

The “big picture” of what we are all about

Running off to war!

BY TERRY CAMSEY, MAJOR –

I remember well that in every one of the divisional visioning events held in connection with the introduction of the territorial “Vision 2000 & Beyond...” two questions arose:

** How will this change the way you (administration) do business?*

** Can we be assured that when the present territorial commander moves on the incoming leader will not change direction?*

The latter question expressed the *greater* concern, because change of leadership at any level seems inevitably to signal impending changes of direction. For years, the pattern was one of relatively short appointments (three years or so) leading, in many instances, to accumulative negative effects of a “stop-start-stop-start” pattern on health and growth.

It was for this very reason that corps were encouraged to develop a local vision of what they felt the Lord wanted them to become. Rationale was that, if the corps waited on the Lord to determine *his* will for the corps in that location, wrote down the vision and developed a strategy to reach it, there would be no need to keep changing directions.

New officers would accept the corps vision, help corps review the vision and strategy from time to time, and take corrective action as warranted by changes in circumstance. Such long-range plans would overcome the “frequent change of direction” problem, and enable incoming officers to see where they *best fit in* to further the established vision and strategy.

The territorial vision was not created in a vacuum. Readers will know that it was a grass roots-up process. Every corps vision was reviewed and collated, the Lord’s hand in the process being clearly seen as key themes emerged. The corps visions were distilled down to the very essence of what they were saying and the result was the territorial vision...a vision in which every corps can see its own reflected.



Back to the question

Having done all this, the second question still begged an answer, *“Can we be assured that when the present territorial commander moves on the incoming leader will not change direction?”*

Speaking personally (but I hope for many), I have now as a retired, but keenly interested, “outsider” been thrilled to observe the way in which Commission Linda Bond has so quickly taken the pulse of the territory, grasped its aspirations, and wasted no time in taking steps to overcome what is usually an inevitable hiatus when leadership changes hands.

I am particularly impressed by the way in which she has eagerly accepted “Vision 2000 & Beyond...” as being God-inspired, and assimilated it into in her strategic thinking. But, even beyond that, I am impressed by the keen insight that has enabled her from the territorial vision to: draw strategic objectives, prioritize them, and initiate steps to implement them. Has she changed direction? No! Is she reenergizing the vision and its accomplishment process? Yes!

The Big Picture

I am a “big picture” man myself. Some like to look, microscopically, at the details of a painting...the individual brush-strokes, etc. This is good, but there is a danger of never seeing a picture in its entirety...a picture of which brush marks are only a small part of its creation. My preference is to see the whole picture first, then to examine the detail. In the context of vision accomplishment, I want to see the “big brush” strategy, from which in local contexts administrative levels and mission delivery units can craft action and tactical plans.

The diagram in the center is, I believe, the vision challenge distilled down to its very essence. Let me put a little flesh on the bones of that picture in the hope that the task will be clarified in a way everyone understands.

The Goal

The goal before us is to fulfill our mission. To put this in context, we first must have regard to the international mission of The Salvation Army, “...to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and meet human needs in his name without discrimination.” That’s it. Everything we do should contribute to that end. Anything that hinders accomplishment of such noble cause must be rooted out and eliminated. We cannot afford to waste resources on anything less.

The territorial vision (which, as I have said, embraces every corps vision) interprets and clarifies the international mission in our context. The short form of that vision includes intent to be:

- Biblically authentic in motive and mission
- A relevant and vibrant expression of Christianity
- Culturally diverse in methods and ministry, and
- Compassionately active in serving humanity

In spelling out her “Six Mission Priorities,” Commissioner Bond has put “legs” on the territorial vision. We are left in no doubt as to the essential strategies to move us towards accomplishment of “Vision 2000 & Beyond...” These mission priorities arise directly out of both our mission and our vision.

What is the goal? Our goal is to fulfill our mission, accomplishment of the “Six Mission Priorities” being the immediate objectives. These priorities, if they are truly priorities, are everyone’s priorities, whether in administrative, corps or social services settings. They must also be the priorities of advisory board members, volunteers, employees, etc.

I understand that one of the first American coins said on it, “Mind your business.” A well-known phrase suggests, “stick to your knitting”! Our “business,” our “knitting,” is accomplishment of mission.

Assets

These include all the resources we have, including: *people* (the greatest resource of all since they direct the use of all other assets), *purse* (the money we receive, raise, generate, spend), *property* (premises that we occupy, own, rent or otherwise have the use of), and *possessions* (equipment, vehicles, technology, etc.).

All of these assets should be used to support accomplishment of mission. The searching question of each asset being: *“How is our use of this asset/resource helping or hindering accomplishment of our mission?”* For example, a current reality is that, despite the speed of available technology, decisions can still be held up by out-dated decision-making processes. Someone has said (of the times generally, not specifically of the Army) that our thinking does not match the technological capability we have...the technology is 21st century, the thinking is 19th century!

Structure

This has to do with the way we are organized and staffed at every level. It also includes such things as *operating policies, procedures* (that we are expected to follow), *practices* (the way we are expected to do things, whether formally set out or just implied behavior), *processes* (for decision making and approval seeking), and *programs/activities* (the various vehicles that use up available energy and are intended to be conduits for mission).

Again, all need to be examined carefully to determine whether they actually help or hinder facilitation of mission. The following questions may help:

Why do we do it this way/ what original purpose was it intended to achieve? Is that purpose still valid?

How well is it achieving the original aim?

Can it be made more effective with some “tweaking”? How?

Can the concept be implemented in other, more effective ways? What ways?

If not, how else can we more effectively apply the purpose/principle it was intended to achieve?

The challenge

So, putting it all together, *at all levels*:

Our **goal** is to fulfill our mission, and our immediate objectives are the “Six Mission Priorities.”

Our **assets** (resources) should be used in ways that *support* fulfillment of the mission.

Our **structure** should be such that it *facilitates* fulfillment of the mission.

If assets and structure do not support and facilitate fulfillment of the mission, or actually hinder that goal, then realignment is called for.

Let's not “stroll as to war” or even “march as to war,” let's

...get rid of everything that slows us down...and...be determined to run the race that is ahead of us.

(Hebrews 12:1, CEV)

*So run to win... I don't run without a goal.
And I don't box by beating my fists in the air.
I keep my body under control and make it my slave,
so I won't lose out after telling the good news to others.
St. Paul*

(1 Corinthian 9: 24-27, CEV)