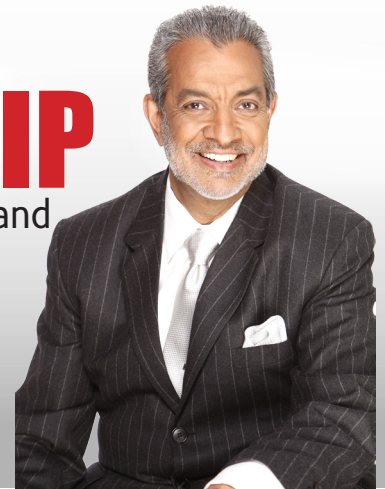




BY PHIL COOKE

THE PERILS AND PRIZE OF LEADERSHIP

An Interview with Dr. Sam Chand



One of the most respected voices on church and ministry leadership today is Dr. Sam Chand. On his website his tag line is “My Life’s Vision is Helping Others Succeed” - and he’s good at it. Sam and I have shared a number of clients over the years and time and time again, I’ve seen him turn around struggling churches, inspire frustrated leaders, and transform the culture at failing organizations. Recently, I did an interview with Dr. Chand because I wanted to share some of his experience, wisdom, and insight on church and ministry leadership. Take notes. Share it. This is powerful stuff:

Phil Cooke – You have worked with hundreds of churches, ministries, and non-profit organizations in your career. What’s the challenge you see the most?

Sam Chand – The greatest challenge I see is organizations “pack” for where they’ve been and where they are rather than “packing” for where they are going. All of us who travel know that part of packing is to know the weather, culture, context of where we are going so appropriate apparel and accessories can be packed. You don’t want to land in Chicago in January while packing for Hawaii! But that’s exactly what churches do. We talk (pack) about where we’ve been, what we’re doing presently and even about where we are going—but, little strategic thought is given to alignment for synergy for the proposed destination. This includes aligning (packing) resources (staff, volunteers, programming, structure, culture, facilities, media etc.) for where you are going as an organization.

Phil Cooke – Why does having a leadership strategy matter with Christian organizations? Shouldn’t Christian leaders be focused on spiritual issues?

Sam Chand – Of course, Christians should think strategically about how the call of the Lord unfolds in their lives. Let me use the most spiritual person to every walk on this planet—Jesus—to make my point. In Luke 4 Jesus overcomes the temptations in the wilderness and starts unfolding his leadership strategically.

- Luke 4 – Jesus establishes himself via the Word of the Old Testament and prophetic utterances that there was something special about him.
- Luke 5 – Jesus picks his executive team (Pet, Js and Jn)
- Luke 6 – Jesus picks his staff (12 apostles)
- Luke 4-9 – Jesus continues to do miracles gaining popular following and dissenters
- Luke 10:1 – “After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also,

and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.”

This verse gives us a great glimpse into the strategy of Jesus.

- A. “After these things”—His choosing his team, creating a groundswell about Himself, both negative and positive...
- B. “Appointed”—No volunteers, no nominations, no elections. These were handpicked and chosen for this specific part of the strategy.
- C. “Sent them”—Sending is different than going. When you’re “sent” somewhere it is done by someone else with a defined purpose. No ambiguity.
- D. “Two and two”—Teams are better.
- E. “Into every city and place, whither he himself would come”—This means the 70 we divided into 35 teams and sent to the 35 cities and places Jesus was planning on going to. This means, Jesus’ strategic plan involved knowing his 35 city and places itinerary, knowing which team would be best matched and suited for that city and place. This was his “advance launch team”.
- F. In the verses following, Jesus even gives them the script of what to say when they are accepted or rejected. By the way, the script doesn’t change regardless of the reception.

Acts 1:8 – Jesus, again, give the geographical strategic plan—Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and uttermost part of the earth. Jesus strategic plan can be capsulized as Discover – Develop – Deploy. **Christian organizations shouldn’t feel it is spiritual to not be strategic.**

Phil Cooke – A big challenge with many leaders is developing a great team. Are the best teams hired from the outside or developed from the inside?

Sam Chand – One hiring issue that many churches are wrestling with centers on whether it's better for them to promote from within or to hire someone from the outside. I typically recommend following the example of many healthy organizations, which first look inside for a qualified candidate before searching externally.

If no candidates are found inside, then looking outside is a legitimate option. Those who want to hire and promote only from within think that insiders are better suited because they already understand the church culture and its operations. This paternalistic hiring philosophy appears to have more disadvantages than benefits. Only hiring from within might match your organizational DNA; just keep in mind that it can also result in:

◆ **Slower growth.** Churches that are limited to hiring internal candidates grow at a slower pace. When they realize they need people with experience and skills beyond what they presently have, they begin looking externally. In the end, they find that hiring believers who have worked in corporate settings satisfy many of their needs.

◆ **In-fighting.** Rather than simplifying a search, limiting hiring to internal candidates can actually complicate matters. Once the policy is known, people will begin jockeying for position, which is not the type of motivation we want to encourage. When only one internal candidate is selected, it can also create awkward situations, uncomfortable feelings and resentment among those who weren't chosen.

◆ **A limited pool of candidates.** Hiring from within limits the number of qualified people. For example, let's say that we're looking for a person to handle accounting and need someone who is a CPA. In addition to looking within our own ranks for a CPA, this person also has to meet the qualifications of church membership, and have a willingness to leave their outside job and come to work for a church. We might be searching for a needle in a haystack.

Focusing on the internal/external debate, however, avoids addressing the most important issue: finding and hiring the best possible candidate.

The goal of every hiring process should be to find the best qualified person – regardless of where they come from. To do that, we must be very clear about the job's requirements and qualifications. The clearer the profile, the better are our chances of finding the right person. If we have people on the search team who are still tied to the idea of internal hiring, a clear job description can stop this debate by making it clear that we don't have a candidate inside the church. By not imposing limits on hiring searches, we open ourselves up to God's provision. Whether the right person comes from within the church or transfers in from the business world, we'll have the right combination of talent and strength to move the church forward.

Phil Cooke – Speaking of hiring, what should leaders be looking for with potential employees?

Sam Chand – In my book "Who's Holding Your Ladder" I say "We hire people for what they know and fire them for who they are." Competence is important. Character is entry qualification. But I've found the ultimate determining factor is Culture—"do you fit here?" Potential employees have to be thoroughly vetted for cultural fit.

Phil Cooke – What's the biggest mistake leader make in hiring?

Sam Chand – Feeling that a vacancy must be filled. A vacancy should give an organization the opportunity to ask itself important questions such as:

- Do we really need this position?
- How does this position need to change?
- Can responsibilities from this vacancy be delegated to others?
- What type of person will be best qualified?
- Hiring in a hurry. The best predictor of disaster.
- Feeling pressured by others to hire quickly or even their candidate. Pressured decisions don't last.
- Not being clear about what success would look like in this position to be filled.
- Not taking time to scan the horizon for the best person and hiring the most needy person who needs a job.
- Hiring as a "Pastor" and not a "CEO". Hiring to help someone and encourage them rather than the best person for the job. It doesn't take long for a "gift" to become "entitlement".

Phil Cooke – What about firing people? Do Christian organizations do it enough, or do it well? What should leaders know about letting people go?

Sam Chand – In my book "Who's Holding Your Ladder?" I say that we need to "hire slowly and fire quickly". In fact the best time to fire someone is the first time it goes through your mind. I know, this sound harsh, even unchristian. Once you know a person has to go and don't act on it, you'll keep searching for reasons to keep them. We continue tolerating people and their incompetence because of our pastoral calling and ignoring our responsibilities of godly stewardship.

Christian organizations pay their staff by the funds we receive via people's generosity such as tithes, offerings, pledges, donations etc. People give as unto the Lord. It's the Lord's money. We pay people with the Lord's money. Therefore, is paying (rewarding) incompetence, bad attitude, cultural misfit etc. good stewardship? Lord pleasing? So, if you as a Pastor want to help someone, don't tie it to pay for work. Just help them from your benevolence budget.

"...it can also create awkward situations, uncomfortable feelings and resentment among those who weren't chosen."

You have to know that everyone in the organization knows who need to go. I've consulted with hundreds of organization and the only person surprised by the firing is the person being fired.

Everyone else wasn't. Moreover, the longer you allow such a person to remain on the team you are affecting your leadership equity adversely. The rest of the team is asking three questions:

- Does our leader see what we see? If he sees what we see and isn't doing anything about it, what's wrong with that picture?
- If our leader sees what we see why doesn't she do something about it?
- If our leader doesn't see what we see, what kind of leader is he?

We must also know that a person could be the wrong person and not necessarily a bad person. Early intervention and surgical removal of cancer can save a person's life. So is it with employees—early intervention and removal can save your leadership and organization.

Phil Cooke – Statistics show that many pastors and leaders are burning out. From your perspective, why does burnout happen, and what's the remedy?

Sam Chand – Burnout can happen to anybody—no one is exempt. But it doesn't have to happen. Much has been written on this and there are ministries that specialize in serving church leaders so my answer will sound superficial. However, in my experience with leaders facing this dark valley of doubt, disappointment and hopelessness the common denominator is seepage. Yes, seepage. Burnout is not an event. It can be traced to when joy and fulfilment started seeping. When joy turned into a job. There are predictable behaviours as well. Hard charging leaders who don't realize that this is a marathon not a sprint are susceptible. Leaders needing high doses of affirmation create an insatiable appetite ending in deep disappointment. Stages of life in late 40's and on lead to asking existential question of being, meaning, purpose and legacy. Feeling trapped with no way out pushes a person internally into a foetal position. Less than satisfying family relationships deplete the energy source available most readily.

The remedy? I don't think there's one, but plenty can be done to build guard-rails to prevent it:



- Don't take yourself too seriously. Life is fleeting. You are replaceable.
- Work on healthy family relationships.
- Take care of your finances to never feel trapped.
- Have a 911 list of friends. May be one or two such 911 friends.
- Be introspective enough to do early detection on seep age.
- You're not the Messiah. You can't save anyone. You can only help.
- Pace yourself. You have a lot to do, but all that can't be done today. Set realistic expectations.
- Know that no human being can satisfy your deep yearning for meaning, fulfilment and affirmation.
- Be grateful. He saved you, trusts you, called you and is for and with you.

Phil Cooke – Years or decades in leadership can frankly wear people down. The day to day struggle can be a grind. How can leaders re-capture the passion they had in the beginning?

Sam Chand – Re-capturing might not be the most healthy aim. That's reaching into the past. God is always leading us into the future. In my book LADDER Shifts I write about eight shifts that are taking place in the lives of leaders. Once you tune into those shifts, you don't think you are going crazy or obsess with re-capturing what once was.

Here are the eight shifts:

- New people
- New pains
- New places
- New perspectives
- New priorities
- New passions
- New preparation
- New possibilities
- Instead of bemoaning the loss of the past, charge forward with the excitement of the shifts taking place in your life.

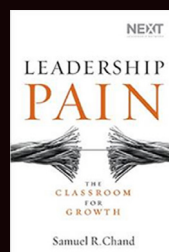
Phil Cooke – If there was one thought you'd leave with our readers about leading Christian organizations, what would it be?

Sam Chand – Leading Christian organizations is a joy yet not easy. Challenges are many, resources often don't match them. Therefore, the one thought I would leave with you is captured in one word:

Measurements.

Most Christian organizations measure the ABCs—Attendance, Buildings and Cash. Measure vitality of volunteers. Measure transformed lives. Measure children immersed in strong Christian values. Measure reaching the community. Measure salvations and baptisms. Measure lack of divorces. Measure children born in wedlock. Measure people who want to follow in your footsteps.

Measure what really matters.



Get Dr. Sam Chand's book today.
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