

# The Basic Organizational Orientations: The Three Mentalities

By Olan Hendrix

I now wish to draw your attention to something that is foundational to management. There are three basic types of organizational orientation or organizational mentalities.

## The Task Mentalities

First, there is task orientation which says, "Do this, do that, do something else." Task orientation is primarily concerned with the performance and activity of the moment, and not with the distant goal. The task mentality is revealed in the following illustration with which I am sure you are all acquainted. A man walked up to several workmen.

He asked one workman, "What are you doing?"

"I'm laying bricks."

He addressed another, "What are you doing?"

"I am installing glass."

Finally, he spoke to a man who was wheeling a wheelbarrow, "What are you doing?"

"I'm building a cathedral."

All of these men except the last has a task orientation. In industry the task orientation expresses itself this way: "Put that nut on that bolt. Never mind what you are building. Just put that nut on that bolt." The average church or mission has a task orientation. "here is what we do. Here is the activity in which we are engaged."

## The Control Mentality

*Control* orientation is concerned primarily with government, authority, and decisions. The most important thing about our association is to make sure that control is maintained, that a proper form of government is perpetuated, and that we do things to a certain standard. Control says it does not make any difference whether we accomplish anything or not. But let us make sure that *we do it right*.

## The Goal Mentality

Goal orientation says government, authority, procedure, precedent, and history must serve a specific purpose. Everything that is done (task) must strategically contribute to the stated goal. Goal orientation is obsessed with clearly defined objectives. Everything else is subservient to the objective. This is the hardest orientation to maintain. Generally, religious organizations start out with a goal orientation, deteriorate to a task orientation, and finally degenerate to the bottom- to control orientation.

I have been talking about evangelical ecumenicity for a long time and have been cited about ecumenicity within a predetermined theological framework. One day I was talking with a lady about her mission. She was the head of a small but prominent mission. She was the head of a small but prominent mission. But, they has not had a new missionary

in eight years and they were deteriorating. They were not growing in any way and yet they were perpetuating their old structures. They had degenerated to the bottom, to the control pattern. I said to her, "Dear lady, why don't you merge your mission with somebody who can bring vitality and help to the areas where you need it so the people involved in your work can accomplish the goals to which they originally committed themselves?" "Oh, merge! We could not merge. That would be an invasion of the sanctity of the origin of our mission." What she was really saying was, "We have no goal other than the perpetuation of our form." Perpetuate she will, and sadly enough, so will her constituency!

It is very easy to substitute sentiment for organizational purpose. Identifying goals can lead to a fierce battle. Our job, in part, is to lead our followers back to a goal orientation.

Is this biblical? Yes, indeed: "Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13,14). "What mean ye to weep and break my heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13). "I'm ready to preach" (Rom 1:15). "He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). It is very biblical. I may only lay bricks with one hand and wield a sword with the other, but I am going to build the wall.

Our spiritual degeneration has taken us down this bitter road to task and control orientation to the exclusion of our goal orientation. Some of us in our organizations will have a bitter struggle to ever regain a goal orientation. Sometimes it cannot be regained in an organization. Maybe you have heard of the inevitable cycle in religious organizations. It starts with a *man* (or woman) with vision and a burden. Thus it becomes a *movement*, and this general degenerates into a *machine*. Then, finally, it becomes a *monument*. These are the four "M's" of organizational deterioration and it results in "control organization." This mentality says in effect, "Never mind whether we are doing anything.; let us just make sure that we are doing it properly!"

The best way we have discovered to get things done through a group of people committed to a common objective is to have someone within the group do the work of planning, leading, organizing, and controlling.