



# GOOD GOVERNANCE IS WORTH THE EFFORT

A HANDBOOK FOR CHRISTIAN CHARITIES  
& CHURCHES IN AOTEAROA

Martyn has been a cornerstone of Parachute's journey from our inception. During his near 30-year tenure as our board chairman he was an enabling leader, and a necessary challenger. Over the years, his considered leadership and encouragement has given me a great amount of heart and courage: courage to ask hard but necessary questions, courage to navigate change, and most of all, courage to be unwavering in vision. There is a lifetime of distilled wisdom in this book. I have been lucky enough to have received it in person, and I am glad to see it passed on to you."

Mark de Jong, Founder and CEO - Parachute Music

I am so glad Martyn has written this book. For over 30 years I have chaired a variety of boards and, at other times, reported to them. It is my experience that governance is often misunderstood and done badly, which is a tragedy because good and effective governance underpins any sustainable successful organisation. Martyn's book will be a fabulous resource for anyone who finds themselves on a board in a church or the wider not-for-profit sector. It is written by a man who has had vast experience in this subject and has personally been a great resource for myself over the years."

Naomi Cowan, CEO - Equip

This is gold! I wish I had this when I started out as Carey Principal...although I did have you in person! It is practical and the NZ-based comments and examples are unique. I can imagine this being a text in training institutions like Carey. It will be an excellent resource for leadership groups to work through—it will become a handbook for pastors and elders/boards. A great gift for boards to give to new members!"

Rev. Charles Hewlett, National Leader, Baptist Union of Churches.

Thanks for the time and experience that you've invested in this. It's certainly a much needed resource! There is shortage of wise, experienced board members in our sector and your book is a pivotal part of creating a new supply pipeline!

Greg Fleming, CEO - Parenting Place



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ISBN 978-0-473-47855-1 90000



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## Chapter Seven

### How do we inspire and motivate?

Governance is more than a set of rules and processes. It is the responsibility of those who govern to ensure that the organisation is functioning with an energised staff team. This touches on the role of the board members to ensure that all who work within the organisation clearly understand the purpose and the path that the organisation is charting. This is where we must ensure that inspiration and motivation are at the heart of what we are doing as a board. We have a responsibility to see that our people are enthusiastic about serving because they understand and are inspired and motivated for the cause. Christian mission makes an undervalued and often unrecognised contribution to our society. Men such as Wilberforce, in the nineteenth century, bravely advocated for good, stirring the social conscience of his time resulting in the abolition of slavery and many other social changes. This courage continues to be demonstrated in New Zealand by social entrepreneurs who dedicate their lives to serving a cause that makes a difference to the lives of others. Our nation is enriched by their visionary endeavours.

It has become popular for Christian organisations to develop a “Mission Statement” which is featured on their premises or publicity material. Some have “Vision Statements” that are published and used in fundraising and promotional materials.

Despite all the effort and good intentions of those involved in completing mission and vision exercises, it is my observation that they seldom have a lasting impact on the direction of the organisation. Sadly, there are surprisingly few truly missional or visionary organisations. From time to time it is useful to reflect on the mission and vision statements of organisations that you are involved with and ask yourself the question; “Do these statements still represent the hopes and dreams of our organisation and the way that we are outworking them?” Hours of meetings and discussion have gone into the preparation of these aspirational

statements. They attempt to encapsulate the hopes and dreams of the organisation in a short phrase that will then inspire their constituents to align themselves with the mission or vision. Typically mission statements will address the current hopes of the organisation. Vision statements are future focused and attempt to capture what the organisation is seeking to become.

There are several reasons why mission and vision exercises fail to make a significant difference in charitable organisations and churches. The task of capturing the essence of an organisation in a succinct sentence or short paragraph is one that would challenge the greatest of writers or poets. Those who gather to carry out this exercise are usually not poets or writers and their outputs are often bland expressions that fail to inspire. (A quick internet search will uncover "Mission Statement Generators" that will provide a statement without the expense of a team retreat. Go to [www.dilbert.com](http://www.dilbert.com) and search for "mission statements" for some humorous commentary about the perils of mission statements.) The team developing the mission or vision statement is usually working in an environment that is heavily laced with optimism and excitement. They often fail to face the negatives and the limitations of their situation. An organisation can have a mission statement that indicates that they want to venture out to reach their community with the Good News of Jesus, but if all the members are shy, stay-at-home introverts then this is unlikely to happen no matter how positive the mission statement is.

Once the mission statement has been developed the challenging task is to communicate it to the wider organisation or congregation. This is another area where the impact of the statement is often lost. The mission statement is announced during a Sunday service at church and perhaps the pastor even preaches about the themes that form it. The mission statement is sometimes printed, included in the newsletter, and even sign-written on the walls of the building. Within a month it is rarely referred to again. For a message to change a group of people it needs to be heard many times, over many months and in a variety of forms. This does not happen effectively in most charitable organisations or churches. It is very difficult for those who were not involved in the preparation of a mission statement to adopt it with high energy and enthusiasm. It has been handed to them and represents the dreams and work of

others. How to personalise the vision or mission to the individual is a significant challenge. "Only my vision will motivate me" is a truism that highlights the difficult task that leaders embark upon when trying to motivate and inspire the people within their organisation.

While I have sounded a note of caution about vision statements and mission statements, I do not wish to downplay the importance that visionaries have in effecting change and progress in our society. Christian mission in New Zealand is populated by these "energised dreamers" such as Mark and Chris de Jong (Parachute Music), Jo Hood (Mainly Music), Jay Ruka (Huia Come Home) and Greg Fleming (Parenting Place). You will be able to quickly identify others. Vision is a picture of the future that we wish to create. It is warm and creative in nature and is often not easy to capture in words. It has energy and dynamic, and visionary leaders are able to inspire others by their obvious passion and the enthusiasm that arises from the dream that they have been given. These leaders are usually entrepreneurial in nature and ready to take risks to pursue their dream. The world is richer for their valuable contribution.

The challenge for the visionary is to get others to join them on the journey as they pursue the dream. Some are naturally attracted by the inspiration that surrounds working with a visionary and soon start to understand the dream. They become energised as they work with the inspiring leader. This building of critical mass outworking the dream usually does not come from focus groups but rather from the infectious enthusiasm of working together in a team pursuing what has become a common dream. In this way vision can sometimes be seen to be caught because it is infectious. The board has become infected with passion for the dream and provides leadership and encouragement to those who want to work in the team.

## Discovering our DNA

While there is some value in clarifying an organisation's vision, it is more likely to be in confronting and evaluating our values that the destiny and direction of an organisation will be established. Values or our judgement of what is really important in life (or our

organisation) should influence our behaviour and our attitude. They make up the DNA of the organisation.

Our problem is that we often profess values that we know are correct but our actions indicate that we are fooling ourselves. I worked with a leadership team of a business in South Africa that wanted to refocus the direction of their organisation. I suggested that we do a values exercise, encouraging them to identify their company values. All the usual things came out—client focused, providing good value for money, excellent quality, professional, equal opportunities employer—and many others. After listening to them for a while I asked them if they wanted me to tell them what I perceived their values to be. They did. When I wrote on the white board “white”, “male”, “racists”. It was only the good relationships that I had developed with them that stopped me being asked to leave. They asked me to substantiate what I had written.

“Look around your organisation and around this leadership team—how many black or coloured people are in senior positions?” None. Fair call.

“Look around the room at your leadership team—how many women are in management or leadership in the organisation?” None. Fair call.

“Why is that young, educated black man still a driver in your organisation after working with you for two years? Why did you give an office to the new white employee but not to the more senior coloured employee who joined you at the same time? Why do you have an equal opportunities committee that does not have any black or coloured people involved?”—Fair call.

It was only by confronting them with how their actions illustrated what they really valued that progress in changing the organisation could be made. This is a good news story that I will expand on a little later.

“But this could never happen in a Christian organisation or church—could it?”

Unfortunately we are among the best at deluding ourselves.

We recently moved to a new city and have started the journey of finding a new church community. Our problem has been to find people in any congregation who will engage with us and

demonstrate basic hospitality and friendship. Yet I am sure that each of these churches would claim that they were outwardly focused and friendly. How do their actions demonstrate what they really value? Would it be fair to say that they value the existing congregation and relating to each other over welcoming new people into their midst?

Denominations and not-for-profit organisations profess to support women in leadership. When you look at the composition of the boards of Christian charities and churches we find that they are predominantly male. The obstructions and opposition faced by some women trying to secure and sustain ministry positions in churches is a sad reflection on what some of us really value. Reactionary attitudes to women are sadly still a feature of some Christian churches. We had the opportunity to talk with the pastor of a new work that is being established in our area. I asked about the role that women would play in leadership of the church as several of them had been dynamically involved in the setting up of the church. I was told that there would be no women “elders” and women might speak occasionally on special occasions such as “Mother’s Day”. It amazes me that these ideas still influence some who profess to be Christian. I would never be an adherent of that church as I would not attach myself to any organisation where my wife, daughter, and granddaughters are not treated as equals in the life of the church. It is little wonder that the recent survey commissioned by the Wilberforce Foundation, referred to in chapter 3, found that “attitudes to women” are a major detractor for non-Christians as they consider involvement with the church.

Most churches and Christian charities profess to value prayer yet when we attempt to measure the prayer life of a Christian community we often find that prayer meetings are poorly attended, answers to prayer are seldom spoken about, and overall engagement in prayer is very low. These communities cannot claim that prayer is a current value.

It is only when we measure the outcomes arising from our *professed* values that we face up to reality. That is why it is valuable for leadership teams to consider undertaking a “values retreat” where professed values are examined and measured and a reality

check is the final outcome. Be careful committing to this exercise as the results might be very uncomfortable!

## Acting on values

If the measurement of our professed values confronts us with the uncomfortable reality that we are deluding ourselves, then we have arrived at a critical decision point. We can take one of two paths. Either we can acknowledge that we don't really want to place a high value on that area and do nothing, or we can commit to starting a journey to grow that value in our organisation or church.

The commitment to commence a journey of growth means that the value becomes an "aspirational value". It becomes the subject of our focus; we commit to discuss it and act upon it.

The business in South Africa decided that they could not accept their current values and set themselves the aspirational value of becoming inclusive. Acting on this value had significant results. Within a year:

- A woman was appointed to the executive group—entirely on merit.
- Three women were in management positions.
- The young black driver was given a professional development opportunity.
- The coloured employee was given an office.
- The equal opportunities committee was led by a young Indian man and had several black employees involved.
- The organisation had helped a black woman employee to set up her own cleaning and catering business supported by their business and other businesses.
- 25% of the ownership of the business was vested in a trust and the profits allocated to that trust are used to provide university scholarships for previously disadvantaged people.

This is what can happen when we confront reality and decide to change our values. It powerfully impacts our thinking and actions, and others benefit.

Clear identification of our values and aspirational values helps us to make consistent decisions and map out a pathway of future

action. We will talk about our values frequently and measure our growth in these areas regularly. They will influence how we spend our money, our building programmes, where we invest our time, and what we speak about when we are together. Plans will be developed to ensure that we achieve the values and aspirational values that we believe are central to our calling as an organisation or church.

People will want to associate with an organisation or church that clearly identifies its values and is challenged by what it needs to become. There is a sense of direction, personal challenge, and development, and activities are aligned with the well identified values. People are quick to spot inconsistencies and misalignment of actions and professed values. They are attracted to cohesive organisations where values are being lived out daily.

Our values will determine our actions. Mission and vision statements should only be crafted in the light of rigorous work on values. Uncovering our DNA—what really makes us tick—is the key to growing a motivated and inspired organisation.

Examination of your organisation's core values needs to be woven into the fabric of your organisation. I would suggest that you carry out a values exercise as a team, being "bravely honest" about what happens when you apply measurement to what you profess as your values. Limit yourselves to five values that have been put through the crucible of rigorous examination and measure how these are consistently outworked within the organisation. Become satisfied that these are part of the organisation's DNA. Identify aspirational values that you want to strive towards. Then weave these values into your everyday conversations until all within the organisation are entirely familiar with them. Talk about the implications of your values in your board meetings and how your activities are building in a manner which is aligned with the core values that you profess. Discussion about core values and how a staff member has contributed towards reinforcing the values should be part of every staff appraisal. Then in five years gather as a leadership team, with a blank whiteboard, and do the exercise all over again. You should see development of your aspirational values into values that are now part of the fabric of the organisation and you may want to change or add values as you challenge yourself

again with this exercise. The board members are stewards of the values of the organisation and should be constantly challenging themselves by measuring how the organisation is living out its values.

## **Planning—or acting in a way that is aligned with our values**

Progress and change don't happen by accident. Plans must be developed that, when outworked, will progress us on the journey that the organisation has set itself.

Work on values and aspirational values makes the planning process simpler. Plans can be tested by asking questions such as:

- Is this plan aligned with who we are or want to become?
- Will this plan advance us on the journey that we are being called to travel?

Once a plan has been agreed upon it is important to divide it into achievable tasks. Doing this work makes a seemingly large project become achievable. The task list becomes a road map that helps us to navigate the journey towards our destination.

*How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time!*

The task list is the “small bites” that, when executed, lead to the achievement of the plan.

A feature of a task list must be *WWW*?—Who will do What, by When? This identifies the task, allocates responsibility, and provides a timeframe for completion. Minutes of meetings should clearly identify the Who, What, and When for each action point. Without this discipline a task list is merely a “wish list”; there is no accountability for the action and timelines slip or the task doesn't get accomplished.

*WWW*, with accountability being apportioned for specific tasks and timely delivery being expected, is the driving force behind achieving tasks, fulfilling plans, and aligning an organisation with its values.

In this chapter we have reviewed some of the common methods used by churches and Christian organisations to encourage a fresh visionary approach to the work that they feel called to undertake. It is in the realistic appraisal of what we truly value as an organisation that we will discover the areas where change is needed. A conviction of the need to change will provide needed momentum that carries the organisation to wave upon wave of improvement. As the world sees that we are people who “practice what we preach”—in other words our actions are aligned with our values—then we will become increasingly effective in serving our hurting world.

The board has an important role in ensuring that those who work within the organisation are inspired and motivated by the cause that we jointly serve. This is too important to just be left to the domain and responsibility of the CEO or Senior Pastor. This form of encouragement must be undertaken by all who serve the organisation.

## **Reflection**

Does your organisation have a mission statement or a vision statement?

How effectively does it motivate those within the organisation on a day-to-day basis?

How long ago were these statements prepared? Do they need revision in the light of what your organisation values today?

When is it time to consider a values exercise? What might need to become aspirational values?