

Killing Leadership Drift

Peter Drucker said, “Only three things happen naturally in an organization: friction, confusion, and underperforming. Everything else takes leadership.” Like a lot of his pithy statement, Drucker effectively captured the natural drift that occurs in organizations (and ministries) and the importance of leaders to rally people against the natural drifts.

Just as a person does not drift towards health, organizations and ministries don't naturally drift towards greater effectiveness. Just as my garage will not drift towards being clean without my intervention, organizations naturally drift toward complexity without intervention. Organizations and ministries drift away from mission, not towards it. Though Drucker was surely not advocating that leaders shrug their shoulders at the drift towards friction, confusion, and underperforming, the quote could be adapted to “leaders must constantly lead against the natural drift towards friction, confusion, and underperforming.” Because those three drifts happen naturally, here are three things leaders must do.

1. Because friction naturally happens, leaders must bring clear values.

Friction does not only happen because there is a lack of shared commitment to the same values, but a lack of value alignment ensures there will be friction on a leadership team. So, leaders must constantly communicate, illustrate, and ask for commitment to the values that undergird the work.

2. Because confusion naturally happens, leaders must bring clear direction.

A common occurrence in organizations and ministries is that people on a leadership team or staff are on the same page about the mission, but not on the same page about the strategy. They have agreed at a high-level view of “what” the organization or ministry is about but not “how” the organization or ministry will accomplish “what” the organization or ministry is about. In other words, you can have people who declare and repeat the same mission statement but are deeply confused about the daily direction. Without clarity around strategy that confusion will constantly increase as activity disconnected from a coherent strategy increases.

3. Because underperforming naturally happens, leaders must bring clear expectations.

When people don't perform well in their roles it is often because there have not been clear expectations given to them about their roles. Clear expectations are a gift to those on the team who desire to offer their best, contribute, and use their gifts to serve others. When there are clear expectations people are able to identify areas for growth and development. When there are clear expectations, leaders are able to encourage and challenge as necessary. To share the

exceptions is to be honest. To equip people to fulfill those expectations is to be caring and committed to the person and not only the result. Of all leaders, Christian leaders should excel in both honesty and equipping.

Leaders serve their teams well with clear values, clear direction, and clear expectations.

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