LEADING TRANSFORMATION # 71:

ORGANIZATIONAL LIFECYCLES AND CONTINUATION-1

Organizations go through different developmental phases. To remain on the “cutting edge” of leadership and results requires intentionality. Too many organizations fail to ensure ongoing re-invention, relevance, and effectiveness. A clear understanding of Organizational Life Cycles can help in providing the right kind of leadership to ensure continuation of transformation in and outside institutions.

ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE CYCLES: PHASES

1. PIONEERING: During this phase, “Pioneers” exercise groundbreaking “Entrepreneurial Leadership” characterized by highly creative leadership, high energy environments, experimentations, and risk-taking. The focus is about proving concepts and developing prototypes.

2. PRODUCTIVE: This phase involves identification of working models; exploration of scalability and sustainability; and expansion. Effective organizations create learning environments that identify, reward, and reinforce Best Practices.

3. HIGH PERFORMANCE: At this phase, concepts have been proven and sustainable and scalable working models are multiplying. The Best Practices environment enhances healthy competition that results in High Performance Organizations.

4. PERFECTING: Most high performing organizations put emphasis on the pursuit of excellence, driven by ongoing evaluation and improvements. This calls for a good balance between effectiveness and efficiency.

5. PROFESSIONALISM: Most organizations at this stage work toward stability, order and predictability. They focus on professionalism based on integrity, justice, impartiality, and effective processes. Usually, “charisma” and “entrepreneurship” can be the losers when undue emphasis is placed on processes, procedures and policies. Though these are good and needed, they should not be at the expense of forward looking and “outside the box” thinking leadership. The need is to ensure constructive dynamic engagement between “entrepreneurship” and “professionalism.”

6. POWER CONFLICTS: When processes, procedures and policies win over entrepreneurial leadership, we say, “Managers have taken over!” Highly creative and risk-taking leaders do not go away without fighting. This generates “power conflicts” between “process engineers” and “change-oriented leaders.” If change leaders win, it is possible to recapture the spirit of entrepreneurship that will promote innovativeness, re-invention, and increasing effectiveness. If process engineers win the next phase is usually Bureaucracy.

7. BUREAUCRACY: Bureaucracy focuses on predictability, traditions, and inward-looking organizational development. “Control” is the management tool usually employed in holding the “wild horses” of risk-takers in check. When excessive control leads to legalistic cultures, Death is the inevitable result.

8. DEATH: Dead organizations can still exist and function. The difference is that they lack the missional cutting edge and effectiveness. They have decreasing relevance, significance and transformative impact. There is the “form” of the organization, but not the corresponding “power.” Some refer to this as the Deadwood phase.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What phase is your institution in?

2. What needs to be done to ensure a constructive dynamic between “entrepreneurship” and “professionalism?”