

excelerate

Excellence, Innovation and Partnership in Mission
a Publication of The Mission Exchange

Issue 1

**How Inno-Friendly
is Your Organization?**



Innovation in Mission Award
Presented to Orality Movement | **PAGE 10**

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THE MISSION
EXCHANGE

Empowering the Global Mission Community

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1

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**THE MISSION
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* This entire menu of resources (excluding conferences) is FREE to every staff member and missionary serving with a full member organization. See page 14 for information on **improve**, our member benefit focused on organizations rather than individuals.

Faster. Better. Cheaper.

Too many church and mission leaders have dismissively and derisively relegated these words to the marketplace. They are presented as exhibits one, two and three of Machiavellian motives and corporate greed; the excesses of unbridled capitalism that should be avoided at all cost by kingdom workers.

In this inaugural issue we are celebrating the paradigm-expanding and yet practical ministry of the International Orality Network... encouraging leaders to pursue excellence... to become more innovation friendly... to embrace partnership as a value

But why should we believe identifying and addressing inefficiencies in how we do church or mission automatically requires us to compromise kingdom values and turn away from a total dependency on God? I reject that assumption out of hand. If we could get more workers to the field in less time, without compromising on the quality of training or the depth of their support network, it would be foolish to resist because the new approach was faster, better and cheaper.

Leaders are stewards of a vision from God and will be held accountable. A biblical understanding of stewardship demands that we not only eliminate waste but pursue excellence, innovation and partnership in mission. That is the focus of **eXcelerate**.

In this inaugural issue we are celebrating the paradigm-expanding and yet practical ministry of the International Orality Network with our first ever *Innovation in Mission Award* (see page 12). We are also encouraging leaders to pursue excellence (see page 6), to become more innovation friendly (see page 8) and to embrace partnership as a value, not just a strategy (see page 14).

It is my prayer that in these few pages you are inspired with a fresh vision of what God could do through your life and the ministry in which you serve. I pray that empowered by the Holy Spirit you bear much fruit that lasts. Faster. Better. Cheaper.



Blessings,
Steve Moore
President and CEO
The Mission Exchange

Pursuing Excellence in Mission



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Excellence in everything simply isn't possible. However the pursuit of excellence in everything should be the determined path of every leader. I learned that lesson from Dr. Ted Engstrom, my mentor for twenty years. That was Ted's thesis in the little gift book he wrote titled, *The Pursuit of Excellence*.

The pressing question for leaders is what do we actually need to do in order to pursue excellence? That's a practical question. But as is often the case in leadership, what you see comes before what you do; we must envision before we take action. I believe the pursuit of excellence involves envisioning the future, envisioning your team and envisioning potential results.

Envision the Future

Excellent leaders are future focused. T. Mark Miller, Vice President of Training for Chick-fil-A, in his book *The Secret*, co-authored with Ken Blanchard, emphasizes the connection between envisioning the future and providing excellent service. The book is organized around the acronym, SERVE, where "S" stands for see the future. To serve others well and accomplish what God has in mind for your organization requires the discipline to quickly learn from the past and then keep a laser-like focus on the future.

Thomas Friedman, in his book, *The World is Flat*, says, "When your memories exceed your dreams the end is near." Leaders who focus on the past rather than envisioning the future will not stay on the cutting edge. They try to build their organization on the milestones of yesterday rather than pursuing the building blocks of tomorrow.

Marjorie Blanchard, Ken's wife, leads the Office of the Future for the Blanchard Companies. One of their many findings on the future is summed up in her popular quote, "Most leaders cannot forget the past fast enough to see the future."

To be accurate in envisioning the future, to see what God sees, you must maintain a focused prayer life. You need time to think, pray and plan. Jeremiah 29:11 reminds us that the plans He has for our future are good plans. We must come to know His plans if we are to pursue excellence and produce the expected results, being good stewards of the resources He has entrusted to us.

It has been said that for every 10 minutes you spend in planning you save an hour in execution. The first stage of effective planning is conceptual. You do conceptual planning alone. A Bible, yellow pad and a pen is all you need. Allow God to speak to you. Dream big dreams. Think through concepts that will lead you toward excellence and increased productivity. Spend time listening to God. Make sure it is His plans you are developing. This is not a time to ask God to bless your plans.

Envision Your Team

We all have gifts. But none of us have all the gifts. This is why a leadership team is critical. Some of us are results-oriented people. Others are idea or creative people, while others are people-people, very effective with interpersonal relationships. And then there are those who are project people.

The key to building an effective team is to first understand your own gifts, and then build your team with the people who have gifts you do not have. This is not a time to recruit your friends. Your friends too often have gifts similar to yours. The greatest mistake a leader can make is to hire people just like herself.



Keys to Pursuing Excellence in Mission

- Envision the future
- Evaluate the gifts of your team
- Articulate your expected outcomes
- Stay focused on your stated mission
- Determine your priorities annually
- Set your goals based on your priorities
- Stop doing everything that does not fit within your priorities
- Choose what you will measure
- Measure how well you are doing monthly or at least quarterly
- Celebrate your results

Why do we hire leaders just like ourselves? There are two basic reasons. First, we like to be around people like ourselves. Our commonality of strengths provides a comfortable environment. Second, we like ourselves way too much. We place too much value on our style, our way of thinking, our giftedness and it de-motivates us from recruiting people who are not like us.

The pursuit of excellence requires us to build a balanced team. Your team should be made up of people who can see your dream from a different perspective. This will help you make decisions that produce greater results and for a longer period of time.

Your team must have a BIG goal to keep them motivated. In his article, “The Team Building Trap”, Dr. Jim Galvin says, “Teams are not built by retreats and creative activities, but by men and women committed to each other and to accomplishing a lofty goal.” In the pursuit of excellence you can always stretch a team member out of his comfort zone, but never out of his gift zone.

An effective team produces synergy. Synergy is a phenomenon in which the output is greater than the sum of the inputs. It only occurs at the highest level of cooperation. Pat MacMillan in his book, *The Performance Factor*, spoke of this level of collaboration defining a team as “a group of people committed to a common purpose who choose to cooperate in order to achieve exceptional results.”

Envision Potential Results

It is not enough to envision the future and the team required to get you there. Leaders must also give definition to the desired future by envisioning potential results. This is the area where most leaders quit pursuing excellence by failing to develop expected outcomes. They often excuse themselves with spiritual rhetoric, saying, “Only God knows the results.” Of course our view from this side of eternity is limited. It is “God who makes things grow.” But leaders pursuing excellence understand the importance of evaluating their progress by articulating outcomes.

Great leaders expect results, plan for results, execute for results, measure results and celebrate results.

Leaders move from the conceptual planning stage by getting their team involved in the strategic, long-term and annual operational plans. They set goals with time-lines, moving ahead with a strategy to execute their pre-determined plans.

Good leaders establish metrics of what success will look like. In other words, they set numerical goals where appropriate and everyone does everything in their power to meet the pre-established goals. Numbers never tell the whole story; but the part of the story they do tell is important. Perhaps that’s why God included a whole book of the Bible, Numbers, on this topic.

I’ve observed two extremes when it comes to numerical metrics in leadership. Some leaders avoid them altogether; others set the numbers so high that they can never be reached. Strive for someplace in the middle; keep your metrics reachable and yet challenging. When there are no goals to reach you will never know when to celebrate. Celebratory experiences provide a new level of motivation for the next “hill to take.” Measurements let you as a leader, and your team, know how well you are doing. ☒

From Invention to Innovation: How Inno-Friendly is Your Organization?



Steve Moore
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I've never met an effective leader who wasn't on the lookout for the next big idea. Leaders intuitively understand the relationship between ideas and innovation and between innovation and increased effectiveness. It was Thomas Edison who said an idea is called invention; converting an idea into something useful for the customer and profitable for the company is called innovation. As a church or ministry leader, your bottom line is infinitely more important than any company, which is why innovation is just as important for you as any business leader.

One of my favorite stories from mission history that highlights the importance of innovation comes from the life of Hudson Taylor. As an emerging missionary in China, Hudson Taylor encountered several Chinese men who, as they went about their business, were continually looking up at him, talking amongst themselves and laughing. Curious and self-conscious, he approached the men and convinced them to tell him what they had found so amusing. He was dressed as was typical to Britain at the time and the men pointed out that his vest had a button on one side and a button hole on the other but clearly hadn't been made with enough material to actually close across his chest, which struck them as ridiculous.

It was at this moment that Taylor first realized he had cultural baggage which was creating a barrier for his evangelistic efforts. Mulling over this idea later convinced him to go to great lengths to remove those barriers, doing everything from abandoning his western dress to shaving nearly all of his head, as was typical for Chinese men, and dyeing what was left black. That was a paradigm busting innovation that continues to impact mission strategy and contextualized ministry today.

Hudson Taylor's experience not only illustrates innovation in mission, it raises two important questions: Where do you most need a fresh burst of innovation? How innovation friendly is your organizational culture?

Seth Godin, in his book *Free Prize Inside!*, makes a thought provoking statement: "There is no correlation between how good your idea is and how likely your organization will be to embrace it." We wrongly assume that if the right idea came along we would recognize it and implement it. History tells a different story. In fact, the more paradigm-busting the idea, the greater the likelihood it will be resisted at first. This is why George Whitefield's innovative approach of preaching outdoors to common folk in Bristol was rejected at first, even by his friends. Few individuals see the potential in breakthrough ideas when they are first introduced and even fewer organizations are structured in a manner that readily turns invention into innovation.

While far from an exhaustive list, I want to highlight four limiting factors that affect the innovation-friendliness of your organizational culture:

*We wrongly assume that if the right idea came along
we would recognize it and implement it.*

1 Elitist Mentality: Research on the logic of diversity shows that a group of randomly selected individuals have a better chance of solving a complex problem than the same number of experts in that particular field. The experts will be much more homogeneous; they will likely have read the same books, trained in the same institutions and been collectively convinced about what won't work. They can't ask the dumb questions that often trigger new ideas.

Why is this important for you? Most churches and ministries limit key brainstorming sessions to insider experts, the "professional Christians" on their staff, unwittingly practicing a form of elitist thinking that will greatly reduce the "aha!" quotient of your meetings. I encourage you to randomly cycle people from every layer of your constituency through those key brainstorming sessions.

2 Risk Averse Culture: Speaking to a group of mission executives at one of our gatherings a few years ago, Cobie Langerak, President of Triaxia Partners, said, "Mediocrity has become a bigger problem for Christian leaders than failure." I agree. We are convinced our constituents don't want to hear we tried something new that didn't work and we know how difficult it is to keep them from finding out, so we repeatedly opt for safety over creativity, resulting in mediocrity. Our problem is not that we are making too many mistakes. On the contrary, we are not making mistakes fast enough. When it comes to innovation, not making any mistakes is just as

big of a problem as making the same ones over and over again.

3 Bureaucratic Systems: Here's an exercise for you: pick a box at random in the bottom one third of your organizational chart and imagine this as the hypothetical epicenter of a breakthrough idea. (If your first thought was why the bottom third, reread my first point - you may be suffering from elitist thinking!) Now make a process chart showing how many meetings and approvals this idea would have to go through before it could be cleared for implementation along with a timeline showing how long it would take. You might be surprised at what you find. "Speed to market" is a phrase few ministry leaders would use in a brainstorming or planning session, but the fact of the matter is the rapid pace of change means the shelf life of your very best idea is constantly decreasing. Stability is not as important as agility when it comes to organizational development. The proverbial red tape is a powerful limiting factor many organizations need to address.

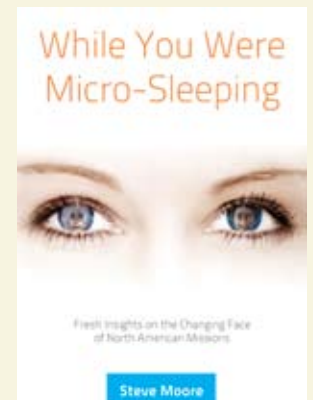
4 Uni-directional Feedback: Most innovation happens at the customer interface, the point of grassroots connection between your frontline staff and your constituents. Some time ago I was looking for a specific book for my Kindle on amazon.com and when I saw that it wasn't available in an electronic version I had the thought that it would be nice to be able to email the publishers and tell them that I would have bought that book if

it had been offered in the Kindle format. I sent a quick email to amazon.com with that idea before exiting the website and quickly forgot about it. A few weeks later I was searching for another book which was also not available for the Kindle and, having the same thought occur to me, looked and realized that in just a matter of weeks they had created a button in the corner of the screen which read "click here to send a message directly to the publisher regarding this book". (In case you are wondering, the book I wanted was available in the Kindle format in less than a month!)

I may have been one of thousands of people who expressed the same idea and clearly someone took notice. But the problem is most churches and mission organizations have one-way communication corridors that flow from the top down. So the people with the power to embrace and execute new ideas rarely ever experience the operation of the ministry at the grassroots and have no consistent mechanism for getting feedback from the people who do. Senior pastors never pull in their own church parking lot one minute before the service is scheduled to start so they have no idea what people who do actually experience. Mission leaders rarely if ever experience the activities of their mission outside of padded walls of preference that come with the status of being CEO.

With these four limiting factors in mind, let's refocus on application: How innovation friendly is your organizational culture? And how will you overcome the limiting factors that choke out invention and block innovation? ☒

*This article is from Steve Moore's new book, **While You Were Micro-Sleeping: Fresh Insights on the Changing Face of North American Missions**. It is based on the transcripts of *Learning @ The Speed of Life*, the video blog of *The Mission Exchange*. A new blog post is available on the 5th of every month.*



When it comes to innovation, not making any mistakes is just as big of a problem as making the same ones over and over again.

Values in Action

Celebrating Excellence, Innovation and Partnership in Mission

Since 2007, we have been presenting an annual *Lifetime of Service* Award to a leader in the Great Commission community, highlighting our value for finishing well and making a lasting contribution to the Great Commission. Beginning this year, in addition to the *Lifetime of Service* Award, we are giving one of the following three awards to a deserving member of the North American Great Commission community: *Excellence in Mission* Award, *Innovation in Mission* Award, and *Partnership in Mission* Award. This year's recipient, the International Orality Network (ION), is receiving the *Innovation in Mission* Award. The article, "Gazing on God's Glory and Telling His Story" on page 10, gives more information about this year's award winner.

T.J. Addington, Executive Director of ReachGlobal, is providing leadership to our award selection team and responded to some of the common questions you might have.

Why these three awards? What is so important about excellence, innovation and partnership?

These are characteristics of all great organizations. Unfortunately mission organizations often change slowly, resist new ideas, and fail to evaluate effectiveness. We would like to be champions of a renaissance of excellence, innovation and partnership as we learn from one another.

How do we make a nomination?

You can visit our website, www.TheMissionExchange.org, click on the "get involved" tab and select "award nomination."

What will the award winner receive and when will it be presented?

Organizations will receive the award at the September conference. In addition to a simple physical award to display in their home office (think JD Power award), we will profile the award winner in the annual publication of eXcelerate. You are reading the first edition of that magazine.

Will winners be limited to the membership of The Mission Exchange?

No, we are not limiting awards to members of the Mission Exchange. They would need to fit the ethos and evangelical commitments of the Mission Exchange organization and its members.

Don't these types of awards give an advantage to the larger churches or mission organizations?

My guess is that this will not be true. Larger organizations often find it more difficult to stay nimble, embrace innovation and see the need to partner with others. Yet at the same time, large organizations often actually learn their best lessons from smaller organizations who can respond more quickly to changing needs. That being said, the values in action selection team will be very sensitive to this issue, since only a small number of mission organizations in the United States would be classified as large. ☒

One of the best ways to embed values into the culture of an organization is to celebrate decisions and actions that evidence a commitment to those guiding principles. We have identified four specific values we want to champion and celebrate as an association: excellence, innovation, partnership and finishing well.

In addition to our annual *Lifetime of Service* Award, we are looking for noteworthy examples of excellence, innovation and partnership in the North American mission community. If someone were to ask you for an ideal picture of what excellence, innovation or partnership in mission looks like in practice, where would you direct their attention in the North American mission movement?

Collaboration and the Orality Movement

By Bill Sunderland

Associate Director | [visionSynergy](#)



With 60% of the world's population either not being able to read or choosing not to read, mission strategists believe that achieving the great commission without using "oral" methods would not be possible. Thus the Orality movement was born – and networks and partnerships are playing a key role in the growth of this movement.

As the Orality movement began to take hold, a groundbreaking partnership was formed between Campus Crusade for Christ, the International Mission Board (SBC), Youth With A Mission, Trans World Radio and Wycliffe Bible Translators. All these agencies formed teams to reach the thousands of unreached people groups where oral-preference learners were present. Today this partnership is called "One Story." www.onestory.org

At the same time, a more internationally-based network called the "Bridges Training Network" was being formed on the field with local indigenous ministries being the focal point.

Today, more than 36 indigenous ministries from the Indian Sub-Continent and Africa along with seven Western ministries are part of this "Bridges Training Network." More than 20,000 grass roots church planters have been trained and 3,000 + churches planted.

Finally, but most certainly not the last, is the International Orality Network (ION) www.oralbible.com. ION is a loose network of hundreds of ministries, both Western and non-Western, whose sole purpose is to influence the Body of Christ to make disciples of all oral learners. Through cooperation and collaboration, the Orality movement is gaining momentum while it supplies training to scores of different denominations, ministries and local churches.

Collaboration is minimizing duplication, helping to promote this methodology across many diverse ministries and helping us all function in the "Body of Christ." ☒





Gazing on God’s Glory and Telling His Story

**Let me tell you a story
... about accelerating
the fulfillment of the
Great Commission in
the 21st Century.**

It’s the story about telling THE STORY in a way that not just evangelizes but makes disciples. It’s the story of a movement that has garnered support from diverse organizations and people for a unified purpose: making disciples of oral learners by communicating God’s Word in culturally relevant ways. It is the story of the International Orality Network (ION).

Two thirds of the people in the world are oral communicators

– who can’t, don’t or won’t learn through literate means. Western Christianity has, since the time of the Gutenberg Bible, “walked on literate feet” and has directly or indirectly required literacy of others, ignoring the vast majority of people who are oral communicators. Literate Christians must make significant changes in evangelism, discipleship, leadership training and church planting or risk not reaching some 4,000,000,000 oral communicators world-wide.

That’s where this story begins. The orality movement had small beginnings with a missionary couple serving in Papua New Guinea. They used

a chronological Bible teaching method, telling the story from Creation to Christ. Fast forward through several transitions through many different hands and the movement has grown exponentially, expanding to meet requests coming from all over the world. Now ION exists to accelerate the process of making the gospel available to all oral learners in their mother languages and do it better, faster, cheaper and more effectively than when literate methods alone are used. The orality movement mobilizes mission organizations and denominations around the world to work together and share oral strategies to accomplish that vision.

How does it work? The orality movement advocates communication forms that are familiar within the culture: stories, proverbs, drama, songs, chants and poetry. The best oral strategies deal with the worldview of the people by addressing the bridges, barriers and gaps in the culture. The worldview studies done by missionaries and nationals establish a baseline in helping the bringer of the Good News know how to communicate in that culture and assist him in choosing and crafting the oral Bible stories. As a result the receivers of the Good News hear in the way they learn best and in a way they can naturally reproduce within their own culture.

ION now has over 100 mission organization and denominations in partnership, experiencing organizational breakthroughs using oral strategies. Many organizations have seen increased effectiveness in various regions of the world. Collaborations have resulted in 19 translated "oral Bibles" in the last three years alone and 106 more are in progress. Organizations have tailored their processes to reach the unreached more quickly. Others have supplemented their literate approaches with oral strategies and still others have totally abandoned their established "literate" curriculum and adopted this more effective strategy so that more oral learners can be reached. In one instance after training in oral methods 50 non-literates led 4,607 people to Jesus (a six fold increase over previous methods) and planted 198 churches (a 20 fold increase).

What is ION's hope for the future? One goal is that by 2020 Great Commission agencies in the West and the rest of the world will be aware of orality

and the need to communicate with oral methods. The hope is that a majority of mission organizations will begin preparing their missionaries to use oral strategies in evangelism, discipleship and leadership training. Also, that at least 50% of the churches in the US and other sending countries involved in direct missions will use appropriate communications strategies with the oral learners they engage. ION would like to see at least 30% of the seminaries and Bible schools of the world offering courses in oral strategies.

Another goal is that oral communication strategies will be commonplace on every continent and in every country and be used among all segments of society wherever oral learners are found. There will be a multiplicity of resources available in thousands of languages for training in orality making it possible for ordinary people to apply oral strategies in their ministries. By 2020 the term "unreached people groups" could pass into disuse because with appropriate oral strategies functioning there could be ZERO unengaged, unreached people groups in the world. The Word of God could be available to all people groups in an oral form everywhere it is needed. Oral strategies could become so normal in the mission world that special ION consultations will not be needed since the methodology will be an integral part of normal mission world.

Let me tell you a story ... about completing the Great Commission in the 21st Century. ION believes, and we believe along with them, that the implementation of oral strategies by the partnering mission organizations and denominations will help make this a reality. ☒

The Mission Exchange presents the 2009 Innovation in Mission Award to the International Orality Network

Students of the diffusion of innovation recognize every breakthrough idea began with a few paradigm pioneers who, often in the face of significant opposition and with little recognition, paved the way for others. The orality movement we recognize with the 2009 Innovation in Mission Award, in particular the International Orality Network (ION), stands on the shoulders of many such paradigm pioneers.

ION received multiple nominations from members of The Mission Exchange. Our award selection team was drawn to this nomination because of how the innovative approach and breakthrough thinking was quickly leveraged to produce practical training as well as effective resources that are making a difference at the grass roots.

It is impossible to identify and recognize all the people and organizations who have laid the foundation for the effective ministry happening around the world today under the banner of the orality movement. To each of these paradigm pioneers, we say thank you for blazing a trail. Giving this award is in part our way of encouraging even more people to follow your lead.

**How to
nominate
someone for
next year's
award?**

Go to
TheMissionExchange.org



go to the
"get involved" tab



and click on
"award nomination"



*Due date is March 1, 2010.
Nomination is not limited
to The Mission Exchange
members.*

Linking Arms for a Common Cause



Rev. David Hackett
Associate Director | VisionSynergy

The ministry horizon is filled with struggling and marginally-productive solo ventures trying to hold on and win attention. With all their commitment, who can fault these ministries' entrepreneurial dedication and energy, scraping together a ministry often on a shoestring and carving out a role they work on all by themselves?

The eventual superiority of a networked ministry

Most Christian groups are shaped by the clarity of a founder's vision and their own home-grown approach to tackling some aspect of ministry. These strengths can bring a ministry into being where there wasn't one before – an impressive feat! But it doesn't take long to notice that it is no virtue for a ministry to go it alone for long – not when finances mount, innovation costs escalate, duplication ensues, and efforts pale compared to the immensity of the task at hand.

More importantly, a ministry may not be fully faithful to the call of Christ if it does not pursue its cause by partnering with other organizations to do greater things together for Christ. Jesus presented his followers with an unparalleled partnership vision captured in John 17:21: "...that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me." Plainly speaking, this grand Jesus-prayer seems oddly ill-served by the vast majority of ministry organizations that continue to act independently – often oblivious to one another if not competing against each other. And so we observe that while most affirm partnership as a core value for their organization, in practice things often work out quite differently. The difference has to do with the gap between idealized values and realized values.

Idealized values are overarching values that are fairly easy to support in principle, such as the statement that "Since we are one in Christ, Christians work together across organizations to accomplish the Lord's work." Who would question that this is how Christians should unite in ministry?

Yet tempered by experience, realized values often stand in stark contrast to idealized values. These **realized values** are what we actually hold to; they are what we conclude is practical and accomplishable. Wikipedia, on this topic, notes that: "The difference between these two types of systems can be seen when people state that they hold one value system yet in practice deviate from it, thus holding a different value system."¹

A wise counselor once remarked, "We fully live out what we actually believe." Our actions belie our true beliefs. If we say we believe in partnership yet continually choose to act independently, think independently, and minister independently, we engage in a sort of self-denial. (We also miss out on the joy and effective witness that Jesus meant for his followers to have as we co-labor as one.)

The Will/Skill Divide

The challenge, then, is in turning the idealized value of partnership into a present-day lived-out value. How can we embed the practice of partnership in our organizational culture so that we live it out naturally at every level?

A natural divide exists between what *we want* to do and what *we know how* to do. This can be called "The Will/Skill Divide."² People may have the will to collaborate; we may want to work together. So far so good! But if we don't have at least some basic collaboration skills in order to partner in ministry successfully, then we will very likely run into the common roadblocks to partnership that stymie so many attempts.³

Organizations that do embed partnership in their culture gain a platform for accomplishing new levels of impact that makes them stand out from the crowd.

A good first approach to embedding the practice of partnership into a ministry culture is to fall in love again with the idealized value of partnership. View partnership first as a value the organization truly wants to actually live by. Any other view of partnership, as in using it as a strategy to win funding, will misdirect efforts.

Gaining collaboration skills

Those experienced with successful partnerships and networks recognize a fairly large set of collaboration skills that make all the difference in implementing partnership. These include how to approach the exploration, formation and operation phases of partnership, the role of the facilitator, establishing a level ground despite varying organizational strengths, ensuring sovereignty of organizations during collaboration, and more. Elaboration on these, along with practical help on collaboration, is available in the resource collection on the www.PowerofConnecting.net web site. A helpful starting place is visionSynergy Director Phill Butler's succinct article, "Eight Key Principles to Effective Kingdom Collaboration."

Casting an outward gaze and linking for common cause

Organizations that do embed partnership in their culture gain a platform for accomplishing new levels of impact that makes them stand out from

the crowd. Nonprofits and ministry groups casting their gaze externally are so committed to realizing their goal that they pursue it through actively connecting with partner organizations where that partnership advances their common cause. They see their cause as more important to them than their organization.

Stanford University, in a recent publication,⁴ noted these findings from its studies of nonprofits: Networked nonprofits are some of the most effective nonprofits in the world. They are different from traditional nonprofits in that they cast their gazes externally rather than internally. They put their mission first and their organization second. They govern through trust rather than control. And they cooperate as equal nodes in a constellation of actors rather than relying on a central hub to command with top-down tactics.

The Stanford University publication notes that: "Although the social problems that nonprofits are tackling are growing in both magnitude and complexity, funding is failing to keep pace. Networks do not require more resources, but rather a better use of existing resources. And so networked nonprofits are uniquely poised to face the perennial challenge of the nonprofit sector: achieving lofty missions with decidedly humble means."⁵ ☒

The Four Key Questions of Collaboration

A culture of partnership is created and sustained by realizing that neighborhood or wider world-partnership can power our vision and scale up the objectives our ministry can accomplish.

The goal is no less than reexamining everything we do through the lens of partnership. This is the choice for those who want to make collaboration the default setting under which we operate because it is who we are, not just what we do in certain isolated situations.

Those with this commitment will at some point – and again and again! - ask these four key questions of collaboration:

1. "I have a ministry vision that God is calling me to do! Do you suppose God has given this vision to others as well?"
2. "Would it make sense to find them and see how we could work together to accomplish this ministry vision better than by working apart?"
3. "Is there a set of skills that we might need to successfully meet and collaborate?"
4. "How and where might I gain those skills?"

Building on these basic questions will release the power of partnership and fulfill the prayer Jesus had for his followers.

¹ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Value_system

² A fuller explanation of the Will/Skill Divide can be found at <http://powerofconnecting.net/node/126>

³ View a list of common roadblocks at <http://powerofconnecting.net/node/87>

⁴ The Stanford University Social Innovation Review, Spring 2008

⁵ Ibid

improve:

A Brand Promise Kept



improve

FEEDBACK DRIVEN CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The brand promise of The Mission Exchange is increased effectiveness. We are committed to harnessing the collective wisdom and experience of the Great Commission community to help your organization do what God raised it up to do even better than it is now.

For the past few years we have worked diligently to deliver on our brand promise by adding value to individuals serving in mission organizations, both members and beyond. In addition to three live conferences, every year individuals serving with a member organization of The Mission Exchange have FREE access to 36 book summaries, 24 live webinars, 12 author interviews, and 6 Global Issues Updates.* That includes every home office staff member and missionary anywhere in the world.

While we are excited about the progress we are making in adding value to individual mission leaders, we recognize to accomplish our vision and mission, to deliver on our brand promise, we need to provide a service that could help an entire organization become more effective.

improve: Feedback Driven Continuous Improvement

Over the past eighteen months we have been designing and

testing a new service of The Mission Exchange called **improve**. It represents our commitment to deliver on our brand promise at the organizational level.

We built **improve** on the following five assumptions:

1. Leaders are stewards of a vision from God and will be held accountable
2. Every organization has room for improvement that would increase its effectiveness
3. Every leader has blind spots that limit and filter his/her perspective of what or how to improve
4. Some areas of improvement are more strategic than others, providing a greater return on investment
5. A proven approach to exposing blind spots and prioritizing action steps is objective feedback

improve is a flexible but systematic process that enables mission organizations to work with an organizational development consultant to process feedback from stakeholders, mission peers and an Executive Coach to develop a list of priority action steps to begin a journey of continuous improvement.

Your biggest problem as an organization may not be the one you can't solve but the one you can't see. That's why feedback is at the center of **improve**. The

process is designed to expose organizational blind spots and shed light on new possibilities. It harnesses the collective wisdom and experience of trusted mission peers with outside objectivity who are empowered to ask probing questions as well as offer strategic counsel.

The Three Phases of improve

Phase 1 of improve

provides feedback from stakeholders, both internally (your key leaders and management team) and externally (your donors, prayer partners, church partners and volunteer constituency). The internal stakeholder feedback comes in the form of an organizational self-assessment completed online in eight modules: 1) organizational & legal, 2) organizational identity, planning & governance, 3) human resources & team development, 4) finances, 5) marketing & communication, 6) technology, 7) innovation & change management, 8) partnership.

The external stakeholder feedback in Phase 1 is provided through a Constituent Engagement Survey that measures the four pillars of engagement: integrity, confidence, pride and passion. If your constituents trust you (integrity), and believe you are positioned well to accomplish your mission (confidence), they will have a sense of pride

about associating with you and become passionate about your mission.

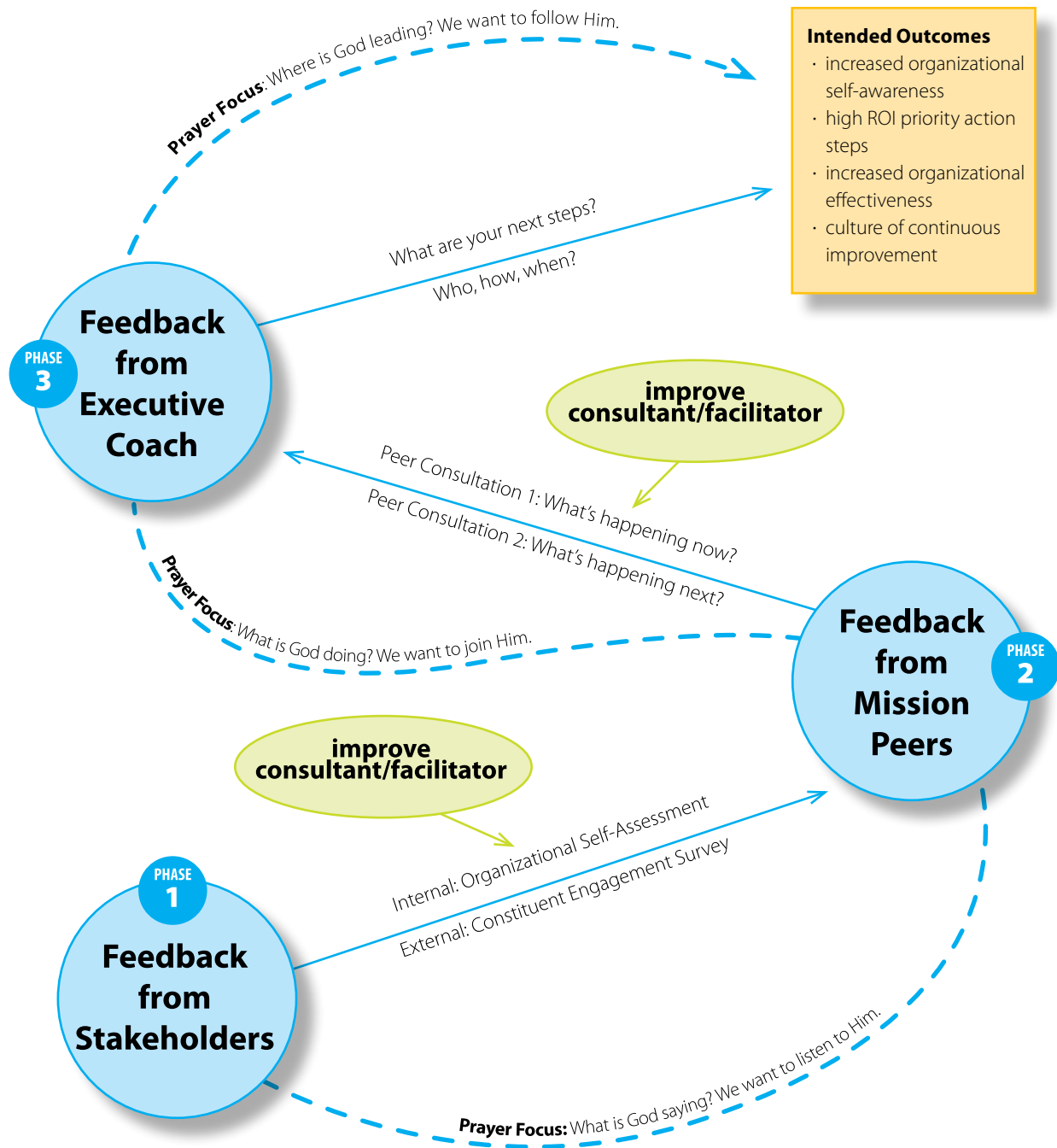
Data from Phase 1 is analyzed with input from an **improve** consultant to develop an initial list of Priority Action Steps. All the phase one information is communicated to a carefully selected group of mission peers for Phase 2.

Phase 2 of improve

engages the input of three to five Christian leaders from the church, business and mission world, who have agreed to review Phase 1 data and participate in two virtual peer consultations. The first peer consultation asks, "What's happening now?" with a focus on strengths to build on and challenges to work on. The second peer consultation asks, "What's happening next?" with a focus on innovation and recalibration. After the second peer consultation the list of Priority Action Steps is updated, with the help of the **improve** consultant, in preparation for Phase 3 feedback.

Phase 3 of improve

provides feedback from an Executive Coach directed to a point leader in the organization who will oversee the implementation of the Priority Action Steps. This three to six month coaching relationship is designed to shine the spotlight on the next steps



that need to be taken in order to get out of the block with a healthy start, identifying key questions of application: what, who, how and when?

All three phases of **improve** are undergirded by prayer, asking: What is God saying? (Phase 1) What is God doing? (Phase 2) Where is God leading? (Phase 3).

The entire **improve** process is focused on four intended outcomes:

1. increased organizational self-awareness that produces
2. high ROI priority action steps that yield
3. increased organizational effectiveness, which contributes to
4. a culture of continuous improvement.

If you would like to explore how **improve** could help your organization become more effective, please contact us at improve@TheMissionExchange.org or 770-457-6677.

For an expanded list of frequently asked questions, visit our website at www.TheMissionExchange.org/improveproject.

** For a brief overview of our member benefits see page 2; for a comprehensive overview of our categories of membership and member benefits download the latest edition of EXCHANGE magazine from the home page of our website at www.TheMissionExchange.org.*



John Kotter on A Sense of Urgency

John Kotter is Professor of Leadership Emeritus at Harvard Business School and is widely regarded as the world's foremost authority on leadership and change management. He is author of several highly respected books including *Leading Change*, and *Our Iceberg is Melting*.

We (Steve Moore and David Mays) had the privilege of interviewing John Kotter about his book, *A Sense of Urgency*, for the September 2009 edition of *Leader's Edge Audio Extra*. Here are just two questions from that interview.

SM: What is the back story on why you wrote this book? How did it come about?

JK: Almost a decade ago we started studying change because more and more people were asking us about it. We found a basic methodology that was used by the top five percent of organizations or leaders who were producing useful, fast, smart, efficient leaps – big changes in their organizations. The first of the eight steps that seemed to be the pattern that summarized as best that one could what these people did was to develop a sense of urgency.

A question I've been asked a lot is, Out of all the eight things that you need to do, which one do leaders seem to struggle the most with. I thought a lot about that and decided it was the very first, the beginning of the whole process, which is creating a sense of urgency, so I dug in to that and wrote this book.

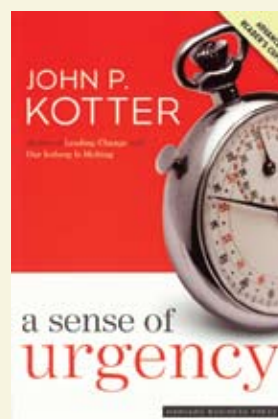
DM: John in this book you explain that success tends to produce complacency and it doesn't even have to be recent success. You warn that people can be complacent even on a burning ship. Explain a little more about what you mean by complacency.

JK: Within the last month I had someone in my home who is running to be the next President of a well known religious denomination and he was running on a platform of change. What is fascinating, according to him—and this is a secondary account—because the organization had been around for many years and had for parts of its past been enormously successful in establishing itself, in achieving its mission, drawing

in more and more worshipers, it developed a sense of complacency. It started to turn inward and stopped noticing what is happening in the world. So complacency goes up and it becomes worse because the focus is inward.

The capacity, once you are complacent, to ignore obvious data that a second party – someone outside the institution – would see and be just astonished, is amazing. In this case, this gentleman was giving me facts and figures and numbers that would...cause the three of us along with ninety-five percent of our listeners to say, "Good heavens! This place needs some significant change." And yet according to him, and I believe it from what I know, the sense of urgency in this organization for making change is incredibly low.

Remember one thing about complacency; ultimately it is a belief that what I'm doing is OK. I may think that what you're doing is not quite perfect, but what I'm doing is OK. If you get enough people in an institution or organization thinking that, by definition, you have a high sense of complacency. ☒



We have provided a brief summary of this book, along with the best chapter, best quotes, best illustration, best idea and best take away in **Leader's Edge Book Summary**, along with the full MP3 version of this interview in **Leader's Edge Audio Extra** for September 2009.



LEAD LIKE JESUS

At Lead Like Jesus, our job is not to run ministries or businesses or to start churches. Our calling is different.

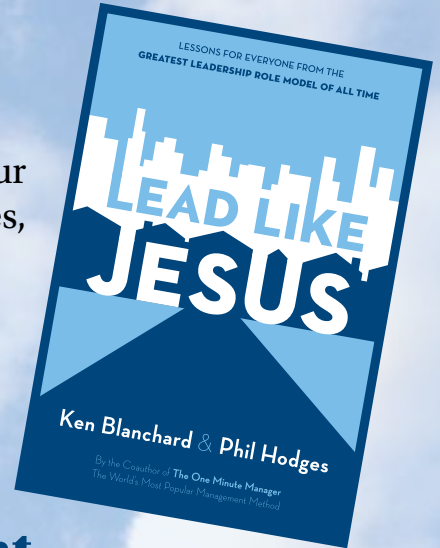
We have one mission:

To inspire and equip the leaders who do.

Leadership Resources

Lead Like Jesus is the best book I know on helping you engage your people into transformational servant leaders. It impacts attitudes, skills, values and lifestyles to help us become Jesus-like leaders.

- Avery Willis, Executive Director, International Orality Network



Leadership Development

As we look back over six years since our first Leadership Encounter with Jesus, I realize how the messages of servant leadership and leading like Jesus have become prevalent in the terminology and ethos of our organization. All staff have had the opportunity to hear the principles, the examples and the

applications. It's made a difference! The Leadership Encounter speaks to the mind, heart, and spirit of participants while giving practical lessons on how they can live and lead more like the Master.

- Charlene H. Eshleman, International Mission Board

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While You Were
Micro-Sleeping



Fresh Insights on the Changing Face
of North American Missions

Steve Moore

We launched Learning @ The Speed of Life, the video blog of The Mission Exchange in September 2008 and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. Steve Moore's blog thoughts have been fodder for online discussion groups, posted on twitter and linked to various web sites.

A number of our viewers have reminded us it's easier to underline a thought provoking idea in print than to harvest it from an online video. So in response to viewer feedback we have compiled a selection of video blog transcripts in book form.

You can still get the original videos from the archive page via the link on our home page, www.TheMissionExchange.org. We think it will give you something to think about, maybe even talk over with your team.

"Our staff have described Steve Moore's video blogs as their 'must see TV'. This compilation of video blog scripts is guaranteed to engage and challenge. Read it with your team and wrestle with the implications of this thought provoking content."

Sammy T. Mah
President | CEO
World Relief