

Towards A Fruitful Ministry, Sam Gore

Congregational coach

An Outline of

Managing Transitions, Making the Most of Change.

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Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Reading, Massachusetts.

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THE PROBLEM

It Isn't the Changes That Do You In

- a. Unless transition occurs, change will not work.
- b. Change focuses on the outcome that change will produce.
- c. Transition is different in that it starts with an ending (paradoxical but true).
- d. "Good changes" begin with transitions that requires you to "let go of something."
- e. Once you let go, you must understand what comes afterwards.
 1. This brings one into what is called "*neutral zone*."
 2. This better termed as "no man's land," between old reality, and the new.
 3. It is the limbo between the old sense of identity, and the new.
 4. It is when the old is gone, and the new doesn't feel comfortable yet.

It is important to understand the neutral zone for several reasons

- a. If you don't expect it and understand why it is there, you will likely rush through it and will become discouraged when you cannot do so.
 - b. You may be frightened in the "no man's land," and try to escape (this is the reason for a high level of turn over in ministry).
 - c. If you escape prematurely, you will not only compromise the change, but also lose a great opportunity.
 - d. The neutral zone is both dangerous and at the same time and opportune place, and it is the very core of the transition process.
5. Ending -neutral zone - new beginning. People make the new beginning only if they have first made an ending and spent some time in the neutral zone.

*"It is a terrible thing to look over your shoulder
when you are trying to lead - and find no one there."*

HOW TO GET THEM TO LET GO

Before you can begin something new, you have to end what used to be.

1. What is actually ending and who is, in fact losing what?
 - a. You have to describe the change in as much detail as you can.
 - b. Imagine that the change is a cue ball rolling across the surface of a pool table. There are lots of other balls on the table and it's going to hit a few.
 - c. You have now started a chain of cause - and - effect collisions. For each of them, think of the people whose familiar way of being and doing will be affected.

- d. Beyond these specific losses, ask “what is over for everyone?”
 1. Is it a chapter in the church’s history
 2. Is it an unspoken assumption about what the members can expect from their leadership?
 3. Is it something that the church stands for?

2. Accept The Reality and Importance of the Subjective Losses
 - a. Don’t argue with what you hear.
 1. It will stop the conversation and you won’t learn any more.
 2. Lose is a subjective experience and your objective view will be irrelevant.
 3. You will likely make your task more difficult by convincing people you don’t understand them - one worse yet, you don’t care what they feel.
 - b. This is not about compliance, it’s about commitment.
 1. You need people to give 100%
 2. You will not get this unless you understand them and make decisions based on that understanding.
 3. Learn who is experiencing a loss of some kind and what it is they are losing.

3. Don’t Be Surprised at “Overreaction.”
 - a. People are overreacting only when they are reacting more than we are. (this may be the way we think)
 1. We should not overlook two things. First, changes cause transitions, which causes losses, and it’s the losses, not the changes, that they’re reacting to.

2. Secondly, it's a piece of their world that is being lost, not yours, or ours, and people will often overreact when this is case.
3. Overreaction will also take place when a small lose is perceived as the first step in a process that might end with removing the grievors themselves.
4. Acknowledge The Losses Openly and Sympathetically
 - a. You need to bring losses out into the open.
 - b. Acknowledge to them you know and understand and that you have concern for the affected people
 - c. Do it simply and directly

5. Expect and Accept the Signs of Grieving

Certain emotional steps people enter into can be mistaken for bad morale, but this is not true. The emotions people are likely to enter into when lose occurs are . . .

- a. Anger
- b. Bargaining
- c. Anxiety
- d. Sadness
- e. disorientation
- f. depression

Not everyone feels all these feelings intensely, and people don't go through them by the numbers. But in any group you can expect to encounter all of them, and you need to get people to recognize that they can accept the situation and move forward.

6. Compensate for the Losses

- a. Many change efforts fail because people affected feel only the pain.

- b. The church might move forward, but the members will feel all is lost.
- c. Ask, “What can I give back to balance what’s been taken away?”
- d. If people feel change has robbed them of their control, can you find a way to give them back a feeling of control?
- e. If the feeling of competence has been taken away from a leader when a position has been taken away, can you give them new competence?
- f. The principle of compensating for losses is basic to all kinds of change, and even the most beneficial and important changes will often fail when this principle is overlooked.

“He that lacks time to mourn, lacks time to mend.”

7. Give People Information, and Do It Again and Again.

Common rationalizations are *They don’t need to know; They already know; I told the department heads; We don’t know all the details ourselves.*

- a. For every week of hiding information, you may gain a month of bitterness and mistrust
- b. Even if you announced it, say it again and again until it sinks in.
- c. Don’t assume department heads are fully aware of what’s going on.
- d. If you don’t know all the information, be sure to give it when promised and remember to say something to the affect that you haven’t forgotten in the mean time.

8. Define What’s Over and What Isn’t

- a. One of the biggest problems that endings cause in a church is confusion.
- b. Not specifying what is over and what isn't runs the risk of three equally difficulties ;
 - 1. People won't dare to stop doing anything. They will try to do all the old things and the new things and will soon be burned out.
 - 2. People make their own decisions about what to discard and what to keep, and the results will be chaos.
 - 3. People will toss out everything that was done in the past, and the baby will disappear with the bath water.

9. Mark Endings

- a. Don't just talk about them, create actions or activities that dramatize them
- b. The old is gone and we're doing things in a new collaborate way!

10. Treat The Past With Respect

- a. Never degenerate the past
- b. Be careful in urging people to turn from the past, you don't want to drive them away from you and from the new direction your church needs to take.

11. Let People Take a Piece of The Old Way With Them

- a. Ending occur more easily if people can take a bit of the past with them
- b. Putting together a commemorative book of pictures, documents, etc.

12. Show How Endings Ensure Continuity of What Really Matters
 - a. Most endings are not so terminal as a church relocating.
 - b. A corollary to this could be that yesterday's ending launched today's success and today will have to end if tomorrow's changes are to take place.

MANAGING THE NEUTRAL ZONE

1. A Very Difficult Time; There are six dangers that may take from during this time . . .
 - a. Anxiety rises and motivation falls
 - b. People in the neutral zone miss more Sundays than in other times
 - c. Old problems, or weaknesses, long patched over and dealt with, may take rise again in full bloom.
 - d. In the neutral zone leaders are often overloaded, signals become mixed, priorities get confused information gets miscommunicated.
 - e. Given ambiguities of the neutral zone, people may become polarized between those who want to rush forward and those who want to go back to the old ways. Discord arises
 - f. Also churches become vulnerable to attacks from the devil.
2. But Also a Creative Time
 - a. The task is two-fold. First; Get the church through in one piece
 - b. Capitalize on confusion by fostering innovation.

One organization created a cartoon caption with a couple of deacons and the pastor that read, “*Deep Doo Doo ahead for the next while; proceed wit caution.*”

3. Normalize The Neutral Zone

- a. People will not understand the neutral zone. They will think it is a trip from one side of the street to the next.
- b. The neutral zone lasted 40 years for Moses and the children of Israel.
- c. But the neutral zone is not just a time for waiting and confusion.
- d. It is a time for reorientation and re-identification takes place.
- e. People need to know it is natural to feel frightened. As old patterns end and new one begin, ambiguities begin and so does the longing for answers.
- f. People in the neutral zone will naturally follow anyone who seems to know where they are going.

4. Redefine It

Use a different metaphor. “The ship leaving the port, we are sailing smoothly. We have encountered the enemy and have taken a hit, but the ole ship still sails.”

“An adventure is only an inconvenience rightly understood. An inconvenience is only an adventure wrongly understood”

5. Create Temporary Systems for The Neutral Zone

In order to give strength and instruction during the neutral zone

- a. You can try hard to protect people from further changes while they're trying to regain balance.
- b. Next, Review policies and procedures to see that they are adequate to deal with any confusion caused during the neutral zone.
- c. Consider what new roles, or reporting methods need to be put into place.
- d. Set short range goals for people and establish check points along the way as you travel towards long range goals.
- e. Don't set people up for failure by promising high levels of productivity while in the neutral zone. Everyone fails when you don't meet certain planned for targets, and people feel defeated.
- f. Provide special training for supervisors or team leaders including seminars etc.

6. Strengthen Intragroup Connections

- a. The neutral zone can be a lonely place.
- b. Communications help people feel included and connected.
- c. News letters, special mailings, etc. can be very useful during this time.
- d. Beware of showing preference. In the neutral zone people want to feel they are "all in this boat together."

7. Use a Transition Monitoring Team

- a. The TMT will demonstrate the people want to know how things are going.
- b. The TMT is an effective focus group to review plans or communications before they are announced or given to the people.

- c. The TMT provides a point of ready access to the church's "grapevine," and can be used to correct misinformation and counter any rumors that may start.
- d. WARNINGS OF TMTs. First make sure that the mission of the group is made clear. Secondly don't give the function to an already existing group of upper level leaders (deacons, elders etc.).

8. Using the Neutral Zone Creatively

- a. Establish the fact that "business as usual" chokes creativity and that the present is the best possible time to try new things.

"If you have always done it that way, it probably is wrong"

- b. Provide opportunities (retreats etc.) to review the old ways vs. The new. Plan for surveys and campaigns.
- c. "When choosing between two evils, try to choose the one you have never chose before" (Mae West).
- d. "The way to get good ideas, is to get lots of ideas and throw the bad ones away." (Linus Pauling)
- e. Where all think alike, no one is thinking very much." (Walter Lipton)

LAUNCHING A NEW BEGINNING

1. Starts can and should be carefully planned.

- a. They take place on a schedule.
- b. They are signaled by announcements well in advance.
- c. They follow the timing of the mind and heart.

2. Ambivalence Towards Beginnings

- a. People want them to happen, but are fearful of them at the same time.
- b. They may activate some old anxieties that were triggered by the ending.
- c. The new way represents a gamble.
- d. It may resonate with a history of which an incident in which a new beginning was aborted in some traumatic fashion.
- e. It may destroy what was a pleasant experience in the neutral zone.

3. The Timing of New Beginnings

Beginning cannot happen by word act. They happen when timing of the transition process allows them to happen. Just as flowers and fruit appear on schedule. That is natural and not subject to anyone's will but the heavenly Father's.

You can't turn to key or flip a switch, but you can cultivate the soil. Here are some ways one can accomplish this

- a. Explain the basic **purpose** behind the outcome you are seeking.
- b. Paint a **picture** of how the outcome will both look and feel.
- c. Lay out a step-by-step **plan** for phasing in the outcome.
- d. Give each person a **part** in both the plan and the outcome
- e. Don't forget **prayer!!!!**
- f. Remain **patient.**

HOW TO DEAL WITH NONSTOP CHANGE

“The only constant is change”

In transition you have three phases.

- An Ending
- The Neutral Zone
- The Beginning

Yet the phases aren't separate stages with a clear boundary between each. The three phases of transition are more like a curving, slanting strata. you are in more than one of the phases at the same time. **Transition is marked by the dominance of one phase as it gives way to the next.**

“Everything had to be done at once”

Consider the following with nonstop change

1. The Rising Tide of Change
 - a. Every organization and human being, has the capacity to adjust to new higher levels of change.
 - b. It's changes in the level or rate of change that throws us into transition.
 - c. The rate of change in America has peaked in our history's past; **our problem is not change, it's assimilation!**
 - d. Even if change were to cease, people would have difficulties because a lack of change would itself be a change.
2. Postpone “Extra” Changes

- a. The danger of change, is when leaders of the church “get hooked on change itself.”
- b. Some want to makes changes just for the sake of change.
- c. A change addicted leader is a very dangerous person although they can make plausible-sounding cases for their proposed change.

AN OUTLINE OF

MANAGING TRANSITIONS

MAKING THE MOST OF CHANGES

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(Moses, with the help of Jethro reorganized his decision - making process in the neutral zone by regrouping people into new units under temporary new managers).

Charles Kettering

E and F added by Sam Gore

spoken by the Greek Philosopher Heraclitus 2500 years ago

Julius Caesar describing how he handled an unexpected simultaneous attack by the Nervii at three different points on his flanks while part of his troops were crossing a river and another part were setting up camp.

A and B Sam Gore