

Look Before You Lead

How to Discern and Shape Your Church Culture

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- Culture shapes our lives and all our belief
- Culture is vital to effective ministry
- Cultural understanding is essential to leaders if they are to lead well

“Culture is the most important social reality in your church. Though invisible to the untrained eye, its power is undeniable. Culture gives colour and flavour to everything your church is and does. Like a powerful current running through your church, it can move you inland or take you father out to sea. It can prevent your church’s potential from ever being realized, or – if used by the Holy Spirit – it can draw others in and reproduce healthy spiritual life all along the way.” Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro, *Culture Shift*

- To make any kind of transition as a church, your church’s culture can’t be ignored.
- Great ideas go nowhere if the culture is unreceptive.
- Your church can have the best programs in the world, but deep-rooted change won’t happen without the right culture shift
- Your culture is the lens through which you view your life. If you change the lens you change your outlook.

“Culture is the shared software of our minds.” Geert Hofstede

- Culture announces its identity through everything you do. The values of your culture – stated or unstated, thought out or unintentional – shape the feel, behaviour, and attitude of a congregation more than anything else.

“Culture eats strategy for lunch”

- Even if you have not yet identified your church’s culture, others have.

The Culture Apple:

- The Apple's Skin: Outward Behaviour
- The Apple's Flesh: Values
- The Apple's Core: Beliefs

Skin: "We see, hear, feel, sense _____"

Flesh: "We value _____"

Core: "We believe/assume that _____"

Values:

- Determine ministry distinctives
- Dictate personal involvement
- Communicate what is important
- Guide Change
- Influence overall behaviour
- Inspire people to action
- Enhance credible leadership
- Shape ministry character
- Contribute to ministry success

A Value:

- Is constant
- Is passionate
- Is shared
- Is a core belief
- Drives and guides the church

- Actual v Aspirational Values

- Church Budget reflects values.

Church must exegete the culture

- The Church is also in the context of a wider culture. How does that shape and impact.

- Culture affects our churches more than we realize

Responses:

- Isolation
- Accommodation
- Contextualization

- The gospel is supracultural in its origins and essence but cultural in its interpretation and application.
- It's imperative that Christians and churches distinguish between the gospel and culture.

- We must discover how to use our culture and that of others to best clarify and promote the gospel.

Discovering the Pastor's Culture

Reading the Culture of a meeting.

Shaping Culture

How you think about your church determines what you see and the culture you create. Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro, *Culture Shift*

- Pray for Change
- Do Church Analysis
- Read the Culture
- Learn Why People Resist Change

“Ultimately our church culture resides not in buildings, programs, or printed proclamations but in people who say, ‘This is what God wants us to become’”
Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro, *Culture Shift*

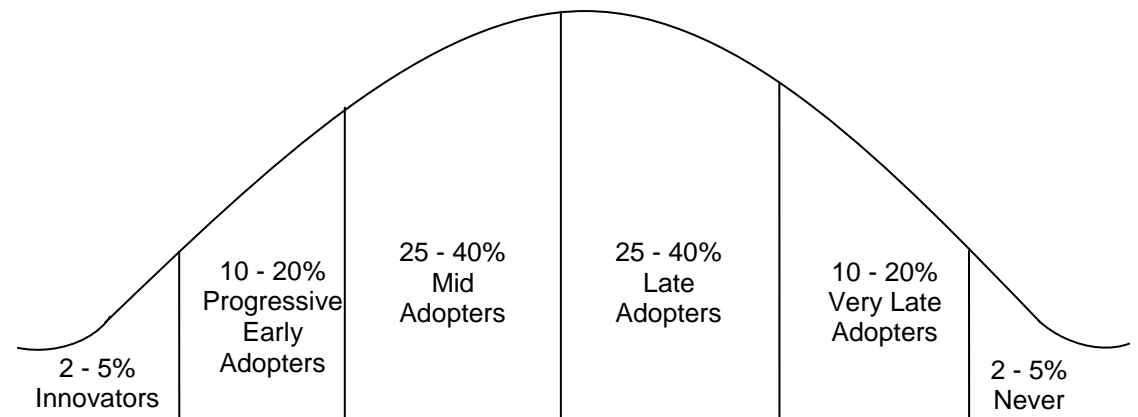
Change Resistors

- Felt Needs
- Status Quo
- Vested Interests
- Distrust of Leadership
- Stress of Change
- Sacred Cows
- Complexity of change
- Self-Centeredness

Know How People Respond to Change

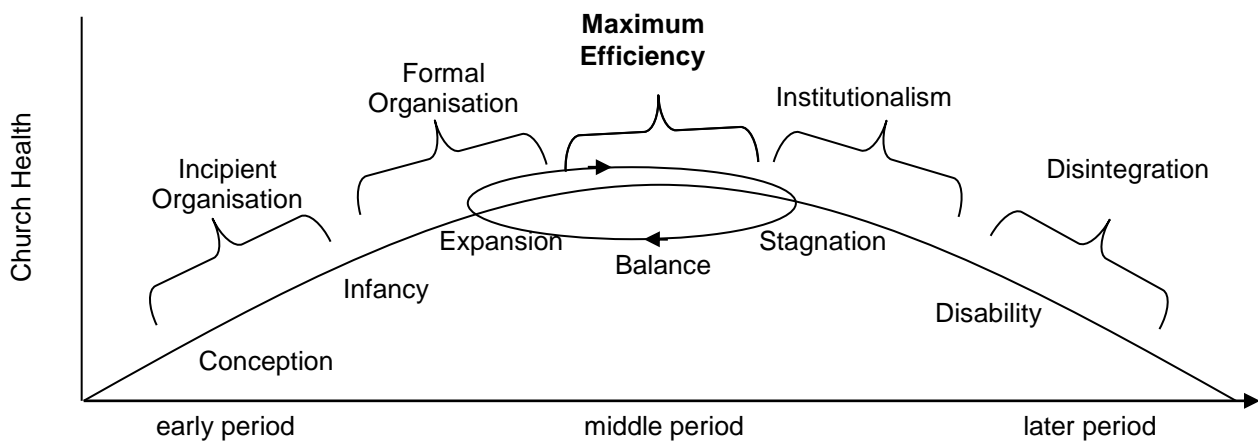
- People can only handle so much change
- People think first about what they must give up
- People are at different levels of readiness for change
- People tend to revert back to their old behaviour the minute the reason for change is removed.

Change Adaptability



Know how life-cycle works and help leaders know the implications

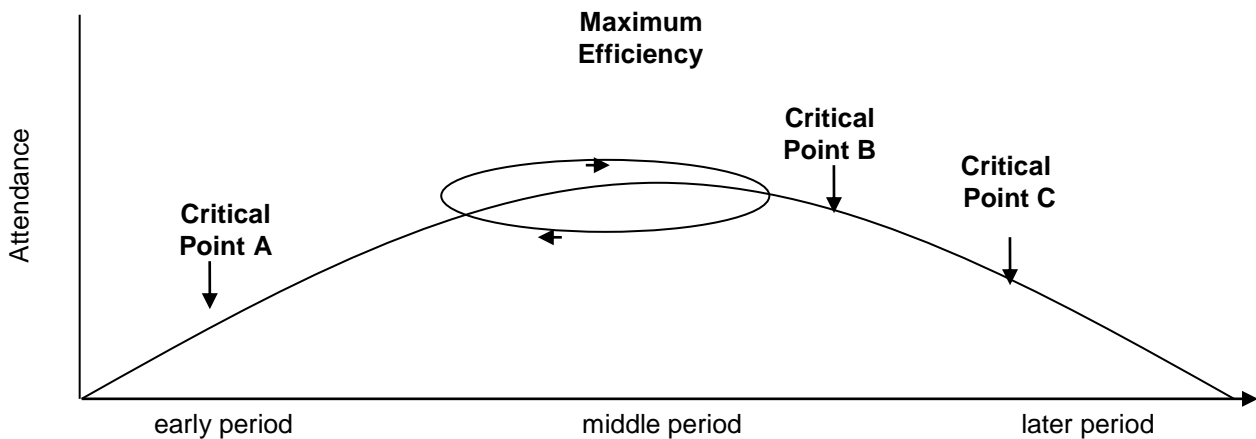
- Left to their own drift, churches move through the life cycle in remarkably predictable ways.



Organizational life stages:

- 1- Conception
- 2- Infancy
- 3- Expansion
- 4- Balance
- 5- Stagnation
- 6- Disability

Critical Points

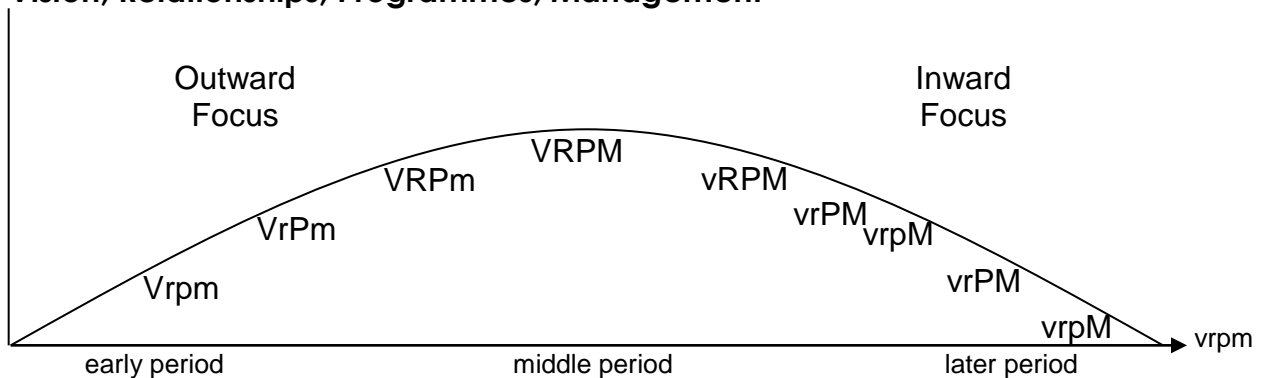


Point A – many churches never develop the programme/systems that achieve the vision of the church.

Point B – most churches do not have systems in place that help them identify when they have started moving down the right hand side.

Point C – The church realises that it is in decline but takes the wrong action to address what is happening.

Vision, Relationships, Programmes, Management



V = Vision

R = Relationships

P = Programmes

M = Management

What Does Your Church Value Most?

Resource quoted in this summary

Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro, *Culture Shift*, Jossey-Bass, 2005.

Alan Nelson and Gene Appel, *How To Change Your Church Without Killing It*, Thomas Nelson, 2000.

Dan Southerland, *Transitioning – Leading Your Church Through Change*, Zondervan, 1999.