Based on Gerald Puccio's Research, the Role of Leaders on Church Innovation, Case of Uganda

Dennis Mujambere,
Lecturer, Africa Renewal University, Uganda
& Ph.D. Student, Calvin University, South Korea

Abstract:- Innovations and inventions are what power today's global economy and organizations. Any nation or institution that falls short in these two areas is either falling behind or on the verge of history. This essay tries to persuade leaders, particularly those in the church, that they can contribute to the ongoing discussion about innovation. The leader is required to manage for creativity and innovation. Otherwise, innovation will remain a distant goal. Everyone has the potential to innovate; the leader's job is to encourage this in the team.

The paper gives compelling reasons why leaders should not slack behind the pulpit when it comes to the issues of innovation. The article continues by demonstrating how church leaders can encourage innovation by recognizing the creative tendencies of the church staff, how to cultivate creativity despite the rigidity of church organizations, and how to better prepare church children for creativity and innovation in a church setting.

I. INTRODUCTION

Johnstone (Sept 2011) defined a leader as a person who has followers who choose to follow a leader: somebody who is in charge of a group of people may not be a leader or maybe a leader only to some of the people under his control. This definition fits well church leaders: they are leaders with leverage since, many times, they lead a committed yet non-enumerated staff. Using that leverage, they should encourage individual and organizational creativity or innovation. Organizational creativity has been defined as "the creation of a valuable, useful new product, service, idea, procedure, or process by individuals working together in a complex social system" (Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993). The reason why we need organizational creativity and innovation can best be explained by Puccio and Cabra; organizations exist to provide solutions to society's needs and problems. As society evolves at a breakneck pace, organizations are forced to respond quickly; those incapables of change will quickly find themselves replaced by more responsive organizations. It is clearly observed here by Puccio and Cabra that an organization, to avoid extinction, must change and adapt to changes to remain viable. To make the church relevant to both members and society at large, it must make innovation a serious matter, or else it risks becoming irrelevant to society. Eventually, it will be on the verge of total extinction.

One should not think that innovation is a discussion of scholars of our time. It is apparent that in biblical times, God's Spirit has been leading men and women to make great strides in the field of innovation. For example, in the time of Moses, the Spirit of God was on Bezalel and Oholiab to make the tabernacle of God Exod 36:1-2: something they had not seen anywhere. It said Washington Carver, a son of slave parents in America, was led by the Spirit of God into the laboratory, and he discovered a hundred applications from potatoes and over two hundred applications from peanuts. It is very clear that apart from natural endowments God bountifully gives to men, the church has the edge over and above the world that is the Spirit of God. Nevertheless, it requires leadership to unleash these potentials which God freely gave to the church. It is famously said that everything falls and rises on the leaders. Jesus himself was an innovative leader. Because of his innovative methods of preaching, he was in constant conflict with the guards of the status quo of his time, the religious leaders. Jesus would easily associate with sinners to win them to himself: something that was so strange to religious leaders. There was a big gulf between the religious leader and the people of God, who were like wandering sheep without a shepherd. It was the preaching of Jesus using innovative methods that brought heavy-laden sinners back to their loving God.

II. NECESSITY OF INNOVATION

If Uganda and the churches are to join other countries in creating prosperity for their people, we must think and promote innovation, without which there is a narrow gap in survival. Daniel Pink (2006) observed that the affluence of the developed nations, combined with the movement of much analytical work to automated methods and low-cost global workers, means that we have arrived at an age where we must become "a society of creators." Looking at the statistics below makes it more compelling to go for innovation, without which there is no escape route. Puccio observed that as early as 1991, U.S. expenditures related to information and communications technologies—the tools of the innovation age—surpassed those for the industrial economy, $112 billion to $107 billion. This means we are just behind many years; we are just trying to be what others were fifty years ago. That makes innovation the need of the hour in the church and the country.

Change is fast, moving at lightning speed, sweeping across all institutions and societies. Even in the most conservative- institutions, change is daily knocking on their

doors. It is observed today that when there was a call to change the way the traditional churches make their music and the church was reluctant to wake up to the call, the young people abandoned the church. Forbes and Faith Popcorn expressed uncertainty about which job will exist in the next forty years. When Forbes looked at future jobs, the magazine proclaimed that in two decades, "your job probably won't exist, at least not in the same form". Trend-analyzer Faith Popcorn (2001) predicted that, in the foreseeable future, more than half of us will work in jobs that do not exist yet. This means that leaders have a great responsibility to prepare their people, especially the young ones, to navigate the unpredictable future confidently. It is only through innovation the desired future is created instead of waiting for the unpredictable to strike.

Today it takes a short time for a product to be high in demand, and soon, it vanishes away because new and better products have hit the market or the manufacturers themselves plan for their demise to give their clientele fresh brand Products. Puccio observed that Whatever the cause, products today are replaced more rapidly than ever, and industrial redesign, whether for competitive advantage or because of rapidly changing technologies, occurs at a much faster pace. Owing to the two studies that were conducted found that products go through fundamental redesign every 5 to 10 years, while in technology, the rate of change is much faster, with products undergoing redesign every 6 to 12 months (Hunder & Schmit 1996). This implies that as the products change, there is a need for the workers to adapt to the new demands of the new products, which is equal to creativity or innovation.

III. CREATING A CONDUCIVE ENVIRONMENT

The leader should create a conducive environment that allows innovation to thrive, and the following is how leaders can create the environment. According to Amabile and Khaire (2015), if a leader wants to foster innovation, s/he should stop to think himself/herself as the wellspring of ideas that the employees execute; instead, should elicit and champion others' idea. Very often than said, many leaders see themselves as the source and custodian of ideas, and the rest of the followers are there to execute the ideas of the 'boss.' The leaders render the rest useless in terms of generating ideas except only to support and uphold the ideas from the top. The situation is even worse in church organizations where the idea of the 'man of God is unquestionable, however dumb it may be! There is a tendency for leaders to show themselves as if 'they know and have it all, which is a false posture. A good leader must understand that creativity lies in all people. An innovative leader should provide an environment where the best idea wins the day regardless of the source of the idea. Leaders should provide a safe environment for the followers to challenge the ideas of the top leaders without fearing for their lives or jobs. This is what Amabile et al. called managing for creativity, not managing creating.

Connected to the above is someone working as an administrator in one of the church ministries in Uganda; by that time, that person was not a pastor and had not done anything significant to the organization to listen to him. Yet, the senior pastor had an open mind to allow clergy and non-clergy staffers to generate ideas to move the church forward. He usually stressed that it does not matter where the idea came from and whose idea wins the occasion, but he wanted the best idea to be the one to be accepted. Because of this approach to leadership, the ministry grew so fast, and in a short time, it had a radio station primary school, bought more land for expansion, and had a child project to help needy children. One thing that is clear the initial ideas to begin any of these projects were not at one moment from the senior pastor. Yet every time the idea was accepted, refined, and became the way forward: the senior pastor became the spokesperson of the idea and rallied all the people behind the idea. As long it was like this, the organization grew by leaps and bounds, and it saw an unprecedented increase in membership and corporate partnerships.

To create an innovative culture at church, the leader should never allow or give grounds to groupthink culture in the organization. Grant (2016) defined groupthink as "the tendency to seek consensus instead of fostering dissent. Groupthink is an enemy of originality/innovation; people feel pressured to conform to the dominant, default views instead of championing the diversity of thought". Grant identified three dominant reasons that different organizations depend on to hire recruits. He identified them to be as professional, star and committed. An organization driven by commitment aims to have the same values and operates as a loving family of many members. The problem with such organizations is at risk of operating like a cult where any deviation from the group idea is meted with harsh judgment and, at times, punishment or even expulsion. Another challenge with such an organization that has a strong culture, according to Grant, they have greater difficulty attracting, retaining, or integrating a diverse workforce. The church is one of the organizations which has a strong commitment culture whereby each one must subscribe to the core values as enshrined in the scriptures. The church dogmas are unquestionable, and the moment you question them in many churches, you must be excommunicated, as was the case with Martin Luther from the Roman Catholic church.

Does it mean that since the church has a strong commitment culture, she should, therefore, forget anything to do with innovation? The answer is a firm no; it is not always that strong commitment culture leads to groupthink. If the church is to foster innovation, it must allow and reward dissenting ideas within its ranks. First, we must question our dogmas and whether they agree with the scriptures. If dogma is not backed by scriptures, it can be challenged, and the challengers should be looked at as a reformer/Innovators of the time because the Reformed keep on reforming. Secondly, the biblical truths are ever constant, but the means through which they are conveyed change depending on culture, age, status, and location. This means innovation must be allowed to shrive

unhindered in methodology if the gospel message is not compromised.

An excellent example of innovative methodology in preaching can be seen from a man who wanted to preach the gospel and see many people return to the Lord. He decided to become a missionary, and he did missionary work in one African country. He planted a church and did everything using the conventional method of evangelism, but he saw dismal church growth. He decided to change his methodology and opened a class restaurant in the central business district of that town. He made a restaurant where whoever wanted good and classy food would give it priority. He employed the best chef, and he decided to usher in clients, and his task was to talk to customers about Lord Jesus. He said he was amazed that he would share the gospel with over 200 hundred people per day, and instead of investing to bring them to the church, they were the ones who were paying for the food and transport to bring themselves to the restaurant. Many people believed in the Lord through this method because he decided to go away from the norm!

IV. EXPLOITING CREATIVE/INNOVATIVE PREFERENCES

The leader, to create an excellent working climate s/he must investigate the creative preferences of his/her staff. Puccio, Mance & Murdock (2011) identified four types of creative/innovative preferences, which include clarifiers, ideators, developers, and implementers. Puccio (n.d.) said that a clarifier likes to spend time clarifying the problem, doesn't like to move too quickly to a solution, and wants to be sure the right problem is addressed. Gathers information to understand the situation and likes to look at the details. An Ideator likes to look at the big picture and enjoys toying with ideas and possibilities. Ideator likes to stretch or her imagination and sometimes takes a more intuitive approach to problem-solving. S/he enjoys thinking in more global and abstract terms and may overlook the details. Developer enjoys putting together workable solutions enjoys thinking about and planning the steps to implement an idea. S/he enjoys analyzing and comparing potential solutions; developer likes to examine the pluses and minuses of an idea and may get stuck in developing the perfect solution. Implementer likes to see things happen, enjoys giving structure to ideas so they can become a reality, and enjoys seeing ideas come to fruition. S/he likes to focus on ideas and solutions they feel are workable. S/he likes the 'Nike' approach to problem-solving (i.e. "Just do it") and may leap to action too quickly. The implementer is persistent, decisive, determined, assertive, and action-oriented.

The leader can make a discussion session in which he can identify volunteers' and staffers' creative styles through their reasoning. Through the first discussion, s/he can use it as a litmus paper to know which creativity style each member exhibits and group them accordingly to accomplish specific tasks that lead toward a common goal. Where necessary, s/he

can require each member to take Kirton's adaptor-innovator continuum and FourSight preference tests. Puccio et al. (2011) urged that by using CPS, the team focuses their problem-solving energy in one direction and together progress through the process. By sharing the same framework, the team will always arrive at a better problem solution having experienced less frustration along the way when they are grouped according to their creative styles.

After knowing the creativity preference of the leader and the members using take Kirton's adaptor-innovator continuum and FourSight preference tests, the leader can go ahead and make sub-projects out of any project. These are the sub-projects, Clarifying the Problem, Generating Ideas, Developing Solutions, and Implementing Plans Puccio, (n.d.). Then the leader divides members along with the above sub-projects, that is, clarifiers in clarifying the problem, ideator to generate the ideas, Developer to develop solutions to the problem, and Implementers to implement the plan. By subdividing the team members along these lines, the leaders will always get the most out of staffers' psychological diversities. By doing this, strife and wasting time discussing trivial issues can be avoided among the staffers and volunteers.

Having said the above description of how people approach innovation, demands that church leaders first determine their creative preferences. Grivas, Chris & Puccio (2011) gave the leaders counsel that the more we understand ourselves and how we think, the more we can consciously apply ourselves effectively. Once that happens, there's no limit to the innovative breakthrough results you and your team can achieve. For example, from the above and personal experience, one leader concluded that He was more comfortable with work that requires overseeing or implementing. He embodied the overt characteristics of implementers, Persistence, decisiveness, determination, assertiveness, and action oriented Puccio (n.d.). He displayed that charisma in all projects he worked on. He was not that good at work which required a lot of planning and refining the idea to get actionable parts. Often, he overestimated what could be implemented and only realized later that he chewed what I could not swallow. This means he had to hire a Developer with creative preference and assign all planning work to that person instead of trying to choke himself doing something he will never perfect.

Church leaders must understand that we have two forms of creativity, i.e., adaptive, and innovative styles. Still, it should be understood by the leaders that about both styles: those workers with adaptive and innovative styles are both equally important to the organization. A leader must create a climate that favors both styles of creativity and each one to hone his/her potential to create a natural balance in the organization. Puccio et al. (2011) contended that "This bias toward the innovative style of creativity may lead to a situation in which the creative contributions of adaptors are not recognized or is undervalued. The reality is that societies and organizations need both adaptive and innovative creativity. Organizations need a

balance between ideas that focus on finding better ways to do what they currently do". When a person comes to understand his/her creative and thinking styles is in a better place to leverage his/her strengths and to find ways to compensate for his/her deficiencies Puccio et al. (2011). If a leader finds what he can do better, he will always allow others to handle it where he does not have the strength. It gives everyone a chance to shine and to be celebrated for what they are doing. This increases employees' productivity, job satisfaction, and retention in the organization.

It is a good strategy if the church leader and the organization make deliberate efforts to find the creative styles of each employee by using the four-sight preference model. Knowing each one's cognitive styles can be of great help in knowing how to communicate with him/her better; communication is the organization's lifeblood. There is a direct relationship between creative style and job performance; the organization will find it simple to allocate assignments to an employee in areas where s/he has a competitive advantage. Puccio et al. (2011) urged that planning subgroups are better suited for the most adaptive managers and the implementer subgroup for those with an innovative orientation.

Once employees are sub-grouped according to their abilities and creative preference, it will foster intra-team communication and higher success in the organization Puccio et al. (2011). In case an organization creates a team or finds itself with a team with a wide range of creative style preferences to avoid communication challenges and poor job performance, it will choose an integrator as the team leader to mitigate the would-be challenge. Puccio, G. J., Mance, M., & Murdock, M. C. (2011) asserted that Integrators could go with the process flow, moving effortlessly from step to step. They can also look at situations from many different perspectives. Integrators tend to be good team players that can communicate readily with others who have different process preferences and have a concern for maintaining harmony in teams.

V. PARENTING LINKED TO INNOVATION

Another way church leaders can foster innovation is through parenting not only their children but, more importantly, church children. Studies show that parents are not the best models to their children, even though the bible says, *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it Prov 22:6*. It is clear that there is a way for each child to go which may not be necessarily the same as his/her parents. It is true when it comes to values; parents should train children in the biblical values that the parents uphold. Still, when it comes to a career, the parents must understand children don't necessarily have to follow their parent's career path. Realizing this phenomenon, Grant (2016) advised parents that if they encourage originality and innovation in their children, the best step to take is to raise children's aspirations by introducing them to different kinds of models. Many parents cannot meet and introduce different models to their children.

The church has the capacity to introduce their youth and children to different people from different walks of life to raise their imagination. Such children, when they grow, innovation will not be a foreign idea to them, as studies and experience indicate.

Like above, the church can introduce children to fictional characters through literature books to be their models. It is said that what inspired Elon Musk to be an innovator was Lord of Rings; for Jeff Bezos, it was Wrinkle in Time, and for Mark Zuckerberg, it was Ender's Game. Grant observed that studies are showing that when children's stories emphasize original achievements, the next generation innovates more. When stories emphasized original achievements, patent rates typically soared twenty to forty years later (Grant 2016). Leaders should take careful attention to what their children read, and they should stock the church library not only with biblical literature books but also with imagery and fictional books to raise children's imagination and aspirations in career paths. It is only the sure way of creating the innovators of tomorrow that will stun the church and the nation tomorrow with great innovation and invention.

VI. CONCLUSION

In a nutshell**,** we can safely conclude that without a leader who manages for creativity/innovation, innovation will always be far from any organization**.** Innovation does not come to any institution as a random happening; it is realized by deliberate and intentional efforts from the leadership**.** It doesn't require a leader to be innovative but a leader who creates a working environment that makes the institutional staff innovative. Leaders ought to know that everyone is innovative, except that staff is often wrongly placed in positions that don't augur nicely with their creative styles. Leaders must set free people's brains to brainstorm solutions to society's problems without fearing the backlash. Staff should have no fear of challenging the leaders' ideas, and leaders should guard against being 'sacred cows,' or else the staff will always agree even to what they don't agree with inwardly.

REFERENCES

[1]. Grant, A. (2016). Originals: How Non-Conformists Move the World. Penguin Books, New York.
[2]. Grivas, C, Puccio.G. (2011). The Innovative Team: Unleashing Creative Potential for Breakthrough Results. Jossey-Bass, VitalBook file
[3]. Johnstone. B (2011) Good followership. TJ www.trainingjournal.com
[4]. Popcorn, F. & Hanft, A. (2001). Dictionary of the future. Hyperion, New York.
[5]. Puccio, G. J. (n.d.). Tapping into our creative thinking skills to manage complex problems [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from https://class.waldenu.edu

[6]. Puccio. G.J & Cabra F.J. (2010) Organizational creativity: a systems approach: Excerpted from The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity, 1st Edition by Kaufman, J.; Sternberg, R. Cambridge University Press. Reprinted by permission of Cambridge University Press.

[7]. Puccio, G. J., Mance, M., & Murdock, M. C. (2011). Psychological diversity: Leading people with different styles.

[8]. Puccio, Mance, & Murdock. Creative leadership: Skills that drive change (pp. 241–264). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

[9]. Puccio.G.J, Mance. M, Barbero-Switalski. L, Paul.D. Creativity Rising: Creative Thinking and Creative Problem Solving in the 21st Century, ICSC Press, NY, U.S.A.

[10]. Puccio, G. J. (n.d.). Tapping into our creative thinking skills to manage complex problems [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from https://class.waldenu.edu

[11]. Puccio, G. J., Mance, M., & Murdock, M. C. (2011). Psychological diversity: Leading people with different styles. In Puccio, Mance, & Murdock,

[12]. Frank L. Schmidt.F.L & Hunter .E.H | (1996). Methods of Meta-Analysis: Correcting Error and Bias in Research Findings

[13]. Woodman, R. W., Sawyer, J. E., & Griffin, R. W. (1993). Toward a theory of organizational creativity. Academy of Management Review, 18(2), 293–321.