



Editors Note:

We have chosen to post this article, because it communicates well the way many of us are working together as simple churches. Though we may be from different countries, cultures, denominations and spiritual backgrounds, we are learning much from one another because we desire the same thing-God's glory and the building of His Kingdom. We are discovering that as we serve one another in humility with no one seeking to be on top or control, we experience the unity and servant form of leadership that Jesus prescribed. And as the Psalmist wrote, "When brothers dwell together in unity, God gives great blessing."

A few months ago I was in a used bookstore and was struck by the cover of an old book Megatrends (John Naisbitt). I was curious to see if the book had accurately predicted the future. Turning to Chapter 8, I read the title From Hierarchies to Networking and knew I would have to get this book. I was sure that God was wanting to use this book to speak to me about something I was already experiencing in my real world: the shift away from top-down, "select few in charge" leadership to a flat, "every member is important" structure of relating to people and our church life. For Maria and I a result of this journey landed us in the house church movement.

The message Naisbitt shares in Megatrends, written over 24 years ago, has such profound insights for the church today and especially the house church movement that I thought I would select different passages for you right out of the book. I think you will see that this book is very prophetic. It needs little further explanation.

Yours for the Kingdom,

/Jeff Gilbertson/

Smashing the Pyramid

For centuries, the pyramid structure was the way we organized and managed ourselves. From the Roman army to the Catholic Church to the organization charts of General Motors and IBM, power and communication have flowed in an orderly manner from the pyramid's top, down to its base... The pyramid structure has been praised and blamed, but its detractors have never come up with a better or more successful framework for organizations, although many have tried.

[Ultimately] the failure of hierarchies to solve society's problems forced people to talk to one another – and that was the beginning of networks. In a sense, we clustered together among the ruins of tumbled-down pyramid to discuss what to do. We began talking to each other outside the hierarchical structure, although much of our previous communication had been channeled inside. That was the birth of the networking structure.

As friends, as individuals, as members of small groups or large organizations, we exchanged resources, contacts, and information with the speed of a telephone call [e-mail] or a jet airplane ride, with the high touch of our own voices set against the din of a world swarming with too much data and too little knowledge. Networking was a powerful tool for social actions. Those who would change the world began doing it locally, in clusters of like-minded people with a single ideological purpose.

What is a network?

Simply stated, networks are people talking to each other, sharing ideas, information, and resources. The point is often made that networking is a verb, not a noun. The important part is not the network, the finished product, but the process of getting there – the communication that creates the linkages between people and clusters of people. Networking... is done by “conferences, phone calls, air travel, books, phantom organizations, papers, pamphleteering, photocopying, lectures, workshops, parties, grapevines, mutual friends, summit meetings, coalitions, tapes, newsletters.” (Marilyn Ferguson)

Networks offer what bureaucracies [hierarchies] can never deliver – the horizontal link. Virginia Hine, late University of Miami anthropologist, describes networks as “a badly knotted fishnet with a multitude of nodes or cells of varying sizes, each linked to all the others either directly or indirectly.” What needs to be added is that networks are infinitely more complex because they are three-dimensional in nature.

Why Now

Why have networks emerged at this particular time? Is networking so different from the Old Boy Network, the informal way professional men have helped each other for decades? The answer is yes. The “Old Boy Network” is a clubbish, fraternal conspiracy that protects the self-interest of a limited few. It is not widespread and it was not created out of necessity. The new networking is both ubiquitous [ever-present] and essential.

The “Old Boy Network” is elitist; the new network is egalitarian. Within the networking structure, information itself is the great equalizer. Networks are not egalitarian just because every member

is a peer. On the contrary, because networks are diagonal and three-dimensional, they involve people from every possible level. What occurs in a network is that members treat one another as peers – because what is important is the information, the great equalizer.

There are three fundamental reasons why networks have emerged as a critical social form now: (1) the death of traditional structures (2) the din of information overload, and (3) the past failures of hierarchies... The failure of hierarchies to solve human problems has forced people to begin talking with one another outside their organizations, and that is the first step to forming a network.

Life Within the Network Model

The vertical to horizontal power shift that networks bring about will be enormously liberating for individuals. Hierarchies promote moving up and getting ahead, producing stress, tension, and anxiety. Networking empowers the individual, and people in networks tend to nurture one another. In the network environment, rewards come by empowering others, not by climbing over them.

http://www.simplychurch.com/2006/02/from_hierarchie.html