BOARD GOVERNANCE: A GUIDE TO VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

+logicboard

envision + empower + achieve

Visionary Leadership. Building Leaders That Build the Church

Competent, visionary leadership is critical to the ongoing success of the local church. That's why the Lord ordained elders to act as spiritually mature overseers, envisioning a future for the church and guiding it toward its goals. In a growing church, that task can be complex. But it doesn't have to be overwhelming.

The Visionary Leadership model was designed to help make the work of the elder team more rewarding and productive. It's compelling. It's focused. And when its implemented successfully, it provides an environment where Biblical principles of leadership and empowerment can be fully employed.

This following guide will help you navigate your way through this leadership model, helping you:
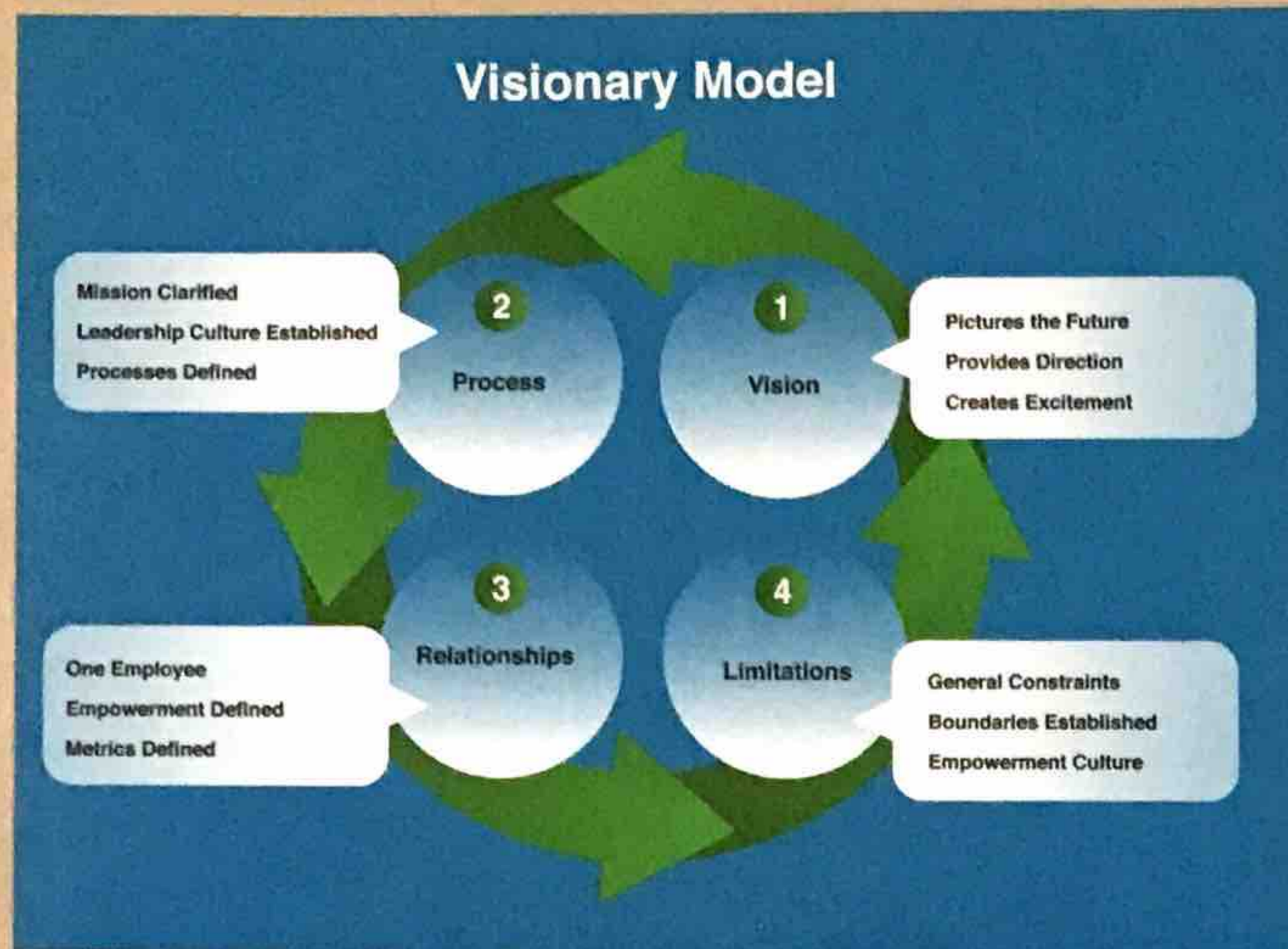
Understand the role of the elder

Recognize empowerment possibilities

Understand issues pertinent to the elders

Embrace the leadership model.

Visionary Leadership and strategic thinking are inseparably linked, and those who serve on the elder leadership team must demonstrate both— along with a high degree of diligence and discernment. To better understand the characteristics that define a good elder, consider reviewing the qualities established in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 as you move forward together to build a strong and effective team.

Visionary Model

2 Process
Mission Clarified
Leadership Culture Established
Processes Defined

1 Vision
Pictures the Future
Provides Direction
Creates Excitement

3 Relationships
One Employee
Empowerment Defined
Metrics Defined

4 Limitations
General Constraints
Boundaries Established
Empowerment Culture

Two Teams. One Church.

As two distinct leadership groups, elders and staff both play a critical role in serving the local church, but they each have a different role. In the Visionary Leadership Model, elders establish the future vision for the church and determine the best policies for achieving it, while the staff initiates and implements a strategic plan to fulfill the vision, using those policies as a guide. Effective elders establish good policies, stay focused on monitoring achievement of the vision and avoid involvement in the day-to-day operations of the church.

Working Toward a Common Goal.

"Policies" may sound impersonal, but they're simply a tool that allows the elder team to speak with a collective voice, providing leadership on important topics while guiding current and future decisions of the church. This model provides "overview" leadership of the church and creates a framework for consistent decision-making, even as members of the elder team change from year to year.

The origin for this style of leadership is embodied in the ultimate "servant-leader," Jesus Christ who said, "whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant." Good leaders are good servants first.

Building a Stronger Church.

Visionary Leadership provides a comprehensive approach to building an effective church. It demands elders who are proactive rather than reactive. And it requires visionaries who are committed to the principles of empowerment and delegation, remaining consistent with the Biblical mandate (Ephesians 4:11-16) that leaders should seek to prepare members of the church for ministry and entrust it to them with appropriate means for monitoring progress. In so doing, the church experiences the success of fulfilling its mission and achieving its vision.

Visionary Leadership, when fully implemented and applied, has been shown to:

Provide clear roles for elders and staff.

Leverage the full potential of elders and staff.

Clarify mission and vision.

Eliminate trivial/unnecessary meetings.

Equip elders to lead, not manage.

Establish practical tools for leading.

Cure micromanagement.

Focus agendas on vision and achievement.

Sponsor creative thought.

Foster a proactive mindset.

Facilitate advanced decision-making.

Deepen quality leaders.

Accelerate progress.

TEN COMPONENTS OF VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

VALUES

The elder leadership team (jointly referred to as "elders") is based upon a simple, but well-defined set of values that provides a spiritual framework for the work it does. The team has a strong moral ownership of the values and governs itself with them regularly.

UNITY

The elders speak with a single voice or not at all. This singleness of the voice encourages diverse discussion, followed by consensus on all decisions. Without a single voice, the team has little authority to lead. If division in any form is perceived in the team, it will be realized in the church family. Elders serving as volunteers within church ministries carry no voice of authority and remain subject to the direct supervision of those responsible for such programs.

DECISIONS

Elder decisions are few. When exercised, consensus is required. While this may take longer, it elicits and values everyone's input instead of creating "losers"—a situation which decreases motivation, and may foster resentment and division.

EMPOWERMENT

In more traditional settings, elders are accustomed to giving permission to the plans, ideas and requests brought to them, thereby entangling themselves in unnecessary details that limit the creativity and agility of those in front-line ministry. Elders seek to define and delegate.

POLICIES

The leadership voice of the elders is expressed in policy. Judiciously written, policies provide clear and unwavering direction, freedom and empowerment, with appropriately defined limitations. Policies focus energy and resources on achievement and enable the team and the church to stay on course with its mission.

VISION

With a concise statement, appropriately layered with detail, the elders are strongly focused on achieving a preferred future. Believing that this vision is God-given, they seek to channel their leadership assets toward its fulfillment.

LIMITATIONS

For protection, all groups need boundaries. Through such a policy, the elders empower the senior pastor and his staff to use all reasonable, legal, ethical and prudent means to achieve the prescribed vision.

PROCESS

On the foundation of scripture, the elders design what they expect of themselves as a team—values, norms for personal behavior, job products and succession. While policies are always subsequent to change, the elders view those that govern themselves to be binding.

PERSONNEL

The elders are responsible for one employee—the senior pastor, who also serves as a team member. They forge empowerment and productive linkage to the staff through him. This enables each to excel in their clearly defined roles and job products.

METRICS

Performance is monitored rigorously, but only against appropriately documented criteria in the form of policy. Monitoring is aimed primarily at measuring progress toward the achievement of the vision. The elders require relevant data and spend 70% of their time auditing the spiritual health of the church and its progress toward achieving a predetermined vision.

CATEGORIES OF LEADERSHIP POLICY

UNLOCKING THE KEYS OF PROGRESS

As previously stated, polices are the collective expression of the elders on various topics that guide current and future decisions of the church. Defining and executing policies in four key categories—vision, process, relationships and limitations—provides a healthy framework from which the elder work flows. By making these documented statements, the elders express good leadership in a positive, proactive and productive manner. The details of each category, outlined below, are maintained in a policy manual and kept in the church office.

Vision
Pictures the future, Provides direction, Creates excitement

Process
Clarifies mission, Establishes leadership culture, Defines processes

Relationships
Focuses on one employee, Defines empowerment, Defines metrics

Limitation
Outlines general constraints, Establishes boundaries, Creates an empowered culture

1. Vision Policies: Describing A Preferred Future

These documents focus on the future. They describe in detail what the elders intend the church to be in the unfolding years. Through them, the elders give definition to long-term outcomes and results.

When creating or reviewing these policies, it is urgent that key concepts are understood. Vision does not include services, programs, personnel, facilities, budgets or activities. Rather, attention is given to the products those items produce.

The vision for the church has priority. All other policies guide the investment of people and resources for its achievement, and aggressively monitor progress toward it.

By establishing a clear vision and setting the direction of the church toward its achievement, the elders lead effectively.

2. Process Policies: Doing Right Things Right Ways

These policies describe, in detail, the means by which the elders execute their work. Beginning with team values, they move through a series of norms, practices, procedures, and various methods employed to deliver and evaluate what the elders expect from themselves.

By executing their work in this intentional manner, the elders lead effectively.

3. Relationship Policies: Delegating Responsibilities

These documents describe how the elders delegate strategic planning and day-to-day management of the church to the staff through the senior pastor.

Effective churches have strong elders and a strong senior pastor, with clearly defined differences between the roles and job products of each. Policies in this category also define what's expected of the senior pastor, how he is evaluated and how the strategic work of the staff is monitored.

The elders want the senior pastor and staff to achieve the vision they have defined without violating any of its limitations. Clearly defined policies on monitoring make it possible to evaluate their performance efficiently and fairly.

By delegating responsibilities into the hands of the senior pastor and staff, then truly evaluating their progress toward the achievement of the vision, the elders lead effectively.

4. Limitation Policies: Defining Boundaries

These policies empower the senior pastor and staff to conduct and manage the day-to-day affairs of the church. To that end, they provide general constraints that define functional and operational boundaries.

Setting limits can be done without being consumed by the details or the complexity of day-to-day operations. It's impossible to define all the activities and decisions that a church is engaged in, but by defining boundaries or general constraints of what is acceptable behavior, the elders lead effectively.

The concept behind these policies is empowerment. Once these boundaries are known and understood, the senior pastor and staff are empowered to take any actions necessary, within the limitations, to achieve the vision.

Foresight is 70/30. When Visionary Leadership is implemented, priorities naturally fall into place and micromanagement is replaced by focused meetings that address the larger needs of the church. When this balance is reached, boards are able to spend the majority of their time working on vision-related issues.

More specifically, elders using the Visionary Leadership Model spend 70% of their meeting time assessing relevant data they have requested from the senior pastor and staff to measure progress toward the vision and determine the spiritual health of the church. The broad strokes of shepherding happen here. In addition, the elders govern their own deliverables to ensure that they establish and maintain the best environment for leading. The remaining 30% of their meeting time is spent handling conflict resolution, administering God's Word, praying and fulfilling other policy directives.

Logicboard Leadership

Elders

Staff

Strategic Thinking

Strategic Planning

Why Do We Exist?	Mission	Strategic Plan & Budget	What is the Operating Plan?
Where Are We Going?	Vision	Goals	How do we make progress?
How Do We Do Things?	Process	Teamwork	What process is important?
How Do We Protect?	Limitations	Personnel	What skills are needed?
Are We Making Progress?	Metrics	Procedures	What guides will help?