



CEO Dialogues

An off-the-record one day dialogue
for CEOs of Christian Organizations

CEO Dialogues Roundtable

at the
Christian Leadership Alliance National Conference
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Summary of Selected Comments and Insights from CEO Participants

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The following are some of the notes and key thoughts from the CEO Dialogues roundtable. We hope that they will help reconstruct the conversation and some of the day's important take-a-ways. However, since the session is officially "off-the-record," none of the thoughts are attributed to any specific person.

Facilitator

Bob Andringa, chairman of CEO Dialogues, Inc., was the day's facilitator. Contact him at BobAndringa@mac.com.

Devotional

Jerry White presented a powerful devotional on the "Unfinished Life." Jerry welcomes thoughts on the topic for an upcoming book by the same title. Contact him at jerrywhite100@msn.com.

Mid-Day Presentation

John Wylie presented a session on legal issues facing today's nonprofit organizations. He can be reached at john.wylie@hro.com.

The Dialogue



Topic #2 *The CEOs Role in Fundraising*

CEOs in the room spent between 10-60% of their time on fundraising or donor-related activities.

 Topic #5 *Balanced Life Issues*

CEOs in the room discussed living “balanced lives”:

- Spiritual
- Physical
- Mental
- Marriage and family


Many of the CEOs recognized that the demands of their positions effected their sense of balance – at home (marriage and family) or personally (predominantly with regard to exercise and spiritual time).

CEOs in the room were encouraged to develop a habit of Sabbath (regular rest) and a plan for Sabbatical. Ted Engstrom suggested:

- One hour a day
- One half-day each week
- One day per month
- One week per quarter

CEOs in the room were also discussed “balance” in regard to their teams

- Providing training
- Healthy people create healthy organizations

 Topic #9 *Recruiting and Hiring the Next Generation*

CEOs in the room discussed at length the nature and habits of next-generation workers, and the challenges many had had in incorporating them effectively into their work environments.

A number of CEOs remarked that younger workers did not have a solid work ethic, demanded a great deal of flexibility, and seemed to be more concerned about balance and issues outside of work. Other CEOs questioned whether or not those “demands” were inappropriate. Many had successfully transitioned their organizational cultures to better engage younger generations of workers.

All employees want to know the answers to these five questions:

- What am I expected to do?
- Why is it important?
- When I need help, who do I talk to?
- How will I know how I’m doing?
- Is my input welcomed and heard?

CEOs in the room were also encouraged to make mentoring a key leadership priority. Raising up the next generation of organizational leaders is key to the continuance of vital mission work.




Topic #17 *New Approaches to Strategic Planning/Thinking/Managing*

A CEO (or executive leader) makes or breaks their role with 2-3 decisions a year.

One CEO had a coach that led him through the following set of strategic questions to unlock innovations and creativity:

- What would you do if resources or reality wasn't a limitation?
- Why did you choose that thing?
- Are there other ways to pursue that reality?



Topic #26 *What scares you the most about leading in the next five years?*

CEOs in the room said:

- Where the country is going
- An unpredictable future
- I'll stop being nice
- Economy, finances, and funding
- That ministry becomes "work"
- Ministry personnel being at risk and in danger
- How do we benefit from technology?
- How do we best use our human resources?
- How do we recast our values into a changing environment?
- Wasting the "once in a lifetime chance"
- Will my work be relevant?
- Will I make a difference?

Other thoughts/ideas from the pre-dialogue survey:

- Many ministries will go out of business
- The cultural influence of Evangelicals will decrease
- America will become increasingly secular
- Competition between ministries will grow
- Recruiting great talent (staff and volunteers) will be difficult



Topic #27 *Maximizing Your Impact with an Executive Assistant*

A number of CEOs in the room did not have an executive assistant. Others only had part-time help. The exponential benefits of an executive assistant were discussed. Physical presence was considered a plus, but others have had success with virtual assistants.

CEOs in the room were challenged to look for sharp up-and-coming individuals who might work as an assistant for the reference and experience. CEOs were also challenged to consider the effects that the “Halftime Movement” could have on their organizations, with many sharp, experienced professionals looking for meaningful work toward the end of their careers.

Topic #29 *What’s Your Style, and Why? Working with a COO or Executive VP, or 4-6 direct reports*

Most CEOs in the room had more than 5 (and some as many as 9) direct reports. Depending on who you read, span of control is defined as 3-7 people.

The “pros” of Multiple Direct Reports

- Allows for more fluid change management – leader has more direct access to people
- A “flatter” organization (less hierarchy)
- A better team

The “cons” of Multiple Direct Reports

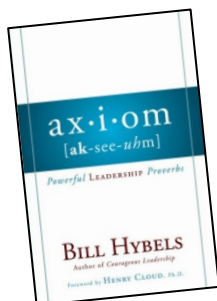
- Less time for work outside the organization (e.g. fundraising, advancement)
- Less time for creation
- Less time for visionary leadership – more management

Group talked about the difference between a direct report and a relationship of influence (3 x 7 x 25)

Most CEOs do not delegate enough. Question: What does your board say about your management style and your number of direct reports?

Axioms

- Focus on the transformational, not the transactional.
- A problem well stated is half-solved
- If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.
- It is not what is taught, but what is caught.



The book: “Axiom” by Bill Hybels.

Take Aways

- I'm not alone.
- I need to pace myself.
- I need to allow other people to speak into my life.
- Modeling and teaching leadership is probably as important as doing it. The end result is to teach others to get the job done.
- I'm trying too hard.
- I need to accept some realities, rely on God, and rejoice in the gifts I have been given.
- The importance of peer relationships.
- The blessing of cross pollination
- I was included, and able to discuss things that were happening in my organization.
- Reflections on "unfinished business" – personally and for our ministry
- The power of modeling. The power of story.
- Peak at 80.
- Find a mentor.
- Consider using half-timers
- Get an executive assistant.
- I want to bless my donors.
- I'm going to balance my life this next year.
- Build a good workplace for younger people
- CEO is different than COO; my time needs to be focused on mission, not systems and operations
- All CEO's should have an intern
- I'm going to build a "guiding coalition" of staff members that I need to hear from
- A formula for sabbatical
- I need to practice what I preach; taking time to rest and reflect
- Everybody has the same problems – nothing new under the sun
- Life in balance – personal devotion – respect my family - treat staff well

Recommended Books

- **Mastering the Management Buckets**
John Pearson
- **Good to Great and the Social Sector**
Jim Collins
- **The Imperfect Board Member**
Jim Brown
- **Good Governance for Nonprofits**
Fredric L. Laughlin and Robert C. Andringa
- **Why Smart Executives Fail**
Sydney Finkelstein
- **Made to Stick**
Chip Heath and Dan Heath
- **Blue Ocean Strategy**
W. Chan Kim and Renee Mauborgne

- **It's Your Ship**
D. Michael Abrashoff
- **The Leadership Challenge**
James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner
- **Mission-Based Management**
Peter Brinckerhoff
- **Leading Change**
John P. Kotter
- **Reinventing Strategy**
Willie Pietersen

For More Information and Future Dates:

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