
WHEN NOT TO TRY TRANSFORMATION

Session Description

Not every church is a viable candidate for a transformation. Likewise, not every pastor has the temperament or the ability to lead a transformation. But how do you know if the church or you are ready to take on a church growth initiative that will reach the community for Jesus Christ? In this episode Drs. Bill and Kris invite you to seriously explore whether or not a church transformation is in your future.

Session Outline

The odds of leading a successful transformation effort are slim ... in fact, 80 percent of all transformation efforts fail to make any lasting positive impact. And when an intentional transformational attempt fails, a second effort is impossible until the current generation has passed. In other words, before you take on a transformation, you need to have a pretty good idea whether or not you can maximize your chances of success.

The bottom line, when it comes to a successful transformation effort, it nearly all rises or falls on leadership.

When not to take on a transformation:

1. Your mercy gift will get in the way when the hard decisions have to be made.

- You can't make everybody happy.
- There will be those who threaten to leave if ...
- Not everyone is going to stay if you go forward.

2. You value peace and harmony over the Great Commission.

- Blessed be the peacemakers ... but "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34).
- Conflict *always* accompanies church transformation .

3. You cannot commit to enduring incredible hard work, stress, and pressure for at least three years.

- It takes at least three years to routinize the basics of transformation.
- Transformation efforts demand a high commitment to hard work, learning and applying new skillsets, and even challenging your own assumptions and values.
- Transformation efforts are marathons, not sprints, and they are terribly tiresome.

4. Your judicatory will not support your leadership when push comes to shove.

- Before you even start talking about transformation, have a talk with your local judicatory and get a feel for their support.
- Be ready for one or two members to make serious complaints about you. If your judicatory won't stand with you, do not proceed.

5. You cannot build sufficient alliances to stage a coup if necessary.

- If you cannot build significant and sufficient alliances, you will not be successful.
- The alliances must be strong enough and committed enough to stand up to very loud bullies and terrorists ... and be willing to show them to the door if necessary.
- You may not need to lead a coup, but you must be ready just in case.

Any one of these issues will scuttle any attempt at a transformation. If you can't do it, don't start. Don't even try. Be honest with those in your church who want to see transformation. It's better they leave the church to find one that will faithfully disciple them than to launch into a transformation attempt that fails. The battle for transformation always has casualties and too often good, faithful, hope-filled people become wounded, jaded, and cynical in the wake of a these failures. Take the words of Jesus seriously. Count the cost *before* you start.

If, on the other hand, you think you can overcome whatever blockage you'll have to face, be sure to secure the services of a coach who will be able to help you navigate the minefields you'll have to face.

Discussion Question

1. What did you hear that surprised you in this session? Why did it surprise you?
2. What difficult decisions do you think you'd be faced with if you led a transformation effort? How would you keep your mercy gift in check?
3. Which of the five blockages do you think you'll have to overcome? What will you do to prevent becoming blocked?
4. Do you think your church is a candidate for a successful transformation? Why or why not?