

Leadership...Emerging and Moving Forward!

By Sam Earp

JUST A BRIEF STROLL THROUGH THE AISLES at Borders or Barnes & Noble convinces one the topic of leadership is among the most popular subjects in professional, business and religious life. Literally hundreds of books line the shelves, awaiting the eager purchaser.

Among them are the classic offerings of Drucker or Denney, or the newer experts like Maxwell or Hybels. The topic embraces everything from the philosophical understanding of leadership to a list of qualities every leader should possess. Leadership concepts are ushered in among the narratives of *Tuesdays with Morrie*, or the marketing ideas of *The Tipping Point*.

Add generational concerns to the mix, and the topic of leadership becomes a convoluted mess! Builders, Boomers, Xers and now Mosaics understand leadership within the confines of their generational context and its values. Builders fail in understanding Xer "slackers" who fail in understanding Builder "workaholics." Boomers sandwiched between trying to comprehend their Builder parents and their Xer children try following and leading at the same time – often to their utter dismay.

If it's true that the most significant issues rise and fall with leadership, then the pursuit of leadership information, concepts and techniques drives the sale of so many books. People are literally on a desperate search for the magic leadership elixir, making themselves more effective and efficient leaders within their professional, business and, dare we mention, "church" lives. As Reggie McNeal noted in his book, *A Work of Heart*, pastors and church leaders are also hunting for the tools of the trade, but too often leaving behind their spiritual characteristic.

With so much already written, why one more article on leadership? Fair question. The answer is really simple. Most of the current senior leadership positions within the church

are held by Boomers, and they see retirement on the horizon! Who'll take their leadership positions? How prepared will they be? And who'll season them in their leadership tasks? As a leading-edge Boomer, these are current questions for my ministry.

Context determines, to a certain extent, leadership. As noted earlier, generational cohorts lead in different ways. Training effective future leaders requires those of us who are older to understand future leaders and the contexts in which they lead. When we take our cue from them, we can assist in the creation of a better prepared leadership in at least two significant ways.

One significant aspect needing understanding is the necessity of community. Generally, Boomers led with a top-down and authoritative style. Emerging leaders are very suspicious of that approach. They're more comfortable with a plurality of contributing leaders.

When the question is asked, "Who will make the decision?" emerging leaders understand it to be the power question. Where does the ultimate power lie? But, when the question is, "How will this decision be made?" they feel much more comfortable, because this is the process question, a more relational one.

Leadership in the Biblical experience has always been a matter of community. Too often, Boomers have drawn their leadership models from business or political arenas, where the leader is understood to be the charismatic high-profile personality type. Yet, Moses' leadership was augmented by Aaron. Among the early disciples of Jesus, Peter, James and John stood together, while Paul needed Barnabas to validate his leadership.



For the rest of this article, go to CMAonline.org/mrc and click on "Christian Management Report." Then click on "June 2006" and you'll find Earp's article.

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