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## New People

*My main job was developing talent. I was a gardener providing water and other nourishment to our top 750 people.*

*Of course, I had to pull a few weeds, too.*

– Jack Welch, former chairman and CEO, General Electric Corp.

Paul is sweating. His largest client just called, asking for earlier completion of an important project. Paul's been up nearly all night, scrambling to meet his regular project deadlines. Despite the success of his small software company, he finds it increasingly difficult to retain responsible employees. While there's no shortage of qualified programmers, their inability to meet deadlines or even to show up for work has forced him to let a number of them go. His most talented people are frequently lured away by offers from larger companies. Staring at the ringing phone, Paul wonders if he can afford to hire someone to deal with these human-resources challenges.

Leadership is filled with people issues. No leader is immune to them; they come with the territory. Like Paul, maybe you find yourself in need of some new people in your life. Perhaps you're wondering why you're not getting the support you need from people

who have always been helpful in the past. Maybe you wish you could find someone to simply validate the challenges that you're dealing with or provide sage advice from their own experience.

All leaders need new people in their lives. The people who got you to

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**The people who got you to where you are now may not be the ones who take you where you need to go.**

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where you are now may not be the ones who take you where you need to go. The chief financial officer (CFO) who took you from \$1 million to \$5 million may not be the one who takes

you from \$5 million to \$50 million. As a leader, you have to accept the fact that your CFO has his own thresholds, his own limitations, and his own issues to work through. You have to accept the fact that his perspective may be different from yours.

## People You Will Encounter

There are many types of people who regularly cross the path of a leader. As you climb the ladder that you're on, you'll encounter people who are:

1. Where you used to be.
2. People who are going where you're going.
3. People who are in the place that you want to be.

Many of the difficulties that you'll encounter come from not knowing how to deal with the issues and situations raised by these different groups. When we don't know how to disengage and engage with people, it causes pain. Knowing more about these eight particular types of people can help you to deal with them appropriately:

1. Positive and negative people
  2. People you have outgrown
  3. People who are tied to yesterday's solutions
  4. "That's not my job" people
  5. People who have not moved on
  6. People who can give you new perspective
  7. People you can be transparent with
  8. People who can celebrate your success
1. You'll encounter both **positive and negative people**. It's easy to recognize positive people; they are the ones who add value to your life. As you move up your ladder, it's important to have positive people around you. We are all built with a need for approval and we want to be around people who add value by agreeing with us. It's also important to understand that agreement is not always positive and disagreement is not always negative; people can disagree with us and still add value.

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But there are some people who will not agree with us at all. What can you do about these people? What strategy can you use with them? I heard one very insightful remark from the former president of Kenya. During our discussion, he made the comment, "To appease everybody is to invite trouble."

When a company or an organization grows, you will find yourself appeasing fewer people. Appeasement means that you have to find the middle of the road. The more you travel in the middle of the

road, the more mediocrity you're going to produce. Excellence is found on the edges, never in the middle. Saying "yes" to one group or one person and "no" to another invites challenges on each side.

Many times, when a negative person gives you their opinion, they

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expect you to follow through. That's why it's important to be around people who are willing to give you

input without a demanding spirit. These are the positive people, the ones who will add value and help you get where you want to go.

2. You must also deal with **people you have outgrown**. Growing is necessary; it's what keeps you moving. There will be folks who started the journey with you that you will outdistance. Maybe there's someone who was an integral part of your organization who just hasn't grown with you. People have to understand that if you don't grow, you've got to go.

The same thing can happen in a church. Perhaps you began with 25, 30, or even 100 people in your congregation. As you expanded

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to two or more services and added many more people, you might find that the elders, board members or other leaders who accompanied you

are not the same ones who will take you where you need to go. As a leader, you have to accept those facts.

3. **People who are tied to yesterday's solutions** are another concern. Dealing with the "old guard" is an issue that every leader has to wrestle with. In the early stages of an organization, we throw people

at issues. When you began your church, you just wanted someone to play the keyboard. You weren't concerned about the person's musical pedigree. If you and your son started a landscaping business, for instance, you're not looking for people with vast experience. You're just looking for someone who is breathing, who can come to work and push a lawn mower. So maybe you just hire your neighbor's son, who is also your son's friend.

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After a certain amount of growth, we begin refining our approach or expertise. When that happens, that's when we realize that the people we have doing the work are not working out. Maybe they don't understand what you want, don't want to learn contemporary worship songs, or wonder what's wrong with the way they've always done things. What do you do with those people now? Yesterday's solutions have become today's problems.

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And because the young man you hired to push the lawnmower is your son's friend, your son may not like it when you let him go. Your neighbor may not like it either. Solving issues about yesterday's solutions are often complicated.

4. Then there are the **"that's not my job" people**. When you hire people, they're typically tied to job descriptions. At higher levels, you are less concerned with job descriptions than you are with the three essential factors of:
  - Character

- Competency
- Chemistry

Competency is about the skills, the training, and the experience required to get the job done. Character is about integrity. Bill Hybels describes integrity as what you do when there's nobody watching you. You want to know that you can trust this person.

Chemistry is the one characteristic that can really cause issues. It

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asks, "Does this person fit in?" "Can they get along with other people?" Carly Fiorina was the first outsider to lead Hewlett Packard. When she left, many people attributed her departure

to chemistry. She just didn't fit in with the culture of HP.

Southwest Airlines is a prime example of the great results you can achieve when employees have the right blend of competency, character and chemistry. A man called the Southwest Airlines ticket counter in Dallas concerned about his elderly mother's ability to change planes in Tulsa. The ticket agent who took the call volunteered to drive the woman to the airport and fly with her from Dallas to Tulsa after his shift was over, just to ensure that she made the connection.

You want people like that, people who aren't restricted by the circumstances under which they were hired. You want people who take ownership of the situation instead of saying, "That's not my job."

5. You also have to cope with **people who have not moved on**. A leader is always dynamic, while organizations tend to be static.

When the vision and the movement of the leader do not mirror the vision and movement of the organization, they're out of sync with each other. We call that tension a lack of organizational congruence or alignment.

Carly Fiorina's vision of merging HP and Compaq caused a great deal of organizational tension. She had to battle employees, shareholders and even the board members. Her vision was out of sync with the organization.

When you have moved on and your organization has not, you have to figure out who is going to take the journey with you and who is not. You have to think about where you're going and who can help you to get there.

6. It's also important that you find **people who can give you new perspective**. The most productive time of a new employee in any organization – secular or sacred – is the first three months. After that, they do not add the same value. In the first three months, they give you perspective by questioning the way you do things. They might say, "Didn't I just fill out a form that asked me for this same information?" They find redundancies, they look for duplication, and they look for ineffectiveness. They find more effective ways to do things, they bring new ideas with them. After three months, they know survival involves falling in step, so their DNA becomes that of the organization.

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When I was president of a college and hired people, I always had a conversation with a new employee and their supervisor.

I'd bring them together on the first day and encourage the new person to ask questions and tell the supervisor not to be threatened by the questions. I'd tell them that those questions will help us to reconfigure and reinvent ourselves, and help us to make improvements. New people bring a perspective that others cannot give you because they see things at another level. Whether they're internal or external, you'll be able to recognize these change agents immediately by the fresh perspective they offer your organization.

7. It's equally important to have **people you can be transparent with**. As you rise in leadership, it becomes increasingly difficult to find people you can talk to about your inner issues. There are fewer and

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fewer people you can be transparent with, reveal your fears to, and have them listen to your concerns. Since these are not issues you can talk about with just anybody, you need a few people in your life that you can talk to.

Chances are that the people you had conversations with two years ago may not be the same people you'll be having conversations with in years to come.

Why is it so difficult to find people to talk to? It's because the stakes are higher. When your landscaping company was just two men and a truck, you could talk about anything while you're driving down the road. But when you have 10 trucks and 100 employees, you're not going to talk to everyone about the equipment you're going to buy, about your plans to leverage your business, or about who you're going to let go because they're not working out.

There are fewer people who understand the reality of your position.

You can find a lot of people when you're at the two-men-in-a-truck level. But you're going to have fewer people available when the organization expands. It really can be lonely at the top – but it doesn't have to be.

8. You should also **find people who can celebrate your successes**. The Scriptures tell us to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. Unfortunately, people find it easier to weep with those who weep than to rejoice with those who are rejoicing.

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Let's say that while both of us started organizations at the same time, your organization took off but mine is struggling. It's very difficult for me to have the type of relationship with you where I can celebrate and rejoice with you.

You want people who will say, "Yeah man! It's great that you're doing well!" You want people who can be the wind beneath your wings, who can cheer you along, who won't get jealous or envious, who won't disengage from you because you're doing well. You want people who can help you celebrate your journey.

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## People Principles

Every leader is tempted to ignore or dismiss one particular type of person. We dream about how much easier life would be without an especially challenging soul. Or how much better things could be if we cloned someone who is full of new ideas or is always encouraging.

But the fact is, we need different types of people in our lives. Rather than avoiding people, leaders must focus on them. Jack Welch

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understood the importance of people and it helped him to transform stodgy General Electric into a highly competitive, multi-billion dollar global enterprise. Jack Welch, who has been called one of the two greatest corporate leaders of this century, said he spent 50 percent of his time on people issues. That's taking your people seriously!

*Business Week* reports that Welch told his senior managers that they should be proud of everyone that reports to them. If they weren't proud of their people, they weren't setting themselves up to win.<sup>3</sup> And Welch established the example for his leaders to follow. He sent handwritten notes to production workers. He apologized to one executive's wife for keeping him tied up with an important presentation. He commended one of his executives who turned down a promotion that would have involved having his teenage daughter transfer to another school. In many companies, turning down a promotion is what's called "a career-limiting event." But Jack Welch called this manager up and praised him for having his priorities straight.

Jack Welch knew that the way an organization grows is by growing its people. Too many leaders think that the best way to expand a company is to have a leading-edge product or a service that blows the competition away. We try to convince ourselves that the best way to grow a congregation is to have certain programs, an inspiring service, and a magnificent building. But that's not going to produce long-term growth. To grow your church or your organization, grow your leaders in number and in depth.

Achieving growth comes from following these People Principles:

- **People Principle #1:** The way to get your organization to grow is to grow your people. The way to experience growth as a leader is to grow other leaders.
- **People Principle #2:** In addition to growing others, leaders should surround themselves with people who challenge them to grow.
- **People Principle #3:** Focusing on your organization's context, not its packaging, attracts new people.

People Principle 1: *The way to get your organization to grow is to grow your people. The way to experience growth as a leader is to grow other leaders.*

Growing people is a very holistic process. It means that you pay attention to their development in the areas of character, competency and chemistry.

- By focusing on character, you ensure that when people are making decisions, they're making ethical decisions. You're ensuring that they err on the side of losing business rather than doing shady business.
- Developing competency means that you send them to classes, seminars and workshops that help them to become a better widget maker, computer person, or musician.
- You focus on chemistry by helping them to strengthen people skills, leadership skills, and management skills. Typically,

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people don't leave organizations because of competency issues. They leave because they don't fit in with the culture, because they either don't know how or don't want to make these types of changes. Most people I've had to release fall into this category.

Growing people has to be a holistic effort. Many companies have on-site fitness facilities and wellness benefits, but imagine if your

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organization sponsored a marriage retreat for employees. If an employee's marriage is strong, won't he or she be more productive? If an employee isn't distracted by a divorce, won't she give

the job her full attention? Isn't it better if your employee isn't working another job just to make the child support payments? Growing people means caring for the many facets of their being. After all, you want the whole person coming to work every day.

People Principle #2: *In addition to growing others, leaders should surround themselves with people who challenge them to grow.*

Everyone is familiar with the undesirable type of person known as a

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"yes man." Only concerned with protecting their status and position, they never consider disagreeing with their leaders. Have you ever considered what your life would be

like if you were surrounded by "yes men?"

If we only surround ourselves with people like us, our weaknesses are never challenged. Because we never complement our weaknesses within the organization, it leads to further weakness. That is why John

Maxwell says, "Staff your weaknesses." Find out where you're weak and hire people with strengths in those areas. Most pastors are not good with finances. We went to school to study theology, not management. As a result, we don't know how to read an audit and we don't know how to answer a CPA's questions. If that's you, stop pretending and hire someone with that competency.

Every time you hire, you should be looking for someone who is better than you. If you want to stay where you are and make lateral moves, hire people just like you. People who are just like you will never challenge you to grow. When Scripture talks about iron sharpening iron<sup>4</sup>, it's talking about the need to have people who will challenge your thinking. You should gather people around

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**What attracts people is becoming part of an organization that's going somewhere, that's doing something, that's changing the world.**

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you who think the ideas that you haven't, people who will challenge the status quo. Give these people permission to speak honestly so that you grow. You don't have to agree about everything. You might come away saying, "Well, we didn't agree but it sure gave me something to think about."

You have to be secure enough about your weaknesses to let someone else do it. Don't pretend that you have to do everything yourself. Insecure people will hire people who are beneath them. Secure leaders always get people who are better than they are. I can walk into any church or organization and determine how secure the primary leader is. If he has gathered eagles around him, I know he's an eagle. If he's got turkeys around him, I don't care how much he says he's an eagle. He's just a better turkey.

## The Company You Keep

It is better to be alone than in the wrong company.

Tell me who your best friends are, and I will tell you who you are. If you run with wolves, you will learn how to howl. But, if you associate with eagles, you will learn how to soar to great heights. "A mirror reflects a man's face, but what he is really like is shown by the kind of friends he chooses." The simple but true fact of life is that you become like those with whom you closely associate – for the good and the bad.

The less you associate with some people, the more your life will improve. Any time you tolerate mediocrity in others, it increases your mediocrity. An important attribute in successful people is their impatience with negative thinking and negative acting people. As you grow, your associates will change. Some of your friends will not want you to go on. They will want you to stay where they are. Friends that don't help you climb will want you to crawl. Your friends will stretch your vision or choke your dream. Those that don't increase you will eventually decrease you.

Consider this:

- Never receive counsel from unproductive people.
- Never discuss your problems with someone incapable of contributing to the solution, because those who never succeed themselves are always first to tell you how. Not everyone has a right to speak into your life. You are certain to get the worst of the bargain when you exchange ideas with the wrong person.
- Don't follow anyone who's not going anywhere. With some people you spend an evening; with others you invest it.
- Be careful where you stop to inquire for directions along the road of life.

Wise is the person who fortifies his life with the right friendships.

- Anonymous

People Principle #3: *Focusing on your organization's context, not its packaging, attracts new people.*

Tom Peters says that your company will never experience a talent shortage as long as it's a great place to work. A growing organization ends up attracting people; they don't have to hire people from cold resumes. Growing organizations and churches have people who want to be a part of them.

It's not the stock options, the fringe benefits, or the salary that attract people. It's not the product or service you're providing either. What attracts people is becoming part of an organization that's going somewhere, that's doing something, that's changing the world.

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**It's about value, respect  
and significance.**

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Apple's co-founder, Steve Jobs, was trying to convince John Sculley to leave his job as senior vice president of PepsiCo to become the CEO of Apple. Sculley wasn't particularly interested in leaving a secure position at Pepsi to run this brand new company. Jobs changed that by asking him, "Do you want to spend the rest of your life selling sugared water or do you want a chance to change the world?" Being part of a company that was doing something important is what attracted John Sculley to Apple.

Herb Kelleher, the founder and chairman of Southwest Airlines, says they probably have 25 applicants for every open job<sup>5</sup>. That's not because they've been the only airline that's been consistently profitable. It's because people want to be connected to a company that makes them feel fulfilled in their work.

Ritz Carlton is another example. Their employees are all empowered



to make decisions to ensure that guests are satisfied. When you talk to them about a problem, they don't pass the buck to the manager. Instead, they immediately take ownership and follow up. That attitude is apparent in their credo, "Ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen."

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**When we grow others, we are also growing ourselves.**

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It's about value, respect and significance. Why is it that some companies in Silicon Valley have no trouble attracting people in spite of that area's talent shortage? It's because people want to be connected to an organization that values them, that gives them important work to do, and that treats them with respect.

## Taking Appropriate Action

As a leader, you need many different kinds of people. Often, problems arise when you're not certain how to engage and disengage with the

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**A leader does three things: they know, they grow and they show.**

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people around you. I've found it helpful to interact with people by determining whether this is someone who I can assist with their leadership

growth, someone who can grow alongside me, or someone who will help me to develop my leadership potential.

We engage each of these people differently.

- **Reach down to those we can assist.** A leader is someone who shares what they've learned with others. They use their own growth to help others to grow; they purposefully mentor others. When we grow others, we are also growing ourselves.

A leader does three things: they know, they grow and they show. Knowing means getting information. By using the information you acquire, you grow and develop yourself. That alone doesn't make you a leader. You have to show someone else what you know to be a leader.

Giving away what you've learned sounds odd. Why would you share your hard-earned secrets with someone else? Because you never lose by giving away power; the best use of power is empowering others. When you empower someone else, you've made a friend for life.

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- **Reach out to those who are where you are presently.** If both of our companies have 100 trucks, we can commiserate about our troubles and rejoice in our successes. During this conversation between peers, you are both learning from the other person's experience. You may not be adding a lot of value to them and they may not be adding a lot of value to you. You're just experiencing cohesiveness, camaraderie, and collegiality by being transparent with each other.
- **Reach up to those who are where you want to be.** It's important that we also get assistance from those who are where we want to be. Put yourself in environments that let these people recognize who you are, and let them know that you'd like to benefit from their knowledge and experience.

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**Disengaging from people is difficult, it's painful, and it's messy.**

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It's this last category that can be somewhat painful. That's because

you have to disengage with people who have brought you where you are in order to engage with the people who can take you up.

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**Leaders only grow to the threshold of their pain.**

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If you've been spending time with a new group, you don't have the time to devote to the people you used to see.

If you were with people who ran small companies and now your company is growing, you're busy engaging with people running other growing companies.

Disengaging from people is difficult, it's painful, and it's messy. It's painful because you really care about these people and may not want to disengage. It's painful because you realize that unless you disengage, you'll never be able to have the time to engage new people. And it's also painful because you realize that you may never see these different groups together because their worlds and realities are so different. It's painful because the people that you're disengaging from will not be able to understand why you've disengaged from them. It's painful all the way around. But remember, unless you are willing to endure these pains, your own growth as a leader will be limited. Leaders only grow to the threshold of their pain.

## Teaching Points

- All leaders need new people in their lives. The people who got you where you are now may not be the ones who take you where you need to go.
- Many of the difficulties that you'll encounter come from not knowing how to deal with issues and situations raised by different types of people.
  - You'll encounter people who agree and disagree with you. Agreement is not always positive and disagreement is not always negative. People can disagree with you and still add value.
  - You'll have to deal with people you've outgrown, those who you've outpaced.
  - People who are still tied to yesterday's solutions can become today's problems.
  - There are also people who will only stay within the boundaries of their job description and not take ownership of situations.
  - A leader must deal with static people and static organizations. When they're not moving in sync, the tension is a lack of organizational congruence.
  - People new to your organization can offer you new perspective on redundancies and ineffectiveness during their first 90 days.
  - As you rise in leadership, there are few people who understand the reality of your position. So it's important to find people you can be transparent with about your inner issues.

- You should also have people who can celebrate your successes without being jealous or envious.
- We need different types of people in our lives. As we focus on growing people, the organization will experience growth. Focus on growing people in the areas of character, chemistry and competency.
- Surround yourself with people who will challenge your own growth. If you only hire people like you, it never complements your weaknesses within the organization.
- As long as your organization values people by giving them important work to do and treating them with respect, you'll never experience a talent shortage.
- When interacting with people, we should:
  - Reach down to share our growth with other leaders, those who are potential leaders and those who are where we used to be.
  - Reach out to peers who are where we are presently.
  - Reach up to those who are where we'd like to be.
- Unless you're willing to engage with new people and disengage with others, your own leadership growth will be limited.



