

REGENT UNIVERSITY

LEADERSHIP INTERVENTION AT A NON-PROFIT MINISTRY

SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP STUDIES

LMOL613 MEASUREMENT & ANALYSIS

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper represents a proposal from a professional organizational development consultant for a leadership intervention for a non-profit ministry. This non-profit ministry operates in a local community helping women with crisis pregnancies by providing counseling, basic medical services (such as pregnancy testing and ultrasound), education, and physical resources. This ministry is quite successful in that it has been operating for over 25 years and is well recognized in the community for the work it does. It is supported by individuals, businesses, and local churches in terms of volunteers, and donations of material goods and funds. It has an annual budget of about \$100,000 with the largest funding source being United Way and the balance of needs raised through several fund raisers held at different times of the year. The organization has a board of directors, an executive director, a small number of paid staff, and larger number of unpaid volunteers.

Intervention is “an action or set of actions consciously designed to solve a problem – often a complex or intractable one – or bring about a change for the better” (Leith, 2004). It follows that leadership intervention is a set of actions designed to solve a leadership problem by bringing about change.

The leadership problem this proposed intervention is intended to solve can be stated as “founder’s syndrome.” This syndrome occurs when an organization operates in a manner that seems to be more focused on the personality of a key person in the organization than focused on the organizational mission (McNamara, 1999a). In this particular situation, one of the founding members of the organization is both a board member (although not the chair) and works daily as a volunteer staff member in the organization. This person has worked hard and played a key role

over the years to ensure the success and survival of the organization; the ministry would not be where it's at today without the hard work and sacrifice of this leader, and the organizational leadership, staff, volunteers, and clients are extremely grateful. However, the organization has reached a stage in its growth where the personality and behavior of this leader is now constraining operations and impeding growth to the next level of maturity and effectiveness. It is the intention of this leadership intervention to take explicit action to overcome these limitations in a manner that preserves the dignity of the subject leader while ensuring near term success of the organization and perpetuates its existence over the long term.

This leadership intervention proposal consists of these components:

Leadership Intervention Approach. This section proposes and explains the recommended actions to change the nature of the organizational leadership and impact the individual leader, the leadership team, and the organization as a whole.

Measurement of Results. This section summarizes the use of surveys as a measurement device, their use on a year to year basis, and integration of survey results with organization performance measurements.

Action Plan. This section outlines the processes of feedback delivery as well as action planning, implementation, and monitoring.

Conclusion. This section summarizes expected outcomes and change opportunities.

## II

### LEADERSHIP INTERVENTION APPROACH

This section proposes and explains the recommended actions that change the nature of the organizational leadership and impact the individual leader, the leadership team, and the organization as a whole.

Although Founder's Syndrome is identified as the major problem, it is symptomatic of the leadership change that must take place within the entire organization to sustain and improve organizational performance. Therefore, it is necessary that a comprehensive solution address the larger context of organizational leadership. It would be short sighted to address any one individual leader of the organization without positioning the leadership team and the organization collectively to further the objectives of the ministry. Toward that end, there are three components of the intervention plan addressing the three target levels of the organization – individual leader, the leadership team, and the organization respectively:

- Founder vis-à-vis Executive Director
- Board of Directors
- Staff and volunteers

Conducting surveys is a key component of the overall intervention strategy. Surveys are used in each of the three organizational levels. Kraut (1996) points out that organizational surveys are done for two reasons: assessment and/or change, and provides a series of reasons for conducting surveys of which these in particular apply for this leadership intervention situation:

- Pinpoint areas of concern. The intent is to evaluate the extent and impact of the founder's syndrome on operations at all levels of the organization so that appropriate organizational change can occur.

- Add a communication channel. Surveys provide a communication channel from the leadership team to the staff and volunteers of the organization.
- Monitor organizational change and improvement. Administration of surveys on an annual basis serves to encourage reflection and guide ongoing change.
- Communicate symbolically. Surveys enable leadership to send a powerful message about the need for change, education, and new initiatives.

An additional key factor in the success of the proposed intervention is retaining an organizational development consultant experienced in multisource surveys, preparation of feedback results, facilitation of feedback sessions, coaching, and organizational training to assist in the individual intervention activities. This strategy not only acquires necessary expertise that is lacking in the organization, but also provides an independent third party that is likely perceived by all to have no vested interest in any particular outcome (other than ensuring the success and growth of the organization).

Table 1 summarizes the major components of the intervention, the roles involved, and the relationships between them. The balance of this section describes each of the three components that comprise the intervention approach.

Table 1

<b>Intervention Component</b>	<b>Founder</b>	<b>Executive Director</b>	<b>Board</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Volunteers</b>
<i><b>Founder vis-à-vis Executive Director</b></i>					
360 Degree or Multisource Feedback	√	√			
Feedback and Counseling Sessions	√	√			
Inspirational Leadership Workshop	√	√	√		

Intervention Component	Founder	Executive Director	Board	Staff	Volunteers
<b>Board of Directors</b>					
Board Evaluation			√		
Evaluation Feedback and Board Leadership Training	√	√	√		
<b>Staff and Volunteers</b>					
Organizational Survey		√		√	√
Survey Feedback and Staff/Volunteer Training		√		√	√
Individual Counseling				√	√

### ***Founder vis-à-vis Executive Director***

As previously explained, the founder has performed an important role over the time that the ministry has existed. However, behavioral observations of the founder are strikingly consistent with those that McNamara (1999a) describes as characteristic of the Founder's Syndrome: highly reactive individualistic style, organizational management according to one's personality, the same problems experienced repeatedly, plans not implemented, board and staff members as well as volunteers come and go quickly, and people are generally afraid to cross the founder and tend to avoid interaction. Although the organization has an Executive Director whose role is to act as the Chief Executive Officer, the Executive Director is not as effective as their potential in large part because of the dominating style of the founder. A three pronged personal leadership development approach for the founder and the Executive Director addresses this situation (Pragati, 2004):

- 360 Degree or Multisource Feedback. A major purpose of multisource feedback is to provide feedback to a leader from peers and subordinates (Bracken, 1996). In this case, an instrument specifically designed for a nonprofit organization is used:

360 Degree Performance Appraisal Questionnaire for Nonprofit Organizations (Garber, 2004). The organization development consultant conducts preparation sessions prior to distribution of the multisource feedback instrument to explain the purpose of the survey and the process involved, and clarify the desired end result in terms of the roles and behaviors of the participants. This survey is distributed to board members, the Executive Director, staff, and key volunteers for the purpose of gathering feedback for both the founder and the Executive Director.

- Feedback and Counseling Sessions. The organization development consultant compiles the results of the multisource survey into a report and conducts independent counseling sessions for both the founder and the Executive Director where the feedback is discussed. The consultant may conduct multiple coaching sessions as necessary.
- Inspirational Leadership Workshop. Based on the results of the multisource feedback results and individual counseling sessions, the organizational development consultant customizes and delivers a workshop on individual leadership skills and competencies as well as addressing specific organizational issues around leadership team development. The founder, Executive Director, and Board all participate in this workshop.

### ***Board of Directors***

The goals to resolve the problem of Founder's Syndrome and move the organization and its leadership team to the next level of performance requires an equivalent level of significant change at the board level. The role and responsibilities of the board are to a large extent

determined by the board model they elect to employ (Board Development, 2004). The board's current model of operation can best be described as a Working/Administration board.

Characteristics of a Working/Administration board include establishing direction and policies as well as operational responsibilities for planning, finance, personnel, operations, and public relations (Board Development, 2004). Other activities of the board also suggest a working/administration board such as committees supporting the operations of the organization and, in several cases, individual board members also acting as volunteer workers for the organization.

The goal is to move the board toward a policy governance model of operation as described by Carver and Carver (2001). This model establishes a clear distinction between the ends of the organization and the means by which the ends are achieved. It is the board's responsibility to clearly define the ends and to delegate total authority to the Chief Executive Officer to determine the means. The board defines the purpose (or ends) of the organization in terms of three aspects: intended results, intended recipients of those results, and worth of the results in terms of costs or priority. In this model, the responsibility of the board is to produce specific policy documents, clearly communicate the expectations that these documents represent to the Executive Director, and then check to ensure that these expectations have been met.

A three pronged approach to achieve these board development efforts includes:

Board Evaluation. "Effective boards engage in a continuing process of self-assessment or evaluation of their performance. They do so in order to identify where they are performing well as a board, and where they might improve." (ACCT, 2004a). A standard board self-evaluation instrument, such as that offered by McNamara (1999b), Te Puni Kōkiri (2004), or the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT, 2004b), is customized by the

organizational development consultant for the purpose of enlightening the board as to their current mode of operation (working/administration) as well as to suggest a new and more effective mode of operation (policy governance). All board members, including the founder, as well as the Executive Director participate in the board self evaluation process.

Evaluation Feedback and Board Leadership Training. The organization development consultant compiles the results of the self evaluation in preparation for presenting them in conjunction with a board training event. The plan calls for the organization development consultant to conduct a training event for the board, Executive Director, and staff. The purpose of this event is threefold: first to present and discuss the results of the board self-evaluation, second to prepare for action planning and implementation, and third to train the board on the policy governance model and its application to board operations and the organization. The goal with regard to the policy governance model is to gain understanding and commitment to the four deliverables that represent the policies of the board (Ends, Executive Limitations, Governance Process, and Board-Staff Linkage) as well as the authority-accountability relationship between the board and the Executive Director (Carver and Carver, 2001).

### ***Staff and Volunteers***

The remaining group of people within the organization that also need to understand the organizational changes taking place are the staff and volunteers. Staff and volunteers are impacted by organizational leadership primarily by the Executive Director and the actions of the founder. There has been turnover amongst the staff and volunteers with departing comments indicative of conflict with the founder. The goal of this aspect of the intervention is to ensure that staff and volunteers understand that organizational leadership recognizes that leadership changes

are needed and are being actively addressed, minimize further turnover as much as possible, ensure effective communication with leadership, and operate the center as effectively as possible.

A three pronged approach to achieve these staff and volunteer objectives includes:

Organizational Survey. There are two purposes for conducting an organizational survey: assessment and/or change (Kraut, 1996). In this situation, the goal is both assessment in terms of understanding the thoughts and feelings of staff and volunteers and change in terms of promoting an understanding of changes in how the leadership team operates. The intent is for the organizational development consultant to prepare and administer to all staff and volunteers an appropriate survey instrument that achieves these goals. Additionally, this initial survey serves as a baseline for which to compare the results of future surveys so that progress can be assessed.

Survey Feedback and Staff/Volunteer Training. The organization development consultant prepares the resulting survey report for presentation both to staff and volunteers as well as the leadership team. The goals for staff training in this intervention are similar to those for the leadership team: first to present and discuss the results of the organizational survey, second to prepare for action planning and implementation, and third to train the staff and volunteers on the policy governance model and its application to board operations and the organization, Toward this end, the organizational development consultant may conduct training designed specifically for the staff and volunteers, or combine the training event with that provided for the leadership team.

Individual Counseling. In the process of administering the survey to staff and volunteers, the organizational development consultant may determine the need for one on one consulting for some of the staff and volunteers. It is anticipated that not many such sessions are needed, but in the eventuality that there is a need, the plan is to provide it. The purpose of this counseling is to

ensure that any staff member or volunteer that needs to be heard has that opportunity as well as to minimize the possibility that any key staff or volunteers leave the organization.

### III

#### MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS

As Nadler (1996) notes in this paraphrase about the assumptions of measurement and surveys: “the act of collecting data, combined with the perceptions about the extent to which the data will be used by individuals with power, creates expectations that the results will have consequences that affect important outcomes for individuals. Once something is measured, then it can be observed, assessed, rewarded, or sanctioned. Thus the mere act of measuring generates energy around those activities being measured” (p. 180). The act of measuring as accomplished through the instruments recommended by this intervention plan is intended to influence the behavior of the individuals and therefore the organization at large.

There is a separate survey recommended for each of the three groups addressed in this intervention: a 360 degree or multisource instrument for the founder and Executive Director, a self evaluation for the board, and an organizational survey for staff and volunteers. Each of these instruments has distinct objectives. The objective of the multisource survey is to provide feedback to the founder and Executive Director about the perceptions of others in the hope that personal growth ensues. The objective of the board self evaluation survey is to both assess attitudes and communicate intention about desirable change in the operation of the board. The objective of the organizational survey is to both assess attitudes and communicate intention about desirable change in the operation of the staff and volunteers. The organizational development consultant compiles and summarizes the results of each of these instruments and facilitates the process of their understanding through sessions with the individuals and groups involved.

Two of the three surveys can be used for year to year assessment of progress. In this situation, the multisource feedback instrument is intended for individual personal development

rather than administrative decision making or organizational development (Bracken, 1996) and therefore has no use in assessing the progress of organizational change. The board self evaluation and the organizational survey can be administered from year to year and used for assessing the progress of organizational change.

Integration of survey results with other organizational measures can be an effective measurement tool. In particular, this proposal recommends that the board develop a set of “strategic performance gauges” or a balanced scorecard to monitor how well change is progressing as well as organizational performance (Schiemann, 1996). The board can monitor the progress of change intended by this intervention using indicators that include but are not limited to:

- Staff turnover rate
- Volunteer turnover rate
- Staff engagement (as measured by the organizational survey results)
- Board turnover rate
- Board recruiting rate
- Board engagement (as measured by the board self evaluation survey)

Additionally, the board needs to develop indicators to monitor organizational performance according to the principles established by the policy governance model. Such indicators are determined by the content of specific policy deliverables, but might include:

- Financial performance
- Customers served
- Customer satisfaction
- Fund raising results

- Allocation of expenses across programs
- Allocation of donations across donor types

It's oft said that employees are an organization's most important asset, and a nonprofit organization is no exception. Understanding the relationship between customers, employees, volunteers, owners, other stakeholders and important financial and market indicators present important opportunities to ensure continued success and perpetuate the organization.

## IV

### ACTION PLAN

This intervention plan calls for conducting surveys, education, and coaching at three levels in the organization: the founder and Executive Director, the board of directors, and the staff and volunteers. This section describes how these efforts culminate with the feedback of results and organizational action planning.

Hinrichs (1996) asserts two primary reasons why survey results need to be provided as feedback to survey participants: feedback with accompanying discussion assists to “clarify issues, arouse awareness, generate feelings, and make [participants] open to new ideas and plans” and, once participants decide to become involved, “points out needs, suggests desirable outcomes, and energizes [participants] to search for paths to attain these outcomes” (p. 257).

Recognize that there are differences in the purpose of each of the surveys and that these differing purposes dictate the nature of the feedback sessions. As the previous description of the intervention approach explains, each of the three levels at which surveys are conducted has its own feedback session.

For the founder and Executive Director, the purpose is personal insight and understanding that leads to personal growth. These are separate feedback sessions with only the consultant and the individual receiving the feedback present. The information from these multisource surveys and the content of the feedback sessions is strictly confidential and not shared with anyone else in the organization.

For the multisource feedback survey conducted for the founder and Executive Director, the consultant provides one on one coaching to provide and explain the feedback work as well as to assist the participant on determining appropriate follow up actions for personal growth. Care must be taken in delivering what is likely to be unfavorable feedback. Nadler (1996) points out

that the response to unfavorable feedback is similar to the grief experienced upon the death of a loved one or other painful loss. Coping with grief typically goes through a series of stages beginning with denial, anger, avoidance, acceptance, and finally problem solving. One approach to help the participant is to explain the progression of steps that one typically goes through upon receiving unfavorable feedback. The consultant acting as coach can greatly assist the individual in accepting feedback and making the experience as productive as possible.

For the board self evaluation, the purpose of the feedback session is to provide insight relevant to board as a group into board operations and implementation of the policy governance model. This is a single feedback session in which all board members as well as the Executive Director participate.

For the organizational survey, the purpose of the feedback session is to provide insight for organizational development. This is a single feedback session in which the staff, volunteers, and Executive Director participate; however, the results of the survey and feedback session are shared with the board.

The results of surveys identify problems, raise concerns, and generate insights. Gaining value from all the investment made in the intervention process requires acting to correct problems, address concerns, and take advantage of acquired insights. Failure to do so generates cynicism in the organization and negates the time, money, and energy put into the intervention effort (Hinrichs, 1996).

Hinrichs (1996) states that “the purpose of action planning is to build on specific insights from the feedback meeting and to clarify which are priority issues, to generate as many ideas as possible to address these issues, to evaluate and select the best ideas, and finally, to decide on the best approach for implementing the actions and determining who should be held accountable” (p. 272-273). In this intervention, initial action planning is conducted at the annual board retreat,

facilitated by the consultant, in which the board, Executive Director, and staff participate. The consultant, working with the board chair and the Executive Director, plans the agenda for the meeting. During the meeting, the group makes action recommendations and determines objectives, resources, implementation steps, responsibilities, and schedule for each action item (Hinrichs, 1996). Subsequent sessions are also planned to include appropriate subgroups to drive out additional detail for each action item.

Implementation of action plans is the next step to realize change in the organization. The board and Executive Director must establish responsibility and allocate necessary resources for each action item and hold each individual accountable for achievement. It is also critical to establish a reporting process where responsible individuals can regularly report the progress of action items. Ultimately, all items must either be resolved (or explained why action was not taken) and results communicated back to the Executive Director, staff, and board (Hinrichs, 1996).

## V

### CONCLUSION

As a result of the leadership intervention, the expected outcome is that the detrimental effect of the personality and behavior of the founder has been mitigated so that staff and volunteer relationships and performance has been restored as well as enhances operational performance and facilitates the further growth of the organization. The intervention calls for explicit action to overcome these limitations in a manner that preserves the dignity of the founder. In the eventuality that behavior does not change, then the board may need to take action to remove the founder from the board and volunteer positions.

The expected outcome for the Executive Director is appreciation for the perspectives of others and personal growth resulting in behavioral changes that make a more effective leader as well as a clear delineation of board and Executive Director responsibilities.

The expected outcome of leadership intervention for the board include insight into the operations of an effective board, implementation of the policy governance model, institutionalization of an annual self evaluation process, development and use of organizational performance indicators as well as a clear delineation of board and Executive Director responsibilities.

The expected outcome of leadership intervention for the staff and volunteers is insight into board operations, actions consistent with those of effective leaders, and institutionalization of an annual organizational survey process.

The expected outcomes of the organization as a whole is better understanding of the mission of the organization as well as improved organizational performance as measured by the performance indicators.



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