

THE SECRET SOURCE OF UNLIMITED LEADERS

By Neil Cole

An excerpt from his book *Organic Leadership* (coming out in February '09)

Perhaps the single most consistent need among Christian leaders is for people who can lead ministries. The vast majority of churches I have encountered in my travels all could use more leaders to maintain their ministries. So many churches have more children than child workers and more students than student workers. Everyone could use more musicians.

There are always a few churches, however, that do not have this struggle. There seems to be at least one church in every city that doesn't have the same overbearing need. They have all the leaders they need, and more.

Why is that? Why are some churches full of more leaders than they need, while the rest are all struggling in manpower poverty? I know the secret. I will share it with you now and you too can have more than enough leaders and resources to accomplish all the work God has called you to do.

The Problem with Recruitment

The churches that have the most leaders do not recruit leaders at all. That is why they have enough. The churches that recruit can never find enough. Below I will share some of the reasons why.

Recruitment of leaders is the only option recognized by most.

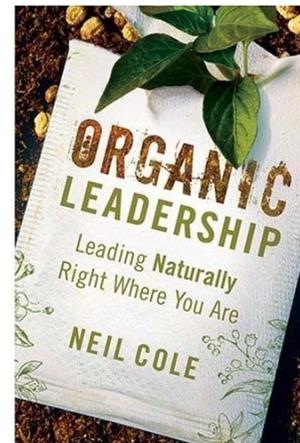
Most leaders who have needs in their churches for ministry immediately take to recruiting. Recruitment is when we search for a leader from the outside to fill a need on the inside. We take on a headhunter role and search for the best leaders we can find for the tasks at hand. For most Christian leaders, there is always more ministry than leaders. That just seems to be the way it is. This approach is rampant in the Kingdom of God. It is actually epidemic. In fact, for most, it is the only way they know. Most of Christendom is set up for this method.

Recruitment is never satisfied.

There are never enough leaders for all the demand. Matching the right people to the right task is a hit-and-miss proposition. Plugging in new people to work in established ministries is a challenge in the best cases.

In organic terms, this approach is like grafting in leadership. It is slow, awkward, and only successful on occasion. The leader is left constantly hungry for more leaders and seemingly having to compromise quality on a regular basis.

We start with a ministry need, and then work to find someone to match the task. This is actually backwards. We start with our eyes on our own needs and we are never really able to see anything else. It seems that once you start down the recruitment path you find yourself in a



world where you are acutely aware of all that you do not have. In this world, there are not enough leaders to fill the gaps let alone start anything new.

Recruitment sucks!

I used to think that recruitment was a strategy that only added ministry to the Kingdom and can never be multiplying strategy. I have come to see that it is not even an addition strategy. Recruitment is actually a *subtraction* strategy. It doesn't *add* anything to the kingdom. It simply takes from it. It is a strategy that uses the kingdom for its own good rather than contributing to the kingdom.

When everyone is taking and no one is contributing, soon the pool sucks dry and we are all left with nothing. The vast majority of churches are sucking up what little resources are left in the kingdom and contributing nothing back. The results are that we are in a drought. Our pool is shrinking daily, and in the end all we have left to us is the muck at the bottom of the pond.

This explains why so many churches are dying of thirst. Quality diminishes. Needs are left unfilled. Our thirst for more resources increases. Our churches are left weakened.

There is a solution, however. There is an oasis available to all our churches with enough resources for everyone. We can learn this solution by a quick analysis of how leaders are found in the book of Acts.

Farming for Leaders

Recruitment is much like picking out produce at the grocery store. Someone else did all the hard work of cultivating soil, planting seeds, growing and harvesting the fruit so that you can conveniently pick it up and take it home for consumption. If everybody was only consuming the fruit, and no one was farming, we would quickly have a problem on our hands. That describes the stark and desolate drought we are experiencing now in the kingdom. Having too many consumers and not enough producers has created a shortage of fruit. We all want fruit, but Jesus wants us to *bear* fruit, not just *buy* it.

The few churches that do not lack for leaders have taken the path into a harvesting mentality. They are doing the things that God told them to do. They are making disciples, which is more than merely teaching the saints. Making disciples starts with the lost.

You see there are untapped and almost limitless leaders all around your church. As Jesus said to Paul when he was alone in Corinth, "I have many people in this place." These future leaders are not in the kingdom of light yet, so there is a simple formula Jesus gives us that is necessary to discover the rich wealth of workers all around.

More than enough leaders

Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful." This is the good news you have been waiting for.

While the harvest is indeed plentiful, he also adds: "but the workers are few." (Matt. 9:37) Yes, you can certainly relate to that latter part of the verse. What He says next, however, is crucial

to our topic. He tells us where to find workers, and then shows us where they will come from. He has a plan. He is the Lord of the harvest. His plan is probably better than yours and mine. We should pay close attention.

Beg the Master of the Harvest for Workers

Jesus says, "...therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into the harvest fields." We need to go to the Lord of the harvest on our knees and beg Him for workers. The word translated as "beseech" means to beg as if your life depends on it.

Why must we beg? Why such a strong word? I believe God wants us to want it that much.

Any who have had small children know about this kind of begging. A simple trip to the grocery store with small children is a lesson in the fine art of begging. My kids could find something in almost every aisle to beg for, and each item was worthy of pleading as if their life depended on it. We had to master that problem early on. But even now, in their early twenties and late teens they can occasionally drift back to the old habits of begging, only now it's for the car keys and some gas money.

Here we have a loving father, with His child. I guarantee you--if you beg God for a harvest of souls for His kingdom He will grant your request with joy. It is what He wants...*even more than you do!* It is His idea. He is the *Lord* of the harvest. He has a vested interest in seeing it happen. If it doesn't happen it will be His loss more than yours. So join Him in His concern. Want it like He does.

This is Jesus' solution to our predicament, and it starts with going to the Lord of the harvest in prayer. He also goes on to show us where the workers are to come from.

Find workers in the harvest fields themselves

I am confident that most of the leaders who stare at the empty leadership roles in their church have turned to God and prayed for workers, perhaps even begged for them. That is a start, but we must shift our thinking as well. Our expectations are misplaced.

In the passage where the disciples are told to pray for workers, where do you think they were expecting these leaders to come from? Seminary or Bible colleges? Of course not. Other churches? None existed. The passage is about farming leaders, not robbing other ministries for them. No, there is no other solution than that the leaders for the harvest must come from the harvest itself. The new disciples *are* the new workers. The seed of the next generation is found in the fruit of the current one. That is farming. God created the world to work this way.

If someone asked my children when they were quite small, "where does an apple come from?" they might have said Ralph's Grocery Store. Of course, now they have come to understand that the apple they eat was grown on a tree in an orchard. We must have a similar shift and see that the fruit we need should be grown, not just bought.

After Jesus told the disciples to beg for workers for the harvest, he instructed them how to find the workers. That is the rest of Luke 10. If we all started to simply obey Jesus in this pivotal

passage we would begin to see a harvest. We would find the fruit we long for out in the fields, not in the barns...or produce department.

In another passage about a harvest Jesus said, "lift up your eyes and look on the fields and see that they are white for a harvest." (John 4:35)

We must farm our leaders, not recruit them. Farming or harvesting leaders is a long-term solution. The seeds of the next crop are found in the current crop. Recruitment is a short answer to a long problem.

Jesus will never ask you to do something and then not provide you with the resources you need to get it done. When Jesus places the order, He pays the bill. So if you find you do not have enough resources for what you are doing, first, you need to ask yourself if you are doing what He wants you to do. Second, you have to look for the resources in the very places He has clearly laid out in Scripture.

Open your eyes and look at the fields around you, they are ripe for a harvest. There are more than enough leaders if you know where to look and whom to ask. Don't look for them in other churches. Look to the fields for leaders and ask the Lord of the harvest for them.

Most leadership development and deployment strategies begin with already committed Christians. If your leadership development strategy doesn't begin with lost people then you are starting in the wrong place. We must expand our strategies to begin in the fields. We must shift from a consumer posture to a contributor posture.

I am convinced that God is going to do something incredible in our day. This will be something on a global scale. It will be unlike anything the church has seen before. It is a privilege to live at this time.

The kingdom heroes that will carry the day in this near future woke up this morning with a hangover...*in the wrong person's bed!* They are stuck in a cycle of darkness and their lives are rapidly circling the drain. When someone reaches out to them with hope, help and life, they will take hold...and never look back. Perhaps we should look at the local bar with more interest for future leaders and not just the local Bible Institute.

Transformation is the Key

Transformation is the key to leaders who turn the world upside down. That is why we need to start with madmen outside of the church. We need to be a band of madmen that welcome other madmen who need to belong to something that gives them purpose.

It is the impetus of a changed life that provides the momentum of a movement. The transformed life is what is contagious so that others are drawn in. It is our changed life that keeps us holding tightly to Jesus through the thick and thin. Our changed life is what validates the movement. In fact, what are we without transformation? We are just a religious club.

When churches reach new people, the changed lives infuse the whole congregation with energy. But it isn't only the new followers that should have changed lives. Jesus is real. Our

lives are still in process. The work God has called us to is bigger than we are and requires that we step out on faith in God and walk in His power. Transformation should be a constant for us all. When we are stagnant as a people the movement stops dead in its tracks.

If your ministry is struggling without leaders, do not re-evaluate your leadership development program first. It is time to re-evaluate your disciple-making system. If you have next to nothing in the area of reaching lost and broken people, then your leadership development system will yield very little results. A lack of leaders is a symptom of a much greater problem—you lack transformation in people's souls. Do not mourn your lack of leaders; mourn your lack of changed lives. If you have changed lives, the leaders you need will emerge.

It all starts with someone transformed from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. This is the fodder for the flames of a movement. If this is happening, our churches are surrounded with the fuel for a true movement. All the resources for the harvest are found in the harvest. We do not need to feel impoverished or desperate. We simply need to do what Jesus instructed us to do. It can be scary, but the risk we take is the place for faith...and faith is what we need in order to see fruit.