

The Lab or the Factory

Seth Godin uses a business example to point out that some organizations are content with doing what they've always done while others are always in search of the next great idea. This has HUGE implications for ministry work, but first, listen to what Godin says:

At the lab, the pressure is to keep searching for a breakthrough, a new way to do things. And it's accepted that the cost of this insight is failure, finding out what doesn't work on your way to figuring out what does. The lab doesn't worry so much about exploiting all the value of what it produces--they're too busy working on the next thing.

To work in the lab is to embrace the idea that what you're working on might not work. Not to merely tolerate this feeling, but to seek it out.

The factory, on the other hand, prizes reliability and productivity. The factory wants no surprises, it wants what it did yesterday, but faster and cheaper.

Some charities are labs, in search of the new thing, while others are factories, grinding out what's needed today. AT&T is a billing factory, in search of lower costs, while Bell Labs was the classic lab, in search of the insight that could change everything.

Hard, really hard, to do both simultaneously. Anyone who says failure is not an option has also ruled out innovation.

Did you catch that? If the fear of change in the advancement of the Kingdom here on Earth keeps us from choosing to experiment with new ministry ideas and models, then we have also said we won't value innovation! It is impossible to please both God and man. Why do we hold on to things that keep us focused on trying to please the latter?

Here's the question: Is your church or ministry a lab or a factory?