



CEO Dialogues

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

CEO Dialogues Roundtable

www.CEODialogues.org

Brea, California

Sponsored by: CapinCrouse LLP

www.CapinCrouse.com

Hosted by: Evangelical Christian Credit Union

September 21, 2010 - Selected Notes

Our thanks to Shannon Barnes for recording these notes!

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

Devotional

Eric Buehrer presented a devotional based on 2 Corinthians 4:6-8: "For God, who said, Let light shine out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair."

The Dialogue

CEOs in the room selected "hot topics" they were interested in discussing, including:

- Structure and vision; using them to capturing the hearts of this generation
- Trend-spotting
- Vision-casting and marketing
- Succession planning
- Recruiting and hiring the next generation
- Market segmentation
- Transitioning in Turbulent Times
- The Strategic Role of the Board and CEO
- Courageous Leadership (Communications) In Crisis
- Development Strategies and Trends
- Scrapping a Sacred Cow
- New approaches to strategic thinking
- Strategic Alliances –partnerships, mergers, acquisitions

The group voted on topics from the list above, and spent the day discussing those topics and offering ideas and resources for addressing them. Here are the notes from those discussions:

 Topic #1 *Trend-spotting:*

Issue Further Defined: Our organizations are counting on us for answers and direction. How do we know? How can we discern between trend and fad?

CEOs in the room spent a lot of time discussing social media – its use and effectiveness, and what to invest in it. Many believed that CEOs are not responsible to know all the answers regarding trends; leaders were encouraged to ask the questions and then discern answers/directions from the feedback. There is a need to discern between macro and micro trends.

Participants shared what they saw as important trends effecting ministries:

- In a virtual world, definition of relationship is changing
- TiVo/iTunes/Mobile phones; moved to an individualized “what I want, when I want it” culture
- Consumers as producers
- Serial communication
- Aging population
- Abandonment of organizational culture/processes
- Globalization (and an emerging localization)
- More articulate “who we serve” targets (mission, segmentation)
- Culture is De-churched – we need to reground our faith
- Change is giving style/approach (www.adventconspiracy.org)
- Redefinition (or end of) privacy
- People are mindful of giving, prioritization
- Legacy Giving (90% of assets are in non-cash)
- Mars Candy realized their competition not another candy maker, it was cell phones

CEOs share a number of resources they use to stay current and look for trends:

- Have board bring “trend-spotting” articles to the meeting to share
- Beloit College Mindset List (www.beloit.edu/mindset)
- Pew Center
- Barna Updates
- Newspapers (Los Angeles Times, Wall Street Journal, etc.)
- TED Conferences, online resources
- Educators, professors
- Google Insights (www.google.com/insights)
- Wired/Fast Company/Inc.
- Brian Solis (www.briansolis.com)
- Erik Qualman (www.socialnomics.net)
- Michael Hyatt (<http://michaelhyatt.com>)
- Iconoculture (www.iconoculture.com)
- Christianity Today
- Willow Creek
- Donald Miller (<http://donmilleris.com>)

- Listening to other CEOs, leadership professionals
- Praying through headlines
- Spiritual Disciplines
- Reading “contradictory” sources (e.g. Scientific American)

From Neal Joseph: I mentioned a great video from the Socialnomics folks that gives a pretty accurate (and very fast-paced) view of the state of social media communication. It's very interesting and thought-provoking and well-worth 4 minutes of your time. You can watch it here: <http://vimeo.com/14528997>

Topic #2 *Strategic Alliances (Partnerships, Mergers, Acquisitions)*

Issue Further Defined: Each organization that serves kingdom purposes is part of the larger Body of Christ. But this connection seems to be often forgotten or ignored by ministries. There is no “sharing” of the call; organizations choose to live and die alone.

CEOs in the room discussed strategic alliances:

- People are skeptical; wonder who will be in charge
- 30,000 feet – great idea; at ground level, it falls apart
- Are we looking to take or serve?
- Give the resources you have
- Need to define “partnership” and codify the relationship
- You have to be ready to let them go as quickly as you started
- Not the same as ownership
- “Their reach was broadened; our mission was accomplished.”
- Look to eliminate redundancy
- Embrace a team concept: Define your unique organizational “shape” – see it through the lens of strengths, and then look for organizations with complementary strengths with whom you can partner.
- Resist power.


Note: Participants broke into three groups for the remaining discussions, and presented the ideas/conclusions to the entire group.

Topic #3 *Transitioning in Turbulent Times*

Many of the CEOs discussed their own personal experiences with turbulent times, and provided the following ideas for moving forward:

- What is “the call” for the organization? Keep that central.
- Transition requires re-evaluation: consider a “zero-base” approach to budget and strategy, justifying each line item, effort, expense, program, etc.
- Vision is hope – clarify and make ideas for moving forward concrete
- Pull people in with abundant communication


The group discussed resources they had found helpful: “Switch” and “The Land Between.”



Topic #4 *Capturing the Heart of This Generation*

The group discussed how organization's can better capture the hearts, attention, and energies of this generation. They considered changes in values and expectations, and how organization's can respond to better reach, employ, and involve this generation in their mission. The group proposed three essentials:

- Organizations need to help people connect their personal passions with the ministry structure
- Approach tasks as a conduit to connect them with the larger mission and purpose
- Understand and capitalize on this generations cause orientation



Topic #5 *Succession Planning*

As a generation of senior leaders prepares to retire or step down from leadership positions, ministries are facing a major need to effectively transfer organizational leadership to the next generation. An experienced group of CEOs provided the following thoughts regarding succession planning:

- Succession is about the organization, not the people. Build the plan on the right set of needs
- Make effective succession a cultural value at all levels of the organization; ensure that transitions are made well, that the organization retains intellectual and management capital
- Work to build successors from within – moving 7s to 10s
- Look for these characteristics in candidates: spiritual maturity, strategic/visionary experience, technical skills/knowledge, relational self-awareness

Axioms

Mark Holbrook presented seven “Axioms” that he’s found essential to his leadership and organization:

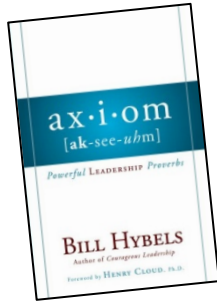
1. Everyone is essential
2. Hire Tens
3. Honor Everyone
4. Institutionalize Core Values
5. Make sure leaders are “first tested”
6. Never do anything you don’t want published in the New York Post
7. Care for the Soul – Yours and Others

Mark discussed at length ECCU’s commitment to fostering ministry (ministry to your family, ministry in your church, and ministry in your work – the leftovers), worship, and rest throughout the organization.

The group offered “axioms” of their own:

- Always tell the truth the first time and you’ll never have to remember what you said
- Understand the difference between responsibility and control

- In the scope of life, what does this really matter?
- Don't mistake hours for productivity
- We're better together (Deuteronomy 32:30)
- Use "the pile" (if you haven't touched it, needed it, throw it out)
- God takes good care of me and expects me to take good care of others (serve, don't hoard)
- It is not what is taught, but what is caught.



The book: "Axioms" by Bill Hybels.
 Also recommended: "Word of the Day" (www.wordthink.com)

Take Aways


- The need to sit down and work out values through small group discussion
- Get out of the office, get informed
- Change is constant. "We're perplexed, but..."
- Take action. Came away with more than theory.
- Great people and connections
- Enjoyed chance to raise my view from my org to larger kingdom issues
- 5th Partnership Principle – Doesn't stray from vision
- Zero-Based Strategy
- I need to do more CEO Dialogues
- Christ in Me (2 Corinthians 4)
- The essential nature of soul care
- Sticking with people (Axiom: Honor Them)
- Determine what's irrelevant; get rid of it
- Communicate what's most relevant – why do you matter?
- Care for the soul
- I have support of others in like circumstances
- Resources and clarity
- Going to get "Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership"
- Our mission is central
- Need to communicate mission in a way that helps others experience the passion I feel

Recommended Books

In addition to the 170 titles listed on John Pearson's book review list (in your binder), CEOs and leaders in the room suggested the following titles:

1. Tribes
Seth Godin
2. Axioms
Bill Hybels
3. The Rest of God
Mark Buchanan
4. Chief Executive Transitions
Don Tebbe
5. Tipping Point
Malcolm Gladwell
6. Less Is More Leadership
H. Dale Burke
7. Primal Leadership
Dale Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, Amy McKee
8. Mistakes Were Made, But Not By Me
Carol Travis and Elliot Aronson
9. Leap Over A Wall
Eugene Peterson
10. Mission-Based Management
Peter Brinckerhoff
11. Half Time
Bob Buford
12. How the Mighty Fall
Jim Collins
13. Switch
Dan Heath and Chip Heath
14. Socialnomics
Eric Qualman
15. The Indwelling Life of Christ
Major Ian Thomas
16. The Treasure Principle
Randy Alcorn
17. Linchpin
Seth Godin
18. Cognitive Surplus
Clay Shirky
19. Mandela's Way
Richard Stengel and Nelson Mandela
20. Half the Sky: Turning Oppression Into Opportunity for Women Worldwide
Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn
21. The Gospel of Ruth
Carolyn Custis James

22. **Outliers**
Malcolm Gladwell
23. **The 4-Hour Work Week**
Tim Ferris
24. **Blue Ocean Strategy**
W. Chan Kim and Renee Mauborgne
25. **Who's Your City**
Richard Florida
26. **Leadership Beyond Reason**
John Townsend
27. **A Million Miles in a Thousand Years**
Donald Miller
28. **Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us**
Daniel H. Pink
29. **Bonhoeffer**
Eric Metaxas
30. **Making of a Leader**
Robert Clinton
31. **Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership**
Gary L. McIntosh and Samuel D. Rima
32. **Courageous Leadership**
Bill Hybels
33. **The Leadership Lessons of Jesus**
Bob Briner and Ray Pritchard
34. **The Tangible Kingdom: Creating Incarnational Community**
Hugh Halter
35. **Let Your Life Speak**
Parker Palmer
36. **If God Is Good**
Randy Alcorn
37. **The Steward Leader**
R. Scott Rodin
38. **Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership**
Ruth Hailey Barton



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