

Leading Change In Ministry

"Change," is the most feared word in the Church. "Patience," is the most feared word in Worship and AV Ministries.

Now What? Change in ministry, whether staffing, direction, mission-vision or re-assignments can either stop followers in their tracks or hinder leaders in processing and making effective decisions. Suggested book: John Kotter, "Leading Change" is a good resource for teams and leaders to ascertain change and how it is or isn't received. Here are a few clues to use as you consider making changes in your ministry.

Think COW

C - Consider - the people first.

Your idea may be the best idea since the invented wheel. But who will lead your idea? What role will you play in your idea? If you are without answers that involve yourself, the idea may not be as practical as you first thought. More importantly, how does your idea benefit others? Are you sure they would agree? Having a vision is a wonderful thing, but having input is what makes it fly. Additionally, the need for change begins with the end in mind. At the intersections of decision making, we find people wondering if you are giving them a green light to participate.

O - Over time - introduce change slowly.

When change moves slowly, you begin to learn more about the people and the process; this helps you navigate more cautiously as your newly introduced idea politely befriends people. When your idea is "shared" rather than "shoved" people will be more open to receive change.

W - Wait - be in a hurry to wait.

Let patience have its perfect work with you as others catch on. This will breed buy-in and ownership; without them change will be a frustration to others and possibly cause animosity within the group you are trying to lead or influence.

Story of a Cow: a business man and a church.

A business man in a power suit grows impatient with the cow on the other side of the fence. After ranting and raving he demands, "Cow...I want you to produce milk for me right here, right now." The cow just stares back at him chewing her cud. The man hollers out, "Hey cow! Make me milk or I'll turn you into hamburger!!" The cow has the same non-response.

What's actually going on in this picture? The cow is producing milk. By chewing and processing the grass over time, milk is the final result. Change can feel like this.

Wise Questions to Ask before change is introduced. Here are five questions to post or think about to help engage team and leader perceptions concerning ministry strategies. These questions may foster healthy dialogues and give both the team and leaders a common ground to listen and discuss.

1. What are the five most important things about our _____ that need to be preserved and why? (Form a Need)
2. What are the top three things we need to change and why? (Form a Plan)
3. How will this help or hurt you? (Form a Purpose)
4. What role will you play in this idea? (Form a Commitment)
5. What are our celebrated short & long term goals? (Form a Follow-through & Party)

*Overall: how you consider, overtime and wait in your leading of change, you set people's expectations in a healthy way while you also establish credibility and precedence.

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