

CHURCH HEALTH IN THE 3 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

Part 2 – Working it Out

** If you have not read part 1, it is important that you read it first.*

Below are action points to call your church out of a program mentality by continually connecting church details with **Superstructure** values and desired future.

I. Establish or reestablish your Superstructure

So you are an Executive Pastor, Senior Pastor, or church leader. In the context of this article you must be a catalyst to identify and establish the **Superstructure** or ship's flag. The most common term is "Vision". "Mission" is God's general marching orders for the Universal Church, usually revolving around the Great Commission and Great Commandment. Your Vision is your church's distinct focus, DNA, values, personality, etc.

If you have an established **Superstructure**, you may need to dust it off and raise it back up the flag pole. A new **Superstructure** will not do the hard work for you. At times you may need to create a new Superstructure or tweak the present one. The goal is not to find "that perfect formula." The perfect formula is more about sweat than wordsmithing. Vision planning is about encapsulating the dreams and strengths of a church into a concise, focused, understandable, and compelling statement or series of statements. The litmus test of an effective Vision is if it can continually be looked to and aligned under rather than be put in a glass case.

It is my conviction that long plans with too many headings, or too many points stacked under headings, have a very good chance of sitting in the glass case. People can't get their arms around a myriad of details and sub-points and, therefore, the plan doesn't inspire anyone. The **Superstructure** plan fails in that instead of being a reference point to catalyze new thinking and new practices, a church goes back to what it knows. Make it concise, make it inspirational and then free people to organically develop their ministries around it within a supportive system of accountability.

II. Connect your Structure to your Superstructure

Pastor or leader, you now need to point to the flag and direct people to move under it. This is where the real work begins since it is far from a once and done type of undertaking. Going back to the ship analogy, the pomp and circumstance of a ship launch with the band playing, confetti, and breaking of a champagne bottle will get you about fifty yards into the harbor. Now there is a three thousand mile journey ahead. It involves scores of interactions, meetings, and communications to get the people and activities working together so that the sum of everything continues to move toward fulfilling the purpose and/or reaching the destination. You will pull down competing flags, filter out unfocused efforts and redirect people who are wandering. It is a mixture of big motions and sweating the small stuff. If the **Superstructure** values and destination are of high value and are urgent, there is no room for wasted energy and resources.

I find that the major problem is not in finding the right Vision but in doing something to act on it. Work the plan with maturity and tenacity. Someone might not need the latest, greatest cardio machine, they simply need to regularly use the old one they have. Children might need their parents to grab an old deck of Uno cards and spend consistent time with them more than they need a new toy.

Instead of reading another book, bringing in a trainer, or going to yet another conference, a church staff might need to just sit down together with some coffee and a flip chart and work out how they can move together under the **Superstructure** they already have. Some church leaders need to grow up. You need to stop looking for that latest gadget that will propel your church to effectiveness. Instead, put on your “big boy pants” and develop the maturity and tenacity it takes to keep doing something when it becomes hard work.

The actions on deck are only half of the picture. Even focused and committed people are affected by their frame of mind. This is where you as a leader can literally and honestly call people to a sense of purpose and destiny. You can say to someone, “All of us together can do far more than any one of us could ever do. You might be content or discontent with your life but your contribution is significant. You have a wonderful purpose. This is how we desire to change the world for Jesus Christ and this is how you are helping us to get there. In your own way you are changing the world for Jesus Christ. If you weren’t doing what you’re doing, our ministry cannot be as effective. Thank you for your commitment to Jesus.” Some people will naturally connect their efforts with the destiny of the organization but many more will not.

Make the conscious and ongoing effort to make the connection for and with people and it will pay off in optimism and momentum.

These are weighty words and can easily be fluff or hype. However, if your **Superstructure** is risky and of faith where you are saying, “For this to happen, God has to show up big time,” it is honest encouragement. Risk is dangerous but risk is also invigorating. Deep down I believe many people desire to live a life of risk and reckless abandon. Repeat the God-sized Vision and people’s connection to the Vision often. Hold your leaders accountable to regularly do the same. Action on deck can easily slide into just doing stuff so you must go after it hard. Here are a few examples of how I could proactively encourage workers by connecting what they are doing (**Structure**) with my own church’s **Superstructure**.

Over the past eight months we have undergone a massive overhaul of our **Superstructure** as well as the **Structure** of the people and actions underneath it. We have a simplified and focused **Superstructure** which is an acronym of our church’s initials - C.B.C.

Celebrate God with our whole lives.

The flagship for this is our Sunday morning campus-wide worship experience.

Build Bridges to reach local and global communities

The flagships for this are influence through friendships and short-term ministry trips.

Connect Together in life-shaping relationships

The flagship for this is small groups.

(By the way that is all there is to our Vision statement. The rest is empowerment and accountability. It is simple, focused, repeatable, and gives form while letting people fully engage their brains.)

Mark and Marilyn in the toddler nursery

I had lunch with Mark and Marilyn the other week. During the course of our conversation, they talked about their enjoyment of working with toddlers on Sunday mornings. The gist of a story they told me was that a rough-looking individual handed his child to them and they told him that the little life would be well taken care of. They knew that they were freeing the man up to go to the Worship Life Center to experience our worship service and learn. While leaders often have to help make the connection, they made it on their own. If you reduced it to an equation it would go something like the following:

1) Mission: The Church is called by God to love Him as well as spread His fame by building believers and reaching the lost.

2) **Superstructure:** Our church's focused priorities for fulfilling God's Mission are **C**elebrating God, **B**uilding Bridges, and **C**onnecting Together

3) **Structure:** We, Mark and Marilyn are working in the toddler nursery and contributing to **C**elebrating God with our work in the toddler nursery.

4) We, Mark and Marilyn are part of an amazing dream that is bigger than us!

John is cleaning debris out of a hurricane damaged house in Galveston, Texas

1) Mission: The Church is called by God to love Him as well as spread His fame by building believers and reaching the lost.

2) **Superstructure:** Our church's focused priorities for fulfilling God's Mission are **C**elebrating God, **B**uilding Bridges, and **C**onnecting Together

3) **Structure:** As you are tearing out moldy wood from a basement you are contributing to **B**uilding Bridges

4) John, you are making a contribution that is helping us reach the world!

It might sound a bit hokey but if you have stopped dreaming or haven't had your hair stand on end in the last couple of weeks, you had better check your church's direction or your pulse.

How is it that we are called by God to the greatest mission ever known to man and yet we talk about it with the same passion as getting our tires rotated? You have to get it and then you have to help others get it.

Discussion Questions

Coming back to a central point once again, leaders must proactively connect their church's people and programs of **Structure** with the dreams, God-sized purpose and destiny of the **Superstructure**. Consider the following questions alone or with a team:

1. Are your executive level leaders able to articulate a compelling Superstructure vision for your church at large?
2. Can your executive level leaders map out how Superstructure dreams are realized through Structure activities in your church?
3. Does your Superstructure permeate your ministries where the efforts of your staff are centered on living into it with their unique ministry area contributions?
4. Does your Superstructure come into play daily in decisions and interactions or, in reality is your thinking guided by other means?
5. Does the advertising in your website and worship folder purposefully connect programs with Superstructure?