

Leadership Transitions Done Well!

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Leadership transitions:

- A normal part of organizational life.
- Affect not only the individual who is/was the leader.
- Can be complicated by issues of
 - self-identity and ambition,
 - ideology,
 - loyalties,
 - friendships,
 - relations with colleagues,
 - politics,
 - perceptions of winning or losing,
 - family considerations,
 - relocating...

Leadership transitions:

- Can be managed with care—attitude is the key!

Leadership transitions—3 perspectives

1. When you transition into leadership
2. When you transition out of leadership
3. When leadership transition means a new supervisor

A simple rule:

Move in with humility...

Move out with grace...

Move along with objectivity...

1. When you transition into leadership

- Show respect for predecessors
- Understand the “call” to service, it is not about you
- Election is for a term—the period of time until the next regular constituency. When the term ends, the individual’s leadership role automatically terminates. If the appointing/electing body chooses, an individual may be called to a new term in the same role...

1. When you transition into leadership (cont'd)

- Examine self-awareness and submission to God
- Reject partisan politics—serve the entire constituency
- Recognize the subtle danger of “power”
- Realize the personal risks in leadership life

“Leadership is not so much the exercise of power itself as the empowerment of others.”

—Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge* (New York, Harper & Row, 1985, p. 80)

“Men whom the Lord calls to important positions in His work are to cultivate a humble dependence upon Him. They are not to seek to embrace too much authority; for God has not called them to a work of ruling, but to plan and counsel with their fellow laborers.

—Ellen G White, *Testimonies for the Church* Vol 9, p. 270.

“Sometimes a man who has been placed in responsibility as a leader gains the idea that he is in a position of supreme authority, and that all his brethren, before making advance moves, must first come to him for permission to do that which they feel should be done. Such a man is in a dangerous position. He has lost sight of the work of a true leader among God's people...

“Instead of acting as a wise counselor, he assumes the prerogatives of an exacting ruler. God is dishonored by every such display of authority and self-exaltation. No man standing in his own strength is ever to be mind and judgment for another man whom the Lord is using in His work. No one is to lay down man-made rules and regulations to govern arbitrarily his fellow laborers who have a living experience in the truth.”

—Ellen G White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 491

“The Lord has not placed any one of His human agencies under the dictation and control of those who are themselves but erring mortals. He has not placed upon men the power to say, You shall do this, and you shall not do that.”

—Ellen G White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 347

“Now do not think that these men who do follow out your ideas are the only ones that can be trusted. You have sometimes thought that because they do your will to the letter, they were the only ones in whom you could place dependence. If anyone exercised his own judgment, and differed with you, you have disconnected from him as one that could not be trusted. Take your hands off the work, and do not hold it fast in your grasp. You are not the only man whom God will use...”

—Ellen G White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 303

The Church does not have a “presidential” system

Seventh-day Adventist Church polity “recognizes the committee system. It provides for shared administration (president, secretary, treasurer/chief financial officer) rather than a presidential system. It recognizes a unity of entities...based on mission, purpose, and belief... While the integrity of each entity is recognized (church, conference, union), each is seen to be a part of a sisterhood which cannot act without reference to the whole.

—General Conference *Working Policy*, D 05

Officer teamwork required

- The president, secretary, and treasurer are the executive officers, and shall carry forward the work in consultation with one another.
- Each officer serves under the direction of the executive committee.
- The president is the first officer of the entity placed in general administrative oversight of the territory.
- The secretary and treasurer/chief financial officer shall report to the executive committee after consultation with the president.

—See General Conference and Model Constitutions and Bylaws, Article on Officers

Personal risks in leadership

1. Power intensifies personality

Power intensifies personality

“...subjects in larger workspaces and seats, which encouraged expansive postures, were more likely than other subjects to pocket, rather than return, an overpayment for participating in the study, to cheat on a test, and break the rules in a driving simulation game.”

—Harvard Business Review, Nov 2013, p. 36

Personal risks in leadership

1. Power intensifies personality
2. Attention and respect connected with a leadership role makes introspection difficult weaknesses inadmissible
3. Commendation and/or criticism can distort thinking
4. Demands of leadership can create imbalance in life
5. Self-identity becomes defined by power and position
6. Predominant leadership models seen in society (business/government/military) are not appropriate for the Church

The reputed importance of the first 90 days

- An opportunity to display leadership behaviors
- Establish trust and credibility

Trust:

- Possibly the most important trait in the leadership of voluntary organizations
- Built on two perceptions—character and competence
- Quickest way to decrease trust—violate a behavior of character
- Quickest way to increase trust—demonstrate a behavior of competence

Trust is like an eraser. It gets smaller and smaller after every mistake.

Trust (cont'd)

“...we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”

—2 Corinthians 4:1-2 (NIV)

“We live in such a way that no one will stumble because of us, and no one will find fault with our ministry.”

—2 Corinthians 6:3, (NL)T

The reputed importance of the first 90 days

- An opportunity to display leadership behaviors
- Establish trust and credibility
- Build relationships (not just among the officer group)
- Accelerate your learning
- Understand change management principles

Challenge of initiating change:

How do you rock the boat without falling out of it?

Strategies for managing change:

1. Visualize a bright future. Create a clear tomorrow—but do not denigrate the past.
2. Make a convincing case. Educate (the need, the how and the benefits) and energize.
3. Build a sense of urgency (a belief that “we can do better”)
4. Get people involved at the right level
5. Have clear actions and expectations. What gets measured and rewarded gets done

The reputed importance of the first 90 days

- An opportunity to display leadership behaviors.
- Establish trust and credibility.
- Build relationships (not just among the officer group).
- Accelerate your learning. Don't be afraid to ask.
- Understand change management principles.
- Surround yourself with high potential leaders.
- Build your advice and counsel network.
- Strengthen workplace culture.

Workplace culture

1. Everyone is valued, everyone is needed.
2. Diversity is honored.
3. Candor with kindness.
4. Safety and accountability.
5. Significance of individuals, interdependence of group (create a choir not a collection of soloists).

2. When you transition out of leadership

Occupying an office is different from owning it!

2. When you transition out of leadership

- How long is 'long enough'/'too long'?

“The question is asked me if it is not a mistake to remove the president of the State conference to a new field when many of the people under his present charge are unwilling to give him up.

—Ellen G White, Gospel Workers, p. 419

“The Lord has been pleased to give me light on this question. I have been shown that ministers should not be retained in the same district year after year, nor should the same man long preside over a conference. A change of gifts is for the good of our conferences and churches.”

—Ellen G White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 420

“The gospel ministry is the most important work ever entrusted to human beings, and those who are called to this sacred work should beware of the spirit of office seeking, ever regarding the preaching of the Word in soul-winning service as their chief responsibility and highest honor...

—General Conference Working Policy E 50, Tenure of Office

“They should recognize that while the call to ministry is for life, the call to administrative service is temporary; therefore, those chosen for administrative responsibility from time to time, should ever hold themselves in readiness to engage cheerfully in full-time ministerial service when called to do so again.”

—General Conference Working Policy E 50, Tenure of Office

“There are those in elected and appointed positions who are not ministerially trained...Although they may be willing to accept other positions within the organization for which they are qualified, sometimes the organization is small and there are few positions open or available. Divisions are encouraged to give study to the specific situations in their divisions and look at options, including assistance for retraining of individuals for other areas of work or more comprehensive termination settlements where other denominational employment is not available for those not reelected.” —General Conference Working Policy E 50, Tenure of Office

2. When you transition out of leadership

- Mental attitude is key to a healthy transition.
 - Service to God is not dependent on a leadership post.
 - In the Church, the job seeks the person rather than the person seeks the job. The latter may be a disqualifier.
 - Discontinuation from a leadership role can be painful if it is viewed as loss. Be wary of sympathizers.
- Respect the leadership selection processes of the Church—they may not be perfect but they involve a group-process.
- Demonstrate respect for colleagues and the Church.
- Engage with the future, do not mourn the past.

3. Leadership transition to a new supervisor

- Respect the leadership selection process.
- Ensure that loyalty to a former supervisor does not compromise one's service to the organization.
- Demonstrate loyalty to God and the Church.
- Support the program rather than undermine the leader.
- Remain positive—engaged, collaborative, objective, analytical, constructive.
- Proactively develop relationships.
- Value differences.