

Second in a Series of Articles on
"Great Christian Workplaces!"

Benchmarking Management Performance!

Eight Ways to Accelerate Your Organization's Effectiveness

By Al Lopus



Managers and their boards of directors often ask: how well-managed is our organization? In the business world, evaluators of management most often look to "the numbers" for the answer: revenue growth, earnings per share and shareholder value. These are examples of comparable and generally reliable information available to gauge management's effectiveness.

But they're the language of business. And do they tell the full story?

Christian organizations are making significant efforts to look beyond the financial numbers in measuring the impact of their ministries. Focusing on outcomes—attendance figures, professions of faith, etc.—helps them evaluate effectiveness over time. While these numbers are more difficult to collect and track, they help in evaluating the effectiveness of ministry strategies.

This spring, Christian ministries experienced a different way

to evaluate organizational performance: the measurement of employee satisfaction and retention. Participants in *Christianity Today's Best Christian Places to Work* program have received feedback about their employee satisfaction levels from the Best Christian Workplaces

Institute (BCWI).

The feedback benchmarks employee satisfaction levels compared to other Christian ministries. At BCWI, we're discovering that satisfied employees are a precondition for effective ministry.

In part two of the *Great Christian Workplaces!* series, we highlight 10 well-managed Christian organizations, both large and small. We asked employees to what degree they agreed with the statement: "my organization is well managed." This was one of 56 items used to determine the Best Christian Places to Work. The following organizations were selected from the 85 participating organizations employing more than 15,000 Christian workers in the U.S.

Well-Managed Christian Organizations With Over 100 Employees*				
	Name	Location	President	Emp.
1	Multnomah Bible College and Seminary	Portland, Ore.	Daniel Lockwood	175
2	Coalition for Christian Outreach	Pittsburgh, Pa.	Daniel Dupree	150
3	Evangelical Christian Credit Union (ECCU)	Brea, Calif.	Mark Holbrook	233
4	Group Publishing	Loveland, Colo.	Thom Schultz	275
5	Dallas Theological Seminary	Dallas, Texas	Mark Bailey	248
6	Whitworth College	Spokane, Wash.	William Robinson	355
7	Tyndale House Publishers	Carol Stream, Ill.	Mark Taylor	276
8	SIM U.S.A.	Charlotte, N.C.	Steve Strauss	119
9	Zondervan Publishing	Grand Rapids, Mich.	Bruce Ryskamp	320
10	Association of Christian Schools International	Colorado Springs, Colo.	Ken Smitherman	180

Well-Managed Christian Organizations With Less Than 100 Employees*				
	Name	Location	President	Emp.
1	Covenant Christian High School	Indianapolis, Ind.	Brian Hudson	36
2	Christian Medical and Dental Associates	Bristol, Tenn.	David L. Stevens	62
3	The DeMoss Group	Duluth, Ga.	Mark DeMoss	18
4	Christian Heritage Academy	Northfield, Ill.	Nancy Goodman	36
5	Paraclete Press	Orleans, Mass.	Lillian Miao	41
6	Medical Ambassadors, International	Modesto, Calif.	Paul Calhoun	50
6	King's Way Christian School	Vancouver, Wash.	Stephen Jensen	52
7	New Mission Systems International	Fort Meyers, Fla.	Phil Hudson	26
8	Whitehead, Phillipi & Harris	Pennel, Pa.	Todd Phillipi	16
9	Far East Broadcasting	La Mirada, Calif.	Jim Bowman	46
10	Phoenix Seminary	Scottsdale, Ariz.	Darryl L. DelHousaye	22

*Rank based on the employee survey responses to Christianity Today's Best Christian Places to Work. Each organization was one of the 40 finalists of the 85 participants. This ranking is based on employee responses to the statement: "my organization is well managed." The number of employees indicates U.S. employees only.

■ **Employee satisfaction is linked to effective management.** We found the highest correlation with overall employee satisfaction is effective management. That's right, above pay, benefits, development, or fund raising, they're looking for effective management!

These well-managed Christian organizations have addressed the challenges all organizations face and came out on top. What do they do differently? What can we learn from them?

■ **Healthy ministries are fruitful ministries.** Our findings show the best Christian workplaces are better positioned to sustain their organization over the long-term. The 40 "Best Christian Places to Work" finalists outperform non-finalists in a number of measurable ways, in addition to employee satisfaction. From the top 40 finalists, we selected the top 10 well-managed organizations.

Organization Effectiveness Accelerators

1. Establish trust between senior management and employees. Trust is the most significant issue leading to a well-managed organization. Trust is built by achieving results, exhibiting compassion for all and "walking the talk" consistently. Organizations with high levels of trust have the "collaborative capital" necessary to leverage their missions most effectively.

The Christian Medical and Dental Association exemplifies high trust levels between management and employees. Employees see Dave Stevens and Gene Rudd as trustworthy leaders. Not only do they communicate the goal of glorifying God in their work, they're seen as "walking the talk" by pursuing their own spiritual journeys in ways motivating to the staff.

attracting similar high performers and mentoring them into fully contributing roles quickly.

There's nothing more disappointing for high performing employees than to see the best and brightest leave for "greener pastures." It's an organizational death sentence. The clear message is that sooner or later top talent

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can only find true job satisfaction elsewhere. Well-managed organizations have a reputation among their employees that the good ones stay put!

Medical Ambassadors International has high commitment levels from its employees. One of the reasons they find for retaining highly qualified employees is to share their knowledge with others. This cross-pollination of knowledge and experience lets newer staff members learn and grow for the organization's benefit and for the benefit of less experienced workers.

4. Focus on accountability. In order to be "nice," we often fail to have the hard conversations with our subordinates, co-workers or leaders. This conflict-averse approach often breeds a permissive environment lacking in accountability.

What's an example of accountability in an organization? One employee from Group Publishing describes the accountability process built into its performance management program. "We are all accountable to perform according to our five key goals which are established in alignment with our supervisor's and department goals."

Financial Performance for Finalists Vs. Non-Finalists

Performance Category	Top 40 Finalists	45 Non-Finalists
Revenue Growth (3 year average)	5.93%	1.76%
Operating Margin (4 year average)	6.02%	4.48%
Voluntary Turnover Rate	7.82%	9.98%

*Based on 2003 Best Christian Places to Work survey

Revenue growth for the top 40 finalists is more than three times that of the 45 non-finalists! Operating margin (net income divided by revenue) is over 30 percent higher and turnover more than 20 percent lower. These results reinforce the premise that healthy ministries are fruitful ministries. They achieve stronger results.

■ **Improving organization effectiveness from the inside out.** How do we improve our organization's effectiveness? Employee satisfaction is a leading indicator of organization performance, and employee attitudes are predictive of future outcomes and results. In our database of Christian employee attitudes, we discovered the items that most closely correlate with employees' perceptions of a well-managed Christian organization.

At the Coalition for Christian Outreach, employees describe their leaders as visionary, capable, responsive, flexible and willing to raise support for their own salaries. Involving staff at all levels in the recently formed goals and vision of the organization has brought people together.

2. Build enthusiasm and commitment for the organization. The commitment level and enthusiasm for the organization causes employees to recommend it to others as a good place to work. This attitude contributes significantly to the enthusiasm well-managed organizations exhibit.

3. Retain highly qualified employees. Recruiting top-quality employees is critical to long-term effectiveness. Well-managed organizations rely heavily on high performing, enthusiastic employees who are most helpful in

Goal-based systems that align organization, department and individual goals are clearly effective in establishing and maintaining an accountability culture.

Leaders need to be part of the process. It's certainly more comfortable for them to remove themselves from the direct accountability others may face. However, removing yourself from accountability to those you're serving sends a poor and loud signal to everyone in the organization.

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5. Establish outstanding first-level management practices. Historical research states the most critical link in the organization is the first level

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supervisor/manager. In well-managed organizations, employees rate their supervisors high in their ability to solve work-related problems, listening to employee suggestions and then acting on them.

6. Communicate the reasons behind major decisions. "It's no wonder employees of effective organizations trust leaders who explain the reasons behind their organization's major decisions," says communications specialist Mark Cutshall. "Without seeing the data, my guess is that leaders in well-managed organizations offer such explanations sooner, rather than later.

"Imagine if [General] Tommy

Confessions of a Ministry Leader

By Helen Lee

This fictional account depicts issues raised by ministry leaders as a result of their organization's participation in and response to The Best Christian Places to Work survey.

For 15 years, I've worked in a ministry with an evangelistic mission I love being part of. I've used my talents and gifts to the best of my abilities, knowing full well I could probably do better financially with a secular company. But I know I'm where I'm called to be, and wouldn't want to work anywhere else.

So imagine my surprise when I recently discovered that many of my co-workers, who feel no less strongly than I do about the mission, have become extremely disillusioned with our workplace environment.

Our organization recently had an open discussion about our results from The Best Christian Places to Work survey, and I was expecting we'd do better—but after our group discussion, I now understood what accounted for our results.

Many of my colleagues, particularly those not in upper management positions, don't feel the leaders (of which I'm one) respect or even invite their opinions. They feel mistreated, and upset that our Christian walk doesn't seem to impact the way we treat them. As a result, they no longer trust those in leadership.

Initial Reaction

My first reaction was anger. As leaders, we've worked hard to guide the organization, and many of us have been in these positions a long time, evidence of our faithfulness and commitment. I felt we deserved more respect, and I almost said so, but something stopped me. A quiet, yet firm, voice spoke within me: "Wait. Listen. And pray."

Suddenly I felt uneasy, and uncertain. Was I part of the problem?

Reflection and Prayer

That evening, I took some time before God, asking him to show me anything in my behavior that may have contributed to these negative feelings and attitudes.

I was shocked by what came to mind. Ways in which I hadn't loved my colleagues as myself. Ways in which my

pride had created an attitude that I was in some way more deserving of respect. Ways in which I hadn't lived out Jesus' example of servanthood, but instead, had expected others to serve me.

I was humbled more than I could have ever imagined at the self-delusions under which I'd been operating. I got on my knees and asked God for forgiveness. But I knew that wouldn't be sufficient.

Seeking Forgiveness

The next day, I began to approach various colleagues, one by one, from whom I knew I needed to ask for forgiveness. I started with my assistant, who has put up with me longer than anyone else, and toward whom I realized I rarely showed appreciation for all she's done for me, nor the care and concern she deserves as a sister in Christ, and as an employee under my supervision.

I invited her to lunch, shared my self-realizations, and asked that she forgive me for my arrogance, pride, and selfish behavior over the years. I also told her how much I respected her diligence, her attention to detail, her patience with all my requests, and her high quality of work. As I finished, I saw tears in her eyes.

"Last week, I'd made a decision to resign, because I just couldn't imagine working here anymore," she said. "I didn't think anything would ever change. But obviously, I was wrong. Thank you for being willing to listen to the Holy Spirit and take responsibility for your actions."

It was the first of many difficult conversations. I'm still working through these relationships, and trying to help our leadership better understand the patterns which have resulted in the negative work environment we helped create.

We have a long way to go, but I feel certain that the work we're doing to repair the brokenness will result in our being better able to fulfill our organizational calling and mission for the glory of God. And that's something we all can get excited about.

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Franks thought he could wage a successful combat mission in Iraq by waiting until *after* the bullets started flying to lay out the rationale: ‘Oh, by the way fellas, here’s why I’m asking you to put your lives on the line.’ Success in the marketplace, just as in war, is won by people motivated to give their best, thanks in part to their leader who keeps them informed on where the organization is headed.”

He adds: “The leaders I admire most keep their organizations apprised of major decisions by using simple, ancient approaches—like gathering employees together and telling them the story of what’s about to happen and why. I once heard a former public relations director at Ohio State University list the 50 most effective ways to communicate. At the top was one-to-one, face-to-face communication, with group presentation not far behind.”

7. Behave with fairness and integrity.

Bill Robinson, president of Whitworth College, believes effective leadership is so important he wrote a book about it. In *Leading People From the Middle: The Universal Mission of Heart and Mind*, he focuses one chapter on “virtuous leadership.” He says “virtue in our leaders is more important now than ever. Trust must replace surveillance.”

Leaders in well-managed organizations demonstrate fairness and integrity. They’re honest, keep promises and are truthful. They’re diligent, modeling excellence in their lives and doing the right things.

Bill Robinson encourages leaders to commit themselves to openness. There’s a certain honesty belonging to those who live their lives in the light, he says.

8. Build teamwork across departments. The final item accelerating organization effectiveness is good teamwork, which goes beyond working groups where interdependence is

low and accountability focuses on individual members, not the group as a whole. In well-managed organizations, the team is more than the sum of its parts.

These organizations are intentional about developing and nurturing individuals and teams. A leadership “team” is more than a group of senior members who meet regularly. They’re more concerned with the organization’s success than that of their own department.

Are you leading from the inside out? How do you measure up? All participants in the Best Christian Places to Work program received a comprehensive report of results from the employee survey. In this report, a Leadership Dashboard of key performance indicators revealed areas where they excelled or fell short, relative to the top 40 finalists.

What’s the benchmark? For the statement: “my organization is well managed,” the 40 finalists received an 84 percent favorable (combining strongly agree and agree) score. The following table is an example of the Management Index. For each of the key accelerators (drivers), the organization’s favorable score is compared with the 40 finalists. Goals for improvement are developed, actions defined and plans established for ongoing measurement.

Well-managed organizations are intentional about the environment they create internally. Now we have research to accelerate the effectiveness of Christian organizations by stewarding them from the inside out.

Congratulations to these well-managed organizations. We applaud your leadership and shining example for the Body of Christ and the world to follow.

Carl Dodrill, Ph.D., a professor at the University of Washington, conducted the statistical analysis underpinning this article.

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Leadership Dashboard			
Management Index	Sample Ministry*	BCPW Finalists*	Variance % of Finalists
My organization is well managed	86%	84%	2.4%
Key Drivers in Rank Order			
There’s a high level of trust in my organization between senior management and employees.	83%	84%	-1.2%
I’d recommend my organization to others as a good place to work.	91%	92%	-1.1%
My organization retains highly qualified employees.	85%	82%	3.7%
In my organization, people are responsible and held accountable for doing what they say they’ll do.	81%	91%	-11.0%
I’m satisfied, overall, with my immediate manager.	88%	91%	-3.3%
My organization’s management explains the reasons behind major decisions.	87%	83%	4.8%
My organization’s leaders behave with fairness and integrity.	89%	91%	-2.2%
In my organization, there’s generally good teamwork across departments.	80%	78%	2.6%

*Indicates percentage favorable.