of their identity in Christ, and several other essential life and ministry values, OC created and offers the 1-week *Lifeworkx* self-discovery course-retreat to all incoming staff (see One Challenge).

The reader probably knows of other equally well-designed organizational offerings which effectively nurture staff development, but this listing is sufficient for our purposes. Organizations that discover a developmental bias are highly likely to become advocates for creative and cost-effective ways to nurture the growth and development of all their staff, not just top-level leaders. The rewards of such well-intentioned stewardship are two-fold—immediate fruit as well as recurring annual returns over the long-term.

Empowering Staff-Initiated Learning and Development: *What staff can do*

You may have been surprised at realizing all that an organization can do to nurture the personal growth and development of its staff. But that is only the framework in which the most effective informal learning takes place. For the purposes of this article we are defining “informal education” as learning that is *self-initiated and self-planned; it may involve group learning, but is typically self-implemented*.

Development of Individuals



The Four Stages of Learning (here titled, Development of Individuals) provides a model for learning and people development. It suggests that individuals are initially unaware of how little they know or unconscious of their incompetence. As they recognize their incompetence, they consciously acquire a skill, then consciously use it. Eventually, they skill can be utilized without it being consciously thought through: the individual is said to have then acquired unconscious competence (Burch).

In the church and mission arena, self-awareness is critical to effective self-initiated learning. And finding ways to

motivate and empower greater self-awareness is a critical step towards empowering self-initiated learning on the part of all church and mission organization staff.

Remember these categories are not characteristic of a person, but rather of a specific role, task or relationship. So you can relax—few of us are totally unconsciously incompetent in all areas. Sometimes people can be competent but do not have the confidence to move through these levels. So learning many times must include competence and confidence! Many times you have to address confidence as well as competence. This on-the-job confidence is best built through close-in mentoring and alongside learning.

Reflect on how Jesus did this so safely and gracefully: In sending out the disciples to discover what they could not do, he helped them realize they lacked an attitude, not just the skills. Sometimes incompetence is an attitude as much of a skill. People in that state have no reason to grow. Good coaches come alongside to help people to recognize a need—that their present understanding or skills does not fit; that they seem to be unwilling to learn something new.

But we do this carefully and lovingly—because some people may carry hurt or pain in certain areas of incompetence—from their past. They won't see it as an attitude or skill, but may feel it is who they are because of what people have said about them in the past. That is false. Our role is to help a person recognize learning needs are specific to role and tasks. It is not a self-descriptor. But when we “bump into history” it may be painful for our learners; and has to be worked through personally. (From Harder, 2013).

Examples of Promising Empowering Approaches

From within an intentionally created organizational culture that nurtures learning and development, it is natural and necessary to move to the intentional empowering of staff through a creative array of developmental initiatives. The examples listed below are but a sample of empowerment approaches that have already proven effective in the church-mission context. Though each one warrants a full discussion on its own merits, our space limitations force us to capture only the core of the effort:

1. Self-initiated “Action Learning Projects” (Tough). Tough's research focused on the adult's successful efforts to learn and change, particularly the 70% of adults who are self-guided without relying much on professionals or institutions. Research since the early 70s indicates that 60-80% of what a person needs to do on their job is learned through informal learning! Often staff need no more motivation to learn than the encouragement to go after a problem or question they face on-the-job, and turn it into an “action learning project.”
2. Seek reflective interaction with your supervisor and peers to “grapple” with the issues. Again, most people need a simple nudge of encouragement to talk directly with their supervisor or appears about issues they are facing. Rather than avoiding or minimizing the issues of cross-cultural adjustment, for example, new missionaries most often need honest exploration of what they are experiencing and feeling with a peer colleague, not necessarily an expert.
3. Model “Ride-Along” pattern—to disciple and to learn: Dan Rabe of New Tribes Mission tries to always invite a younger co-worker to “ride along” or travel with him to and from ministry assignments. The informal atmosphere is a rich setting for modeling, teaching, debriefing and personal discovery. CRM's CEO Sam Metcalf for many years had high potential younger staff in tow in “Ministry Assistant” roles where the younger leader(s) shadowed him around the world. Metcalf comments: “More is caught with me at 35,000 feet and in actual ministry venues than in any sterile classroom” (Metcalf).
4. Seek a coach or outside mentor: Empower staff to create their own “mentoring clusters” of two or three mentors (Upward or Peer) to provide counsel or expertise in needed areas to supplement what organizational leaders might be able to provide (Hoke and Walling).
5. Find a Spiritual Director: One type of mentor needed by many church and mission workers is a Spiritual Director—a mature Christian with the gifting and training to serve in the alongside role of a “Soul Guide” to people in ministry. Spiritual Directors are not so much experts or teachers, as they are active listeners who assist front-line workers process their questions, issues and life transitions amidst the crucible of cross-cultural ministry, whether Stateside or international (Stanley and Clinton).
6. Pursue opportunities for “On-the-job” (OTJ) learning: Recent research does not deny the value of pre-field or formal education, but has discovered the potency of information, insights and skills learned “on-the-job,” not at a distance before the realities of a job are encountered. Some people are consummate natural learners, and are always asking questions, looking for mentors to teach them, or looking for experts from whom they can learn. But others need the encouragement to maximize their real-life role by finding a nearby peer or veteran who can guide their learning—by coaching, advising or teaching them as they progress in a new job, or when they hit a hurdle that seems insurmountable.
7. Encourage Study leaves which will relate to role performance and effectiveness and build-in procedures for feedback and accountability: Though the idea and precedent for study leaves has been around since Daniel and his three friends, some people need a firm but gentle nudge to find the funds and set aside the time to intentionally develop themselves in a non-formal or formal educational program. The recent explosion of distance ed programs now

brings invaluable and focused graduate education into any electrically connected room in the world.

8. Provide academic advising to encourage appropriate graduate study programs: Too often churches and mission agencies have assumed that all staff who enter graduate programs know what they are doing or will get adequate professional advising at their chosen school. Nothing could be further from the truth. Too few institutions reward high quality, just-in-time academic advising that sculpts a program to the person's profile. Too few faculty devote sufficient time to assist even veteran Christian workers in navigating the maze of graduate education. So, if the schools aren't doing an adequate job, churches and organizations must step into the gap to identify resource people to track with their staff from the onset of their academic programs through to completion.
9. Release staff to conduct their own Field research projects: Organizations need to become alert to the infrequent but motivated staff who articulate the questions, and want to research causes and problems. They only need permission—or some time off to pursue their self-guided field research. Many a breakthrough in local church and field missionary work has come as a result of one inquisitive person going after a question that no one could answer.
10. Encourage site visits: I am always flabbergasted when I find field church staff or missionaries who have been “too busy” to visit a neighboring church, a “best practice” partner agency, or observe what the Spirit may be doing next door. That isolationism reflects badly on people of Body Life convictions. Team leaders should always be encouraging their team members to be actively listening, looking and visiting the ministry sites where God is at work.
11. Encourage creative social media networking including Facebook for church planters, threaded conversations, watching and listening to stimulating video clips, etc. No further comment needed here other than to remind older leaders to release younger staff to learn via their preferred media.
12. Encourage library research projects: Everyone has done these throughout their schooling years. Why not empower continued “book learning” applied to ministry practice utilizing the immense power of the web?
13. Equip staff to conduct fruitful web resource searches: Not everyone is adept at finding what they want on the web. But in every team and organization is some web-sleuth with uncanny power to find tapes, talks, books, articles, and videos on any subject they are asked to find. Identify those people and make them heroes—for the cause!
14. Incentivize writing projects: Suggest and then assist staff to write and place research papers and articles for publication. Include small incentives for timely “white papers,” blogs, thought provoking paragraphs, poems, creative non-fiction storytelling, etc. Again, most people who are not natural or trained writers usually need a suggestion on how to focus their idea and a nudge to use the keyboard to get started. At least one individual in each organization should own the goal to find and motivate as many staff writers as they can. This same person should be constantly scanning staff prayer letters and communications to surface the gold deserving of wider distribution.
15. Encourage Speaking projects: workshops, teaching assignments, webinars, etc. Humility can often be a limiting feature of missionaries and Christian workers. They don't push themselves. They hang back and wait to be recognized. When organizations fail to own their responsibility to value and affirm capable and gifted people, many times the teaching gifts of those people are lost to the organization. At least one individual in each organization

should be on the look-out for speakers and preachers in-the-rough, who need to be encouraged to tell their story, to teach a class, to speak to a group of kids or donors, who need the affirmation before they may discover their gift. And these came champions can help refer speakers to churches, schools and organizations looking for current speakers on cross-cultural topics.

16. Encourage staff and leaders professional development: Many Christian workers will need intentional urging to attend the best training events available in whatever part of the world they live. Many have never thought they could afford attending a professional conference, whether religious or secular. No one church or mission agency can possibly provide a world-class menu of learning modules to all of their own staff. But, we now live in a hyper-connected world, with talks, videos, and music available at the click of a download key. Take advantage of the plethora of quality learning resources offered by churches and organizations other than your own. Often staff are just waiting for permission to visit or listen to leaders of another denomination or group. Be generous in your praise and affirmation of the value of the teaching input of multiple other partners in ministry.

The list of way to empower others is endless, depending only on the creativity of the coach and encourager. Be a Barnabas in encouraging and empowering others to become self-directed learners for a life-time!

Creating Your Own Action Plan for a Change Strategy

Let me conclude with a few remarks on how to create a “bridging strategy” for moving your organization from where it is to where it needs to be—developmentally! Whether you are Developmental experts or empowering neophytes, the following suggestions can be adapted to your setting to help you either start or keep the developmental ball rolling:

1. Form a close-knit team of key people with shared values for people development.
2. Conduct some informal (ala Nehemiah) and public needs assessment research to focus actual needs in YOUR church or organization. Don’t launch a program based on one person’s read of the situation. Make it a grassroots effort from the start.
3. Discern together what should be your first steps in influencing the organizational culture. Organizational development research suggests that a collaborative team approach will be much more successful than the valiant efforts of a champion for a personal cause.
4. Prayerfully create a “bridging strategy” to shape your Organizational Culture. Start small and slow, but realize you are forging organizational culture. And meaningful and lasting change takes time.
5. Recruit at least one accountability partner or coach... Those of you who have strong organizational support are probably “chomping at the bit” to get started with these suggestions. For those who don’t, there are OD coaches available as are other HR, training and learning coaches for a 30, 60, or 90 day period as accountability partners who will be a life-saver. The author is available to assist any readers at finding the developmental resources they need.
6. Think big; start small: Design your change strategy. Organization culture will not change by accident. But it will respond to a godly, persistent and Spirit-filled remnant of like-minded developmentalists who long to see God’s people nurtured, cared for and developed to their God-given potential—for kingdom impact!

If you are as concerned now, as you were when you first read the opening vignettes of organizational abuse, you may be responding to the developmental impulses of the Spirit. If Abba draws us into community as his Children, and Jesus models the developmental processes of discipling, and the Holy Spirit serves as our divine encourager and counselor, each of you has at your ready disposal the resources of our Trinitarian God to become an empowered people developer!

Endnotes

FN1: This Common Ground article is an expansion of the author's article in EMQ, Sep 2013, "Nurturing an Organizational Culture with a Developmental Bias," with permission from the Billy Graham Center to revise for this journal

¹ J. Robert Clinton's original article, "Leading with a Developmental Bias," (Altadena, CA: Barnabas Publishers, Nov. 1996) serves as the foundation for this revised and updated version for EMQ, September, 2013, with Clinton's permission to reflect more recent needs and developments within Christian mission agencies.

FN3: I can describe my exposure to and experience in both church and mission organizations as rich and varied. My exposure as a participant-observer includes the following: an MK in Tokyo, Japan for 15 years; member of 13 different churches since 1964, holding staff positions in two, adult ed teacher in 12, launched age-graded congregations in several, on Mission Committee in three, and an Elder in three. I have visited and worked with missionaries in over 40 countries, and consulted and coached over 500 missionaries in over 100 agencies since 1986. I have also served on the board of three different agencies, and served as a church-missions consultant with over 30 churches (in over 15 denominations) since 1980.

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International Teams' "The Journey Begins" Leader Development program. For more information contact: anna.pavey@iteams.org

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MissionNexus. Dr. Marv Newell coordinates the panel of consultants available to serve member agencies. See <http://www.missionnexus.org/professional-services-group/>

Overseas Mission Fellowship (OMF). For more information of their Leader Development Program, contact E. David Dougherty edavidomf@gmail.com

One Challenge. Steven Aldrich is the creator and lead trainer for the Lifeworkx program, and can be reached at: www.lifeworkx.com

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Dr. Steve Hoke (MA, Wheaton Graduate School; M.Div. Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Michigan State University (PhD, 1977), claims his paradigm of learning and development was turned upside down in his doctoral work—not his theological studies! There he experienced a conversion to developmentalism. He serves with Church Resource Ministries (CRM), in the area of leader development and as a strategic life coach. He travels extensively to equip and encourage front-line cross-cultural workers to discover their unique design and gifting. His passion is to see emotionally and spiritually healthy workers minister in Spiritual Authority in the difficult places of our world. He has taught at Seattle Pacific University, Azusa Pacific University, Fuller School of Intercultural Studies, and Reformed Theological Seminary. Steve also served on the MissioNexus LeaderLINK team, equipping missionaries in Africa, Europe, Latin America, and North America (2000-2009) He is co-author with Bill Taylor of *The Global Missions Handbook: Your Guide to Crosscultural Service* (NAVPress, 2009).
