

Quality characteristic 1: Empowering leadership

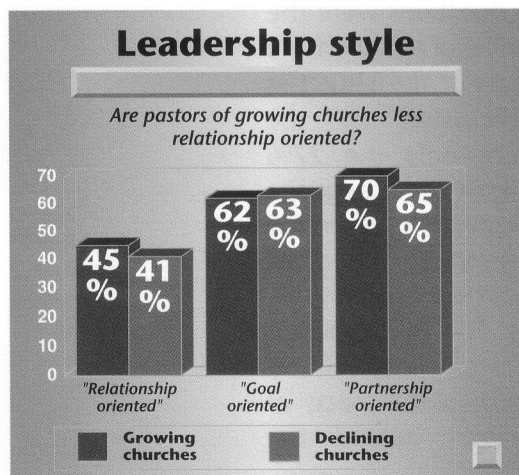
"The research data call into question the way most church growth literature uses megachurches to illustrate its leadership principles."

Church growth literature on the topic of leadership typically states that the leadership style of pastors in growing churches is more *project-* than *people-*oriented, more *goal-* than *relationship-*oriented, more *authoritarian-* than *team-*oriented. In their search for models worth imitating, some authors probably gravitate more towards *large* churches, which tend to employ this kind of leadership, than *growing* churches. The two, however, are far from being the same, as we shall see (pages 46-48).

Our research produced results different from what existing church growth literature (including my own writings) would have led us to expect. While it is correct that "goal-orientation" is an important leadership trait, it is interesting to observe that this is not an area where leaders of growing and non-growing churches differ greatly. Our study demonstrated that while pastors of growing churches are usually not "people-persons" who lose themselves in interaction with individuals, yet on the average they are somewhat *more* relationship-, person-, and partnership-oriented than their colleagues in declining churches (see graphic below).

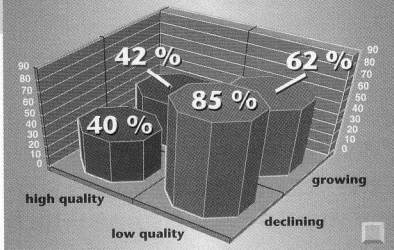
The real difference

The key distinction is probably best expressed by the word "empowerment." Leaders of growing churches concentrate on empowering other Christians for ministry. They do not use lay workers as "helpers" in attaining their own goals and fulfilling their own visions. Rather, they invert the pyramid of authority so that the leader assists Christians to attain the spiritual potential God has for them. These pastors equip, support, motivate, and mentor individuals, enabling them to become all that God wants them to be. If we take a closer look at this process, we understand why these leaders need to be both goal and relationship oriented. The "bipolarity" which will be explained as a theological paradigm of natural church development in Part 4, must be incarnated in the personality of the leader.



The pastor as theologian

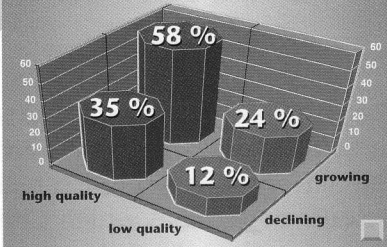
What percentage of the pastors have graduated from seminary?



Two of the most interesting results regarding leadership: Formal theological training has a negative correlation to both church growth and overall quality of churches (left).

Outside help

Pastor: "I regularly seek counsel from a trusted outside source, such as a church growth consultant."



Among the fifteen variables related to leadership, the factor with the strongest correlation to the overall quality and growth of a church, is the readiness to accept help from the outside (right).

Part 1: 8 quality characteristics

"Spiritual self-organization" in real life

What we encounter here was referred to in the introduction as the "all-by-itself" principle. Leaders who realize their own empowerment by empowering others experience how the "all-by-itself" principle contributes to growth. Rather than handling the bulk of church responsibilities on their own, they invest the majority of their time in discipleship, delegation, and multiplication. Thus, the energy they expend can be multiplied indefinitely. This is how spiritual "self-organization" occurs. God's energy, not human effort and pressure, is released to set the church in motion.

The research data call into question a tendency in church growth literature to illustrate leadership principles with examples from megachurches. In many instances, their materials showcase ingenious leaders who are so gifted that it is unrealistic to refer to their churches as "reproducible models." Now for the good news: pastors of growing churches do not need to be superstars. Most of the pastors with the highest scores in our survey are little known. They generally provide us, however, with more helpful basic leadership principles than most of the world-famous "spiritual superstars."

It is obvious that the leadership model depicted here is popular with neither technocrats nor spiritualists. Technocrats tend to gravitate more towards a "guru," who can be either a classical cleric or a revered and aloof church growth manager. In contrast, spiritualists tend to have difficulty submitting to any form of leadership.

Why is there resistance?