



Depth Perception™

Commentary from Design For Ministry™
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Organizational Switch 28 February 2005

One of Design For Ministry's™ newest downloadable resources is a reflection paper on what happens when people suddenly switch organizations. This happens often as ministries close or merge, as people feel they must leave their congregation and look for another, or when there is a sudden change of supervisors. Whenever loyalty – once freely given – is forced to shift to a new recipient, it is not easy. Joyful stories are few.

The thesis was that organizational switch is like any other grief event – as if something died. In developing the paper, ancient stories of organizational switch were considered. Human Resources literature and the literature of business merger and acquisition were scoured, and people who had lived through an organizational switch were interviewed. Here is a concluding excerpt from the paper:

"In several conversations with colleagues during the research portion of this paper, the subject quickly evoked stories of grief and mourning as these colleagues recalled their experiences in having to shift loyalties due to downsizing, merger, acquisition or even resignation from a position. Several of these colleagues

are HR professionals. None could recall ever having seen any writing or research on the subject. Yet, intuitively, all colleagues quickly made a connection that a person in grief is a person who requires support in order to return to an ability to function at a high capacity.

This is the irony: an organization in transition due to merger or acquisition hopes for a higher degree of productivity to offset the costs of the transition. Often, the transition is sought to stay viable...rather than shut the doors. But it is at precisely this point that grief is experienced by the very people who need to ramp up their productivity. A blow to productivity is struck at the moment it is most needed."

The point is the human cost of switching is high, and many leaders fail to consider it. Even those who choose to do the switching are often running from the pain they can no longer stand toward a pain they did not anticipate.

This is not to say switching should not happen – only that it should be seen for how expensive it really is.

— mark l. vincent