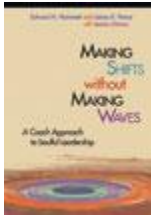


## Speaking Volumes

From Volume 2010, Issue 3 - 3 2010

Transformation of a church is a thing of the heart

by: Ronald E. Keener



"The cost of change is always high," says Edward H. Hammett, about his newest book (with James R. Pierce) *Making Shifts without Making Waves* (Chalice Press, 2009). "The cost of genuine transformation is the ability and desire to find and embrace the new, believing it is God's next step for you, though it may be uncomfortable or unfamiliar at first."

Hammett is a professional certified coach and is a partner in The Columbia Partnership. He responded to questions from *Church Executive*:

### **Say a church hasn't had a net growth in 10 years. How can you transform that church?**

Transforming a church from "stuck/plateaued to effective/growing" has more to do with making right decisions and making decisions right than changing structures or styles. True transformation is a thing of the heart that comes from hours of dialogue seeking clarity, understanding as they discern the best for the whole not just the few. For leaders and key persons to decide to live into this understanding of church and church growth takes time, intentionality, patience and prayer.

### **What environment should a pastor have in his church to begin making shifts or changes?**

For a church exploring finding and following next steps into their future, a pastor needs a core group of remnant leaders who are willing to discern and explore together. It is crucial that part of this exploration team include some skeptics. These key leaders must have the church's best interest in mind, openness to explore and honestly pray for God's leadership and direction. The coach approach by design is action-oriented and not just about talk. The group will establish priorities and decide on next steps and create teams to carry out the tasks rather than "dump the plan" on the pastor's desk.

### **Are there "ripples" to watch for in anticipating the waves that endanger a program of change?**

Certainly, there will always be some ripples when it comes to change. Our ripple model acknowledges this and provides coaching questions to help transformation to occur from the "inside/out." The major ripple that often trips or sabotages a process for change and transition is that people want to move too fast without building a deep and wide support base by creating forums that foster consensus, understanding and momentum. On the other hand, part of the power of the coach approach is setting time frames that move the group to action within a reasonable time frame so you do not fall into "paralysis by

over analysis.”

**If a church board just doesn't see the need for change, what is a pastor to do who sees the need in "making shifts"?**

There are situations where an elected board sabotages the future because they are uncomfortable with change or fear losing power/control or leadership. The coach approach does confront this reality, acknowledges if the group does not or will not acknowledge it on their own. Then the coach asks, "Now what?" "What is the best decision now for the church?"

If the group or congregation decides to move on then there are decisions about leadership models that need to be explored.

**What does the church do about dissenters or skeptics?**

Change is certain to surface some skeptics and dissenters. Some of these can be great legitimizers for powerful change if they are open to exploring, learning and dialoguing with others about options and honestly evaluating the present and the future. Working with and moving some skeptics and watching them take one or two steps forward and shift from "my desire" to "God's desire" is worth more than we can say. Those who experience that internal shift will help make the external shifts needed become a reality.

**What do you want the reader to take away from having read the book?**

We pray that our readers find hope that change and transformation can happen without destroying the church. The handbook is filled with practical and teaching boxes, powerful coaching and reflective questions, real scenarios and wide margins for making notes as you work through your shifts. Finally, we desire that congregations and their leaders discover a practical toolkit and pathway for becoming a soulful-leader. [[www.soulful-leadership.com](http://www.soulful-leadership.com) ]

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