

The Seven Deadly Sins...of managing people badly

Another letter from a senior to a junior devil...

Dear Wormwood,

I write to you today on the subject of *managing people* – the art of supporting and encouraging people to do their job well. As you know, churches are employing an increasing number of paid staff in youth and community projects. Now, even us devils know that to do our jobs well we need to be encouraged and supported, so by helping the church to be *ineffective* in supporting its staff we will help our cause enormously.

On the whole, it is comforting to see how badly the church is doing at managing and motivating people. We know that many Christians enter these jobs full of naïve enthusiasm. Dangerously, many even have a sense of 'mission', a desire to transform and bring so-called 'hope' to individuals and to the communities in which they work. Clearly this could be a disaster for us.

It is fortunate for us that bad management often undermines their enthusiasm and effectiveness. Burn-out, stress, frustration and disillusionment are thankfully already fairly common among people working for churches. Often the cause of stress is not the difficulty of the work itself but the disorganisation and lack of support they receive.

Key subjects like delegation, time management, assertiveness and support structures are not priorities in clergy training. Often, church leaders become skilled in manipulation out of sheer desperation. All of this serves our purposes wonderfully.

You see, the great thing about people being managed badly is that it provides a very positive '*double whammy*' for our work – it disillusiones those who are passionate and effective whilst allowing the unmotivated and ineffective to carry on in their jobs unchallenged. In my experience, the church often allows its staff to be ineffective for quite a long time before taking action. Many churches have got this down to a fine art!

Also serving our purpose is a widespread fear about the growth of '*managerialism*' in the church; many church leaders will respond defensively when challenged about how well they support their staff. You may well hear comments like 'I am called to be a pastor/priest/preacher (delete as appropriate) not the CEO of a corporation.' This is very beneficial to us as it leads to many church leaders continuing to consider management a 'secular' concept.

In scorning appraisals, annual reviews or any sense of strategy many churches happily exist in an unaccountable and unfocussed haze.

Wormwood, it is vital to our cause that we keep it this way.

I have provided here a more specific summary of the kind of behaviour which you should be encouraging:

- 1) *Don't let them set clear expectations for their staff.* Many church jobs still do not have clear job descriptions so many are employed without ever being clear about what is expected of them.
- 2) *Discourage them from tackling problems and addressing poor performance.* Promote the idea that highlighting a poor standard of work is aggressive and somehow 'un-Christian'. This can allow problems to fester and develop into serious issues.
- 3) *Don't give them time to meet.* Encourage the attitude within church leaders that they do not have time to meet with their staff regularly. Remember, good communication between staff is bad news for us. If they do meet, try and ensure that their phones are not switched off as interruptions are a great way to hinder productive meetings.
- 4) *Discourage regular team meetings, appraisals and annual reviews.* These tend to air the issues and can be dangerously effective for encouragement and motivation. If they do have team meetings try and ensure they are long, boring and fractious.
- 5) *Discourage anything being written down.* When meetings do happen try and avoid things like clear action points. A good meeting will end with no-one really knowing what was agreed. You will be doing a good job if you hear comments like 'I can't remember what we said about that' or 'Is that what we agreed?' Don't let clear notes or minutes bring clarity through the fog of words.
- 6) *Encourage the strangely Christian tendency to split the sacred from the secular.* It really helps our cause when Christians dismiss good management as secular. Also encourage a 'spiritualising' of the problems – nothing upsets staff more than being told to have more faith or to pray more when issues are not being addressed.
- 7) *Finally, we have to realise that a lot of church leaders are aware that they are not managing people well and yet don't do anything about it.* Encourage

them to avoid training events or making any concrete steps to develop their skills.

You will do well to listen to my guidance, Wormwood. It is vital to our cause that we maintain poor management of staff within churches. Little else undermines the mission of the Church so effectively.

Yours,

Screwtape

Jon Kuhrt