

## Five Deadly People-sins of Leadership

by Karen Kogler

*This article first appeared in the March 23, 2007, Mission Moments newsletter from the Center for U.S. Missions. Permission is given to copy this article for distribution within your own congregation. Please credit the author and the Center for U.S. Missions in Irvine, California, [www.centerforusmissions.org](http://www.centerforusmissions.org). For more information, contact the Center at 949-854-8002 x1780.*

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." (I Cor. 12:27). St. Paul describes the spiritual reality of the church. But whether or not the individual parts of the body are working well together is often a factor of church leadership.

"The Seven Deadly Sins of Leadership," an article in a newsletter of Partners for Success, Inc., was written for business leaders, not church leaders. Five of the eight leadership "sins" (they added a bonus sin!) concern relationships with the business's employees. All five of these "sins" also apply forcefully to church leaders and the church's primary workforce—its volunteers.

Here are the five "sins," in bold, with excerpts, from the article. Each is followed by questions for reflections and a positive action step.

- 1. Assuming your employees know the company's objectives and purpose.** Even the best plan is worthless unless it is understood and embraced at all levels. Your workforce is the engine that powers your plan.

*Do your volunteers know the church's purpose? Can they verbalize it to people they serve? Do they, when it's appropriate?*

Action: Ask each ministry group to involve their members in defining their group's purpose, tying it to the church's purpose. Follow-up and share results church-wide.

- 2. Approaching selection and hiring in a haphazard manner.** Best case scenario -- 14 percent of the time you will get a good employee. Worst case scenario -- most of the time you will get a less-than-stellar worker . . . Good hiring practices at all levels improve overall performance . . .

*When it comes to volunteers, the church isn't hiring, and it doesn't turn people away. But do people get placed in a haphazard manner? Do volunteers sometimes take a position primarily out of a sincere desire to serve, with little regard for matching their gifts to the position?*

Action: Train a group of "ministry guides," people who can personally help others select the right place to serve.

- 3. Assuming your people are trained.** Failing to develop your people's talents through appropriate training is a massive waste of resources. Many companies spend more

time and money negotiating and paying for maintenance contracts on their equipment than they do training their staff.

*Do we train people for their tasks at church? Do we help them seek out and develop their talents? Could "massive waste of resources" be a description of the church?*

Action: Look for people with experience and skills in training. Invite them to help leaders and ministry coordinators develop good trainings. Make it a goal to train all volunteers for their tasks.

- 4. Failing to provide appropriate feedback.** Fear of conflict can cause leaders to avoid mentioning unacceptable behavior or requiring accountability. Whether through performance reviews or conversations during the course of daily activities, meaningful, constructive feedback is necessary to produce good performance.

*Where two or three are gathered, there will be conflict. We let domineering people have their way for fear of offending them. We ignore ongoing conflict and avoid our responsibility to "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). We all need constructive feedback at times, especially when we don't want it.*

Action: Offer conflict management trainings regularly, as a helpful tool within and beyond the church.

- 5. Treating employees as a commodity.** Any company who has experienced the high cost of employee turnover understands its toll: replacement costs, loss of productivity and decreased morale. Treat employees like a commodity and they will respond in kind -- by leaving you as soon as possible for the next best offer.

*Some burned out volunteers transfer to another church, vowing never to volunteer again. Others continue to work, but with weariness instead of joy. In our eagerness to fill open positions, do we use guilt to motivate? Is the volunteer's labor more important than they are?*

Action: Look around. Is there a good worker you should talk to about cutting back their church involvement so that they can get more rest or meet their other responsibilities?

When church leaders actively and intentionally help people discover and use their gifts in appropriate service, and when leaders by word and deed encourage all of us to support each other's service, the body of Christ is more healthy, a more effective tool to bring his good news to those who so desperately need it.