

## Is your charity heeding the call for change?

By **Bruce Cole**

**Senior Consultant**

**McConkey • Johnston international • USA**

As Christian organisations attempt to become more like Christ they become very adept at taking on one particular attribute of God - "They change not!" The problem is that purpose of most Christian ministries is to change the world!

In his book, *Leaders Who Make a Difference*, Burt Nanus lists four sources of change that charities must consider:

- change concerning a shift in the client's or communities needs;
- change resulting from political, economic, or social forces in the community;
- change accompanying growth or a quest for greater efficiency of operations;
- change initiated by the organisation to alter its external environment in a significant way.

These four sources are the call for change in Christian ministry. The question that must be answered is "Is your organisation listening?"

First, client and community needs have dramatically changed. The moral climate of society has become cold. Families are deteriorating. Fewer and fewer people have any exposure to the Gospel. Hunger, poverty, absent fathers... the list goes on, demonstrating the urgent need for growing numbers of Christian change agents in our society. What's more, your donors' needs and expectations are not static either. Add to these changes about increased accountability and the demand for greater transparency and it's easy to see why organisations that fail to adapt could end up on the endangered species list.

The call for change in your organisation is very likely coming from your clients and donors. Is your ministry listening?

Economic and social forces are also calling for your ministry to change. According to Former Education Secretary, Richard Riley, the top 10 jobs that will be in demand in 2010 did not exist in 2004. He goes on to say that "*currently we are training students for jobs that do not yet exist, using technologies that haven't yet been invented, in order to solve problems that we*

*don't even know are problems yet.*" There is little doubt that we live in a world experiencing exponential change.

Charities are highly susceptible to the impact of economic and societal changes. However, many of them seem to be oblivious to change and continue to plod through their daily routines. Within Christian ministry there is a call for "Men of Issachar" who understand the times and know what to do (I Chron. 12:32). As Warren Bennis, puts it, *"A leader is, by definition, an innovator. He does things other people haven't done or can't do. He does things in advance of other people. He makes things new. He makes old things new. Having learnt from the past, he lives in the present, with one eye on the future."*

Unfortunately, some Christian organisations live in the past, ignore the present, and hope for the rapture before their ministry fails in the future. They miss the call from society to change to meet not only the needs of today but to be there to meet the needs of the future; even if we do not yet know exactly what those needs are. Are you listening?

The third call for change comes from the organisation itself. David Hannah argues in *Designing Organisations for High Performance* that *"all organisations are perfectly designed to get the results they get."*

All organisations have a life-cycle. During phase one the organisation begins to acquire resources, build its charter, establish its procedures, and begin operations. This growth stage follows with expansion, new resources, new programmes, recognition, etc. that contribute to the organisation's becoming its real self. During these birth and adolescence phases the organisation is still flexible and adventurous. Change is much easier when nothing has hardened.

But, as maturity is reached 'sclerosis' begins to set in. It is during this phase that many organisations set the trajectory of their future, either rejuvenation or demise. Organisations that rejuvenate are those that understand their maturity and begin to put safeguards in place to protect them from aging. These protections include key metrics to expose inefficiencies and "weight gains."

In response to this monitoring they proactively promote change to combat the aging processes. The creaks and groans of old age are calling your organisation to change. Are you listening?

Finally, the call to change is coming from the very purpose of your organisation. I have yet to find a founder of a Christian charity who does not believe they were called by God to establish the ministry to change the world. Acts 17:6 tells the story of the early church leadership being accused of "turning the world upside down." The early apostles understood that God had called and empowered them to make a difference.

Church history is filled with stories of leaders who understood the times in which they lived and continued to change the world. In recent history we have seen leaders like Billy Graham, Bill Bright, James Dobson, and other visionary ministry leaders who have taken heed to the call for change.

Every ministry should be attempting to alter its external environment. "Lives being changed" is the clarion call of every Christian organisation. Though the method or audience of ministry is unique to each ministry, the unifying factor of ministry is to change lives. This call alone should be enough to motivate us to change. I remember hearing of a young missionary candidate being interviewed for ordination. When he was asked why he wanted to serve, his response said it all. "I hear them crying for a Savior. What else can I do but go?"

I'm betting that other voices in your world are calling for help. Whether they receive that help or not may be a function of how your organisation manages change. Are you listening?

**If you would like to discuss your charity's needs for change drop us a line at: [info@mcconkey-johnston.co.uk](mailto:info@mcconkey-johnston.co.uk)**

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