

Mission Drift

by Peter Greer and Chris Horst

(Excerpted with comments by Jerry Nelson)

Opening line: “Without careful attention, faith-based organizations will inevitably drift from their founding mission.”

Harvard University’s 1636 mission statement: “To be plainly instructed and consider well that the main end of your life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ.” Motto on the diploma: “Truth for Christ and the Church”

Harvard drifted so in 1701 Yale was founded with motto: “Truth and Light”

Contrast “China’s Children’s Fund 1938 (later ChildFund International) which drifted from its mission with 1952 Compassion International.

Each succeeding chapter of the book gives illustrations and ends with the salient points of the chapter:

Chapter 3: “Mission True organizations believe the Gospel is their most important asset.” They:

- Recognize that Christ is the difference – he, not our ingenuity, changes lives.
- Affirm that faith sustains them.
- Understand that functional atheism is the path of least resistance.

Chapter 4: Mission True organizations make hard decisions to protect and propel their mission. Great “mission drift survey: on pages 47-49 (Illustration of Southern Seminary back from the brink.) Mission True organizations:

- Seek clarity of mission first.
- Acknowledge the pressure to drift is constant
- Realize there is a point of no return.
- Make hard decisions to correct drift.

Chapter 5: Mission True leaders assume they will face drift and build safeguards against it (contrast Pew Trust with Crowell Trust). They:

- Remain mindful of cultural trends.
- Don't assume successors will inherit the founder's vision.
- Attend to the details of constructing safeguards.

Chapter 6: Mission True Organizations have clarity about their mission (YMCA compared to Intervarsity Fellowship). They:

- Know why they exist.
- Differentiate means from mission.
- Change to reinforce their core mission.

Chapter 7: Mission True board members understand their top priority. They:

- Recruit carefully and prayerfully.
- Hold the chief executive responsible for mission.
- Follow standard board practices.
- Create policies and safeguards (see p 86 Compassion's policy).
- Remember the mission (see p59, 86 Crowell illustration of reading the charter aloud annually).

Chapter 8: Mission True leaders set the cultural tone for the organization. They:

- Admit vulnerability.
- Invite others in.
- Create safeguards against impropriety.
- Remain in the "Vine."

Chapter 9: Mission True leaders hire first and foremost for heart and character (Veggie Tales Big Idea compared to Young Life). They:

- Hire slow and fire fast. (See also Dee Ann Turner's Bet on Talent chapter 3)
- Clearly define their approach to hiring based on faith.
- Are consistent with their hiring policy.
- Inculcate staff in their values and history. "Consistent retelling of the history and values of the organization.

Chapter 10: Mission True organizations partner with donors who believe in their full mission. Mission True donors:

- Are explicit in their expectations.
- Plan ahead.
- Keep "mission strings" attached.
- Do their giving while they're living.
- Pray for and encourage the organizations they love.

P113 2011 charitable giving: Individuals and bequests donated 81% of the \$298 billion given. Foundations and corporations gave only 19%.

Chapter 11: Mission True organizations track metrics reflective of their full mission (page 131-133 good model for tracking outcomes other than money). Mission True organizations:

- Make every effort to measure more than just the easy stuff.
- Identify ways measurement can lead them off mission.
- Believe measuring something is better than nothing.
- Admit it's a team effort.

Chapter 12: Mission True organizations understand the Gospel demands excellence in their work. They:

- Maintain the highest levels of quality.
- Celebrate their unique societal contributions because of their Christian identity.
- Integrate the Gospel into all areas of their programs.

Chapter 13: Mission True organizations are fanatics about rituals and practices (Southwest Airlines, International Justice Mission). To Mission True organizations:

- Small things matter.
- Consistency counts.
- Exemplars should be celebrated.
- Embed spiritual disciplines.

Chapter 14: Mission True organizations boldly proclaim their core tenets to protect themselves from drift. They:

- Proclaim their full mission to create accountability.
- Deploy language anchors.
- Build credibility through consistency.

Chapter 15: Mission True Organizations realize the local church is the anchor to a thriving ministry. They:

- Invest in the local church building true friendships creating a foundation for collaboration.
- Over communicate with the church and listen to feedback.
- Are generous with the church.
- Communicate with clarity.
- Worship and pray communally.
- Learn from the church.

Review Questions pages 182-188