



I was struck by the statement in Peter Greer and Chris Horst's book, *Mission Drift*, that says, "It's the exception that an organisation stays true to its mission." They made it clear that the unfortunate natural evolution of many originally Christ-centred missions is to drift. I touched on this topic some months ago with regard to our values and made mention of the fact that in physics a theory for drift is called the second law of thermodynamics, which states that in the natural order of the universe, things degenerate rather than come together. So if this statement is true, we need to give focused attention to safeguard our organisations against drift.

We are perhaps aware of well-known organisations like YWCA (Young Men's Christian Association) and the famous Harvard University that although started with solid Christian commitment, veered totally away from their biblical foundations. If they can, so can we. Drift happens slowly and that's why we have to be intentional about guarding against it.

Mission drift has taken place when the vision, values, culture or practices have veered away from the original passion or direction.

Here are a few key aspects of mission drift that can relate to us in YWAM:

- **Focus on one aspect of the mission:** As YWAM we are called in our passion statement to "To know God and make him known." How do we make him known? Is it by the proclamation of truth or through the demonstration of the gospel in acts of service and mercy? The correct answer is Yes! And how do we mobilise young people to share the message? Answer - through training. We are called to all three aspects of evangelism, mercy ministry and training and every operating location needs to have these elements in their foundation. The same is true of our sphere of influence – local, national, regional, global. To be YWAM we have involvement in all. We will have different priorities but we are definitely *Glocal* and everything in-between. Drift happens when one aspect is separated from the others. It's easier than we think!
- **Lack of accountability:** In a hierarchical structure, everyone has reporting relationships with accountability, job descriptions, expectations, performance evaluations, goals and objectives to reach. As YWAM becomes a flatter organisation, there is a danger of a lack of modelling, mentoring, confronting and accountability. A flattened organisation requires a greater degree of maturity, self-motivation, self-discipline, and a greater need than ever before to seek out those who will speak into our lives and ministries from inside and outside of YWAM. Where there is no outside input, there is a tendency to become self-focused and unaware of our strengths, weaknesses, impact or lack thereof.

- **Losing our DNA:** With the rapid movement of staff and change of leadership, it's possible for young leaders to be lacking in their knowledge of the YWAM values and therefore not passing on the true DNA to their followers. YWAM is an apostolic, prophetic ministry and so if we stop doing new things in new ways, we begin to die. If we cease to hear God on a daily basis, if we cease to live and function in team, if we value one segment of society above another, if.... and the list is quite long - then we begin to drift. It's up to experienced YWAMers to keep sharing stories of how God has led us, passing on the history and underlining our foundational values to all who join us. Our orientation and on-going training of staff and leaders is vital for staying *mission true*.
- **What gets measured gets done:** YWAM doesn't tend to be good at measuring, due to our very apostolic nature and highly decentralised structure. However some kind of measurement is vital to see trends and understand our growth to date. So do we tend to measure performance or quality? For example how do we perform when it comes to the number of students on schools, numbers and locations of outreach teams sent out, numbers of people saved or ministries established? Or do we look at the quality of students attending, the result of our outreach teams, the placing new believers in fellowships and strategic, well trained leaders setting up ministries that impact their world? Another way of asking the question is: What in YWAM is valued, what is celebrated, what is priority? It's easy to come to a conclusion in YWAM that sending a team to an unreached people or starting a team in a new omega zone is highly valued and celebrated. However the process by which we see those results is also important. It is obviously dangerous to neglect the care of our workers or the growth and development of leaders. We must also focus on character, trust, cooperation, love, preferring one another and developing a team spirit. The question then is, what do we want to measure in YWAM to keep us from mission drift and how do we measure it? Obviously there is a need of some further thought on this topic!
- **Financial incentives and challenges:** When we grow to the point of looking at corporate fund raising there will come the temptation to underplay our evangelistic mission, in order to receive grants and financial help from secular businesses. Carnegie gave millions to U.S. colleges facing financial challenges on the basis of no condition of religious views. This created a dilution of their mission and resulted in major drift. Challenges can come to us in more subtle ways too. For instance, as YWAMers we practice a life of dependence on God for financial provision with no expectation of remuneration from the mission. However we can have times where we take on part time jobs or one partner works full time, or some other arrangement to raise the funds that are necessary. None of these situations are wrong but they can set precedents. If Loren & Darlene had started YWAM with part time jobs, we would all have part time jobs today in order to be mission true! Sometimes there is a very fine line that we have to tread. Decisions can be made that benefit leaders financially and set precedents for the next generation of leaders. For instance, out of pressure we start to pay workers for jobs that we can't recruit YWAMers to fulfil. That's a real challenge for

many. Again its not necessarily wrong but we need to clarify what are exceptions and what are the norms.

- **Legal boards:** In YWAM we seek to register as legal entities, where possible, in the nations in which we work. We have an understanding that the executive leadership in YWAM gives the spiritual leadership and vision to the mission and the legal board brings legal and financial accountability. We seek to safeguard these boards with a 1/3 local YWAMers, 1/3 international YWAMers and a 1/3 representatives from the body of Christ. However, there have been a number of situations where a legal board has moved away from YWAM values and taken the ministry and assets with it. How important it is to have board members who have a full understanding of our DNA and who will stand strong against any sense of drift in the mission.

Robert Clinton, the author of *The Making of a Leader*, through his study identified that only 1 in 3 leaders in the bible maintained a dynamic relationship with God, didn't abuse their power and were able to finish well. This highlights the individual mission drift. Are we any different today as leaders?

Dr Howard Hendricks did a survey of 246 Christian leaders who had committed sexual immorality within a 2 year period. All believed they were incapable of committing this moral failure before it took place. If you believe you are immune you are most vulnerable. All of these leaders moved away from spending daily time with God and had no accountability partner. If this can happen in the life of a leader, it can happen in the life of an organisation too.

The writers of *Mission Drift*, express that drift is inevitable for organisations not anchored in a healthy value driven culture and is a crisis facing all faith based organisations but is **not inevitable**. That is good news and gives us hope for the future. So the homework for us as leaders is to identify the practices in our teams and communities that will stand against the tide of mission drift.

Mission true organisations know why they exist and protect their core at all costs. They remain faithful to what they believe God has entrusted them to do. They are clear about their vision, values and passion.

Three keys for organisations to stay mission true are:

**1. Clarity of Christian mission:** It's vital for leaders to understand their role of embracing global words of the Lord and then communicating the corporate story. However, for staff to stay in alignment with the vision and values, it takes more than hearing the story, it takes the modelling and mentoring by leaders in the principles and practices. In general I would say that we have been better at clarifying values rather than clarifying vision. A synergy of revelation in the Spirit and wisdom in clear strategy will help to create a clear vision for the future that enables everyone to engage and know where we are going.

**2. Intentionality of safeguarding the mission:** The values of mission true organisations impact their daily schedule. This means leaders must be value driven and think through the implications of all decisions, plans and ways communities and teams function. One of the key actions for leaders is to create intentional effective leadership development programmes for emerging leaders.

If the vision shows you where you are going, the values show you the process and the ways of getting there.

**3. Stay radical:** Studies show that religions that grow are the ones that are hard-core in some way. They have something that differs sharply from the culture in which they operate. That's one of the problems with mainline Protestantism: it's not different enough from mainstream culture. So identify your radical edge and stick to it. For an example, let's think of our value of living in community. When YWAM began we started living in communities together, all trusting God day to day. Over the years leaders develop a better standard of living and move out from '*living under the same roof*' type of community. This can then drift into moving away from even a *proximity* type of community. New recruits, looking at their leaders, desire to imitate what they see. What took senior leaders decades to develop is wanted by emerging leaders immediately. Soon the sense of community is diminished and drift sets in. How can we as YWAMers stay committed to our radical lifestyle?

I would encourage you to put this topic of *Mission Drift* on the agenda of your leadership team and really pray and ask the Lord what are you to do intentionally in your communities that will help to maintain you as a *Mission True* YWAM ministry.

Until next month

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