



— From the Pen of —  
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## **Purpose vs. Sentimentality**

There must be purpose versus sentiment in Christian organizations. In the business world, not all businesses are successful and well organized. It is amazing how many people study business management but never use that knowledge. However, business has one advantage that we do not have in Christian work; it has a profit and loss statement. If a business does not show a profit, and over a prolonged period continues to show a loss, somebody complains—usually the stockholders. Why? They want a return on their investment. Not only do they want a return on their investment, they also want protection for their capital and the greatest protection of that capital is the continuing functioning of that organization. Stockholders want to make money on the money they have invested. If they do not see this happening, they complain loudly. But unfortunately, we do not have this set-up in Christian work.

We can sink into unbelievable organizational ineffectiveness in Christian work and few supporters will say anything. If complaints are made, they are not spoken loudly, or somebody cries, “Oh, you’re touching the Lord’s anointed,” or “You’re fighting against God,” or “Didn’t God bring this organization into existence?” That is sad. Those statements do not make much sense, but we say them anyway. What is it then that perpetuates the organization? It is sentiment.

One time we had a very serious situation in a church I was serving. A well-meaning but sticky sentimentalist said in a deacon’s meeting one night when we were discussing the problem, “Friends, my advice is not to touch the situation. Let’s maintain peace.” Well, there is a time when silence is not golden: it is yellow cowardice. There is a time when we must sweep aside this kind of peacefulness and sentimentality to accomplish our objectives. Do you know that in church, purposefulness is always considered eccentric, always kind of coming at the status quo from the flank? And yet, it is this kind of purposefulness to which God has called us. But we often find that we prefer to perpetuate the form based on sentiment rather than to insist on accomplishing our purpose.

Some of us may be so bogged down in sentiment that our church or organization does not have a chance for renewal and adaptation. If that is the case, it is tragic! Our donors or church members do not help. They feed the evil root of sentimentality rather than holding us to the highest and saying: “Are you sure that what you are doing is essential? Can you justify your being here?” Your members will not say that. They will pat you on

the head and give you another love offering. An awesome responsibility rests on us to evaluate ourselves and develop a goal orientation.

Let us look at some management organizing principles which relate to organizing, to the developing of the structure, to the work of delegation, and to the work of establishing and maintaining relationships.

- 1. The objective.** The organizational structure should be designed to accomplish established objectives. It follows from this that when the organizational structure no longer accomplishes objectives, discard it, alter it, or subject it to whatever is necessary to accomplish the objectives.
- 2. Specialization.** The work assigned to individuals should be specialized insofar as it is consistent with effective human effort. This is the genius of the assembly line. Specialization applies not only to assembly line situations but to managerial situations as well. The more specialized we can make the work, the more skilled the person is apt to become in that work, and the more effective he or she is apt to be over a lengthy period.
- 3. Management emphasis.** When called on to supervise two or more differing types of work, a manager tends to show preferential emphasis in decisions and choices. Those preferences will be determined primarily by previous relationships or activities. This can be good or bad, depending on the needs of the situation.
- 4. Maximum span.** A manager should oversee the maximum number of people he or she can effectively manage. This is assuming that we view management as a type of work to be performed and we recognize it as a legitimate assignment. The number depends on a variety of things, the most important of which is the capacity of the manager. Some people have a greater capacity than others. The number depends also on the type of work the people are doing. One can obviously oversee more ditch-diggers than research scientists. In the third place, the number depends on the location and/or dispersal of personnel.
- 5. Minimum levels.** The number of organizational levels should be kept at a minimum. Proliferating the organizational levels will not necessarily increase the effectiveness of the organization itself. Minimize those levels. The more levels multiplied this way, the more difficulties are created. The reason is obvious. It takes time for information and decisions to go from the top to the bottom.

Incidentally, have you ever noticed the instinctive answer to every problem? The problem posed is: "We are not getting the work done that we should." The first answer, the easiest answer, the spontaneous answer is, "Let us get more people." *More people do not insure the accomplishment of more work.* It only

insures the presence of more people. Sometimes work simplification is the answer, not an increased staff.

6. **Carry-over.** The early characteristics of organization tend to persist in later organizational forms. To put it simply, "You never outlive your past." Some of these earlier characteristics will follow you to the very end. You can make appreciable changes, but the past carries over.
7. **Control limits.** Delegation should proceed only to the limit of effective control. Just as a person can only do so much, so a person can be accountable for only so much.
8. **Commensurate authority.** Authority should be delegated commensurate with responsibility.
9. **Complete accountability.** The superior is always accountable for the actions of subordinates. It is not a very pleasant position, but it is always a necessary position.
10. **Single reporting relationships.** Each person should be accountable to only one supervisor.