

Unlocking Church Doors – 10 Keys to Positive Change
Paul Munday

Forward

A leader is, by definition, a change agent. (Leaders who bring about no changes are followers rather than leaders.) A leader has the courage to say, "Let's do this differently!" and the skill to help people migrate from present to future while enjoying the trip. A leader knows (a) what to change; (b) how to change it; (c) when to change it; and (d) who to enlist in persuading others to move in a new direction.

Chapter One:
The Newness of You

Getting the Funnel Right Side Up

- Five tactics can stimulate the kinds of personal discipline that lead to positive change:
 - Postpone pleasure
 - Behave your believes
 - Manage time
 - Care for yourself
 - Foster attitudes of expectancy.

Manage Time

- Quantify your day.
 - Time seems to slip away because we do not think of it as a perceptible, tangible resource.
- Keep a "to do" list.
 - Write the list every day.
 - Prioritize items on your daily sheet, 1 through 5.
 - Motivate yourself by crossing off completed items.
- Think monthly.
 - Keeping your life visual over a 28- to 31-day period is a wonderful way to keep a big-picture view of your routine.
- Divide and conquer.
 - Break complex projects into manageable segments.

- Consolidate movement.
 - Do not respond to each phone call as it is received; rather, return all calls during a single time block.
 - Combine errands.
 - Cluster your responsibilities.

Expanding Our Minds

- Church leaders must expand their own thinking as a first step in expanding the thinking of congregations.
- Recognize paradigms.
 - Paradigms are the lenses or containers that define, shape, and structure our thinking.
- Be Aware of Future Trends
 - The vast majority of the population born after 1961 has never been inside a church.
 - Cultural diversity is resulting in tension. Affinity groups will become more important.
 - Most population growth will be from immigration.
 - The population of North America continues to age.
- Risk entering new networks.

Get Real

- Vulnerable living is a powerful but painful route to transformation.
- Pace of the leader, pace of the team.

Chapter Two: Lighting the Way

- PRINCIPLE: Cast a vision for what can be.

The Leader is Key

- Leaders must lead; not with malice or blind ambition, but with a genuine desire to capture and implement God's dream for a particular congregation.

Penetrating Walls of Complacency

- Some fellowships are contented congregations that have learned to survive in satisfactory, albeit stubborn, ways. Lyle Schaller describes such a body of believers:
 1. They are a closely-knit group of committed supporters who derive great satisfaction from a collection of meaningful, shared experiences.
 2. Their gathering place has become an important “third place” (in addition to their places of residence and work) that affirms their personal identity as human beings.
 3. The organization affirms and supports some deeply held cultural values that are threatened by the changing world in which they now live.

Vision Marks

- Visions motivate people to dream again.
- Visions are future-orientated, but build on the past.

Sound a Note of Realism

- People want to be stretched, not broken.
- Most long-term, effective entrepreneurs exercise bounded risk. They know the probability of their success, and they structure the odds in their favor.

Casting and Crafting

- A small group of the people who are “tracking” with you will most likely become a long-range planning committee or visioning committee.
- In shaping your statement remember to:
 - Give direction.
 - Speak simply.
 - Use short sentences, vivid language, and as much specificity as possible.
- The second stage of vision casting occurs as a specific congregational vision unfolds. Reveal the exciting possibilities.
 - Hold house groups.
 - Devote a worship service to the theme of vision.

Chapter Three: **Missionary Maneuvers**

- PRINCIPLE: Connect with the culture of your people.

Symbols

- Think of your current ministry setting. What objects or settings hold symbolic power? What can be altered with sensitivity; what is clearly off limits?

Language

- You will be wise to learn language, not for the sake of acquiescence, but for the sake of making connections.

Values

- At the heart of understanding the culture of your congregation is understanding the values of your congregation.
- Values are like stepping stones across a vigorous and swift stream. If we expect people to cross new currents, we first need to provide a foundation, a place for them to stand.

Narrative and History

- To discover the narrative of your congregation is to ask members to create a historical time line.

Denominational Influences

- *Trust your tradition.* Heritage and history can inform innovation, supplying valued experience that minimizes error and the repetition of costly mistakes.
- *Translate your tradition.* Distill your heritage into transferable concepts and values.
- *Turbo-charge your tradition.* Rev-up your lineage, moving it in the direction of relevancy rather than retreat.

Connecting and Changing

- Becoming “one of the people” is not a professional task, but an incarnational, even earthly task.

The Language of Love

- Plain, old-fashioned loving ultimately bolsters the business of bonding.

On the Road to Trust

- Do what you say you are going to do.
- Be accessible and available.
- Admit your mistakes.
- Be honest and sincere.
- “Pay the rent.”
 - Demonstrate competence in everyday ministerial tasks, if you want people to venture with you into the spiritual deep.

Check the Car Before Pointing the Pistol

- Caring about culture is caring enough to see that the key fits before firing off in all directions; it’s caring enough to link new initiatives to the legacy of those you seek to serve.

Chapter Four: Many Worlds, Many Systems

The Political System

- Two layers or types of political systems function in most congregations: formal and informal.
- In addition to individuals, groups often constitute part of the unofficial power structure of a congregation.
- Savvy change agents are aware of the shift in players in church political systems, negotiating the transition of power with awareness, sensitivity, and great wisdom.

The Transportation System

- Process
- “If a church is to change in pace with the times, then the decision making must be done broadly, so that most active members feel they have had a voice.”
- Issues involving the entire congregation need, of course, to be resolved by the whole congregation.

- Ministry-specific issues need to be resolved by those most affected.
- Structure
- Effective church structure is shaped by a number of other key principles or maxims:
 - Recognize that the world has changed – thus an outreach mind-set is essential.
 - When you operate with an outreach mind-set, you need to organize and structure for nimbleness.
 - To achieve nimbleness, give a need to a leader, not to a committee, and allow the leader to organize his or her own action group to get the job done.
 - Minimize committees.
 - Fly this banner high: Simple says it best.
- Communication
 - Effective communication is the lubricant in the transit system of your congregation, greasing the process and structure of your life together.

The Resourcing System

- Caring
 - Skillful pastoral care, notes of encouragement, phone calls of concern fortify both individuals and churches.
- Spiritual Development
 - Uplifting worship, spiritual direction, prayer teams, and Bible-study sessions all help leverage people forward.
- Education
 - The new requirement for leadership is to be prepared to meet any challenge.
 - Success is now dependent upon our ability to create new knowledge with our colleagues.
 - Mastery of the knowledge-building process is the competitive capital for 21st-century success.

The Weather System

- When ominous conditions overshadow congregational life – either because of change, conflict, or crisis – research suggests that persons then:
 - Narrow their trust.

- Vent their anger toward third parties.
- Congregational self-esteem is often linked to the self-esteem of its members.

A System of Systems

- The first lesson is that everything is a part of everything else.
- A second lesson is understanding your congregation is the principle of homeostasis. Homeostasis means, “to stay the same.”
 - Biologically we have many homeostatic mechanisms to control body temperature, the amount of light entering our eyes, and the level of salts, fluids, and blood sugars.
 - A third lesson in understanding your congregation is that hard work – in and of itself – will change nothing if the system is broken or misaligned.

Chapter Five: The Learning Congregation

Traits of a Learner

- Childlike curiosity.
- A teachable spirit.
- A problem-solving attitude.
 - Effective learners are willing to study even checkmated situations reframing life, looking for the overlooked move.
- A future-friendly outlook.
 - Effective learners choose not to be victimized by life’s realities, but to take responsibility for their lives and their futures.

The Biggest Obstacle

- Cynical, negative, “what’s the use” attitudes are the biggest blocks to learning in most organizations and congregations.
- Dick Shreckhise has found that:
 - The Gospel message changes people.

- [The] greatest need in the world is not for more intellectual people, or skilled people, or more powerful leadership...but for “changed” people...
- Concepts like grace, forgiveness, love, reconciliation, prayer...are not static concepts. They communicate growth...creative expression...[and an] invitation to a new “changed” way of living.

A Focus for Learning

- People have a higher learning potential as they discover their life passion, talents, temperament, and spiritual gifts.

We’re All From Missouri

- People change from passive spectators to active learners/leaders as they venture out of their own backyard and experience.

Going Over the Mountain

- In a global, translocal society, too many parish leaders are caught in local, provincial patterns.

Third-Party Power

- Along with the new models, people can learn through new mentors.
- One of the newest options for churches are congregations that mentor other congregations.
- A more familiar style of mentoring is to contract with a professional congregational consultant. Church consultants have the power to legitimize new ideas. In many cases, they are little different from a visionary pastor or lay leader, but find receptive, eager ears because of their third-party power.
- Consultants are powerful teachers, attracting receptive audiences.

The Goal Is Empowerment

- An experience of life-change and hope (in Christ), giftedness and purpose, new information and vision, mentors and models open life up toward a wonderful array of new options. A sense of new options, in turn, empowers people, the ultimate goal of any learning organization/congregation.

Chapter Six: **Barn-Raising Believers**

Make the Status Quo Dangerous

- John Maxwell wisely reminds us that people change when they receive enough, learn enough, and hurt enough.
- Distribute accurate and revealing statistics.
- Ask key authority figures to name reality.
- Allow people to fail.

Mange the Chaos

- This occurs as he or she casts a vision, names needs, describes options for movement, and reveals a plan for involving others toward a solution.

Specify the Big Picture

- Define the tenure of committees/Task Groups
 - By defining a committee/task force as a short-term, experimental group, you alter the common perceptions of its work; you also enhance its chances of being perceived as friend, not foe.
- Define the parameters of committees/Task Groups
 - Affirm that grandiose is not always grand.
 - Affirm that a journey of many miles is taken in many steps.
 - Affirm that one size does not fit all:

PASTORAL CHURCH. *Size:* 50-150 worshipers.

Type of Change Preferred: modified or custom-tailored ideas and resources.

Delivery Vehicle: informal to semi-formal settings, developed by a committee structure, guided by pastoral influence.

PROGRAM CHURCH: *Size:*150-350 worshipers.

Type of Change Preferred: “as is” or slightly modified ideas and resources.

Delivery Vehicle: informal to semi-formal settings, developed by a significant committee structure, guided by pastoral influence.

CORPORATION CHURCH: *Size:* 350-500 and over.

Type of Change Preferred: sophisticated, professional ideas and resources.

Delivery Vehicle: semi-formal to formal settings, developed by a significant staff structure, guided by administrative board policy.

- Affirm that addition is better than subtraction
 - Change happens best as we multiply people's options, rather than "pulling the plug" on cherished activities.
- Affirm that God's provision accompanies God's vision

Involve Others

- Effective change agents involve those most affected by an anticipated change.
- Minisurveys
- Cottage meetings
- Listening sessions

Especially Young Adults

- Given their sheer numbers, any changes must recognize the presence of young adults – or they will remain largely absent from much of congregational life.

Moving Toward Decision

- Choose Your Language Carefully
 - Every congregation has certain trigger words that pump emotion into a discussion.
 - What are the inflammatory words in your church? What synonyms might you employ? What words do you simply need to avoid all together?
- Provide Choices
 - Do not "own" a particular change possibility too early in the decision-making process. Rather, present several alternatives.
- Articulate the Benefits
 - As you emphasize the benefits, illustrate how the proposed change advances the vision and values of your congregation.

- Suggest a Trial Period
 - People will attempt amazing things when they know that new behavior need not be permanent and absolute.

Timing is Everything

- Never introduce a new idea and vote on it in the same meeting.
- Identify clearly the avenues for additional information and input.
- If people are opposed, meet with them individually.
- Don't position yourself for a negative vote.
- If you sense that the tide is against you, do a reassessment.
- When you sense that people are "with you," bring them together and move toward a positive vote.

Chapter Seven: Bridging Toward Tomorrow

Change and Transition – They're Different

- Change and transition are not synonymous. Change is external reality, while transition is very much an internal reality.

What Are the Endings?

- Most change results in some measure of distraction, discontinuity, and even disorder. Out of such bewilderment develops a sense of melancholy, anguish, and eventually loss.

Levels of Loss

- First-level change involves activities or events that bring about involvement. Changing the colour of carpeting would be in this category of change.
- Second-level change involves activities that bring about revisioning and re-creation. Changing the entire organizational structure of a congregation would be in this category of change.
- The most common mistake change agents make is to introduce a new program or ministry without introducing a new or accompanying value.

Grappling with Grief

- Don't Deny the Pain

- Provide opportunities for people to name their sorrow, ventilate their anger, and acknowledge their grief.
- Respect What Has Been
 - Show regard toward that aspect of congregational life being changed.
 - What endings do you need to recognize in a tangible, even festive way?
 - What aspect of your congregation's past do you need to honor and lift up in high regard?
- Speak of the Problem, Not Just the Solution
 - A true visionary not only helps people connect with tomorrow's possibilities, he or she also helps people connect tomorrow's possibilities with today's problems.
- Expect Overreaction
 - Feelings of grief and loss can result in feelings of frustration and anger.
- Provide a Piece of the Past
 - What mementos of the past might you provide as you move toward change?
 - What aspects of legacy need to become tangible and passed on?
 - One congregation, for example, commissioned collectors' plates picturing their old sanctuary, and sold them as part of the fundraising for a new building.
- Get People Involved in the New
 - Get them interested in the new. Persons normally become invested when they become involved.
 - Don't let hurting people stew; get them involved in new opportunities for relationship and ministry.

Warming Up at Different Temperatures

- First are the pacesetters – 2.5 percent of the membership.
- Next are the early adopters – 13.5 percent.
- A third category is the middle adopters – 34 percent.
- A fourth category is that of the late adopters – 34 percent.
- A last category is that of the footdraggers – 16 percent.

Acting on a Shaky Stage

- Anthropologist Charles Kraft compares the process of change and transition to that of a shaky theater stage.
- Stepping out into new territories and temporary platforms brings ambivalence, instability, and large doses of trepidation.
- A network of comfortable companions is one of the warmest security blankets.
- In troubling transitional times, routine is important.

Turning Doubt on Its Head

- Effective change leaders do not parrot such doubt (negative, murmuring words).
- The Executive Galley Catalog suggests these positive replies to some complaints:

“It’s not going to get any better.”
“We don’t have the expertise.”

“There’s not enough time.”

“We’ll try it one more time.”
“Let’s network with those who do.”
“We’ll evaluate some priorities.”

Chapter Eight: The Right Start

Plan Your Work, Work Your Plan

- Strategic plans answer five central questions?
 - What are we trying to accomplish? (AIM)
 - How will we bring it about? (ACTION STEPS)
 - Which resources are required? (RESOURCES NEEDED)
 - Who needs to be involved? (FOLLOW-THROUGH PERSON/S)
 - When do things need to happen? (BY WHEN)
- As you answer these questions remember to:
 - Be Specific
 - Spell out exactly what you want to do – when, where, and how. Don’t assume anything.
 - Be Realistic
 - Look at your aim through the lens of pragmatism, not idealism.

- Be Brief
 - Don't be caught in the paralysis of analysis.

Who Are the Legitimizers?

- Because new efforts tend to be suspect, they need to be legitimized. One or two persons have the power to make a new idea permissible and acceptable in a congregation.

Quick Wins

- The launch of any change effort accelerates with signs of success and movement.

Quality is Job One

- Quality is not accidental; it is on purpose.
- Quality is attained as people contribute their best efforts.
- Quality is ultimately an expression of service and noble assistance.

Telegraphing a Clear Message

- Managing change, in large measure, is a matter of managing perception.
- People seldom get a message the first time around; normally, you need to tell folks over and over again.
- Utilize the Ordinary
 - As you repeat your message, do so through as many "ordinary" channels and outlets as possible.
 - The church newsletter.
 - Bulletins and bulletin inserts.
 - Bulletin boards.
- Utilize the Unusual
 - Do so through as many unusual channels and outlets as possible.
 - Skits.
 - Video
- Tell Stories
 - The ultimate communication strategy is the strategy of story.

- The inclusion of story cranks up the current of communication.

Mustering Momentum

- Momentum is largely a gift, but certain actions encourage it:
 - Cheerleading
 - Celebrating

Chapter Nine: Grappling With Resistance

- PRINCIPLE: Reduce, rather than resist resistance.
- Think Win-Win

What Is Your Effectiveness Factor?

- Identify the change that needs to be made.
- Rank that change on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 representing major innovation.
- Identify your resistance. How many people and groups are opposing? Though you do not want to minimize your critics, neither do you want to magnify them.
- Don't magnify your opposition!

No Surprises, Please

- Whether you pull back the throttle or push ahead, let people know – in advance – what's coming.
- At least four antidotes to surprise stand out:
 - Labor in advance.
 - Determine who needs to be with you and for you.
 - Work the system, don't circumvent it.
 - Explain everything.

Keep Close to Your Enemies

- Don't wait for critics to come to you; rather, go to your critics.
- As you confront your critics, confess that their criticism stings.
- Critics often raise issues that will turn up the temperature in your conversation. Resist the temptation to become argumentative.
- Instead of arguing, share the challenge of carrying out the new ministry in question. Go into some detail. Ask for the resister's counsel.

- Offer a specific opportunity for critics to bring their opinion to bear on the new ministry endeavor.
- So in our encounters with critics, we need to leave room for them to fly. Don't push. Give resisters the room to make up their own minds, in their time.

The Geometry of Opposition

- Don't underestimate the importance of a calming, tranquil, non-anxious influence.

Take It to the Church

- Don't over-function as a leader. Setting limits and boundaries on our efforts to negotiate resistance is vital.

CAP'S

- As you deal with chronically anxious people (CAP's), try these four approaches:
 - Own the fact that reason or appeasement cannot stop CAP's.
 - In partnership with other leaders, formulate strategies for restraining CAP behavior.
 - Factor CAP's out of your support system. Don't expect such people to want you, like you, or even respect you.
 - Keep your distance. Detach yourself from CAP's without divorcing.

The Up Side of Resistance

- What can resistance represent?
- People are actively, not passively, engaged in the change process.
- Authentic community is taking place, as feelings surface, rather than being stuffed.
- The church is exercising its prophetic role, taking risks and challenging the status quo.

Chapter Ten: Bolstering Bold Beginnings

Multiplying Ownership

- One of the most important ways to bolster and solidify a new project or ministry is to expand ownership.
- As a general rule, resist sponsoring new events alone.
- Share the limelight.
 - President Ronald Reagan kept a bronze plaque on his desk: “There is no limit to what a man can accomplish if he doesn’t care who gets the credit.”
- Seek outside validation.
 - Connect with legitimizers from outside the congregation. People own the new when persons in authority have legitimized it.

Midcourse Corrections

- Even the most successful change launch is doomed without a commitment to ongoing monitoring and midcourse modification.
- Awareness
 - Many congregations have no system of feedback and evaluation, other than the proverbial grapevine.
- Humility
 - As we receive feedback, it will, in all probability, contain some evidence of mistakes and misjudgment. This is painful and humbling for most of us.
 - When we fail, we are called to fail fast and fall forward.

Tenacious Time

- Changes that last usually are accompanied by leadership that lasts.
- Researcher George Barna has observed that over the last two decades, the average tenure of pastors has declined from seven years to four years.
- Ministry cannot be done without deep connection.
- Along the long tenure goes a tenacious spirit.

Of Bucks and Leaders

- A new project or ministry enterprise cannot be sustained without a growing cadre of leaders.
- Along with ongoing human resources, new-ministry ventures need ongoing financial resources.

What Do You Reward

- What we reward – what we recognize – is often what results.

Institutionalizing the Journey

- More than institutionalizing a particular change, we are called to institutionalize the journey.

Epilogue

When the Doors Won't Open

When the Congregation Is the Cause

- When local churches persistently thwart change, there usually are two pathological reasons: the presence of destructive viruses and waning energy.
- Some local churches are profoundly sick.
- *Subversive Communication.* Rather than communicate directly, things go underground and become covert.
- *Controlling Behavior.* Rather than expressing mutual regard and respect, people use intimidation and snubbing to manipulate others.
- *Punitive Conduct.* Rather than fighting fair, people shame and blame others.
- *Irresponsible Attitudes.* Rather than demonstrating maturity and grace, people become cavalier and arrogant.
- Waning Energy.
- No matter how hard a congregation pounds on some doors, they will not open until realistic levels of energy come into view.

When the Change Agent is the Cause

- Chemistry
 - Sometimes a pastor is a poor cultural match for a congregation.
- Giftedness
 - Recent research is revealing that change agents have a particular temperament and giftedness.
 - In general, the effective steward of innovation must be a leader, rather than a manager; an initiator; rather than a

spectator; a persuader, rather than a pacifier; a problem solver, rather than a fatalist.

When the Context Is the Cause

- Industry Relocation
 - The movement of a major factory out of the ministry area of a particular congregation can wreak havoc on a new endeavor.

- Community Transition
 - An increase in violence and drug use in the area around a church can have a profound impact on that congregation's efforts at outreach.