

In order to work towards extraordinary results in your workplace enterprise, are you constantly seeking to benchmark to the uniquely best organizational dynamics and leadership? Of course you are: that's why you do web research and read books and listen to podcasts!

You remember what benchmarking is—finding the best real-world practitioners of a particular task or process or approaches, studying those, and then adopting or wisely adapting those processes or approaches in your workplace enterprise.

One of my all-time favorite benchmarking stories comes from Southwest Airlines and its legendary leader Herb Kelleher. Here's the scoop.

Southwest Airlines, pretty much just focused at the time on key major cities in Texas—Dallas, Houston, Austin, and San Antonio, was starting as a regional airline. (Of course, Texans will quickly say that Texas isn't just a region, it's a country unto itself!) Anyway, Herb wanted to make his strategy an unforgettable reality—that was to be a very low cost yet profitable airline. And that meant keeping Southwest's multimillion-dollar airplanes up in the air longer than his competitors every day. Since flight times could not be substantially reduced, Herb focused on minimizing the time between flights...the time spent preparing the plane for the next flight. If Herb could just get a couple more flights per day out of each airplane, then his airplanes would be very highly utilized. That would be a competitive win, exploiting that advantage in comparison to his competitors.

So, when Herb wanted to benchmark to the leader in getting equipment turned around very quickly, just who did Herb benchmark to? American Airlines? United Airlines? No, Herb sent Southwest's executives to the famous Indianapolis 500 car racing venue, where pit crews routinely service a race car and get it back on the track in just a very few seconds. Southwest's leadership team gleaned everything they could from the Indy pit crews and crafted a very streamlined approach to servicing airplanes in-between flights.

It is this type of thinking—truly effective benchmarking, often going outside the industry to benchmark to outstanding people or enterprises—that has led to remarkable long-term success stories, both for Southwest Airlines and other famous enterprises.

Likewise, the persevering success...the persevering success...of every workplace enterprise is dependent upon constant benchmarking. But if the benchmarked enterprise is actually just average, if it is just routine in marketplace delivery, then the results will, by definition, be limited to just average. This is clearly why so many enterprises are "typical" to their industry...they mimic what is being done by their average competitor. How will they prevail in the long run being just average? The simple answer: they will not.

The reality is, a great leader should have a number of key benchmark gleanings in many relevant organizational disciplines, from management to marketing to strategy. That great leader should know, implement, adjust, communicate, and train towards those gleanings. And in so doing, the great leader forges a great organization that itself can and should become a benchmarked enterprise by admirers.

But there is one enterprise that every other enterprise can benchmark to—and do so with great expectancy. And that worthy enterprise is the Kingdom of God!

You might say, are you kidding? Of course not! That's because nowhere else, in no other organization, can we find the infallible leadership of fallible people. Of course we all work with fallible people. And, if we

are fortunate, we have seen or even participated in excellent but fallible leadership of fallible people. In contrast, the unique and unparalleled narrative called the Bible reveals Father, Son, and Holy Spirit executing magnificent, seamless, infallible leadership of fallible people. That's key: in the Kingdom of God, we don't just see the infallibility of God. We see the whole picture: God's infallibility in handling people's fallibility, and that represents the uniquely best manifestation of any organization, anytime, anywhere. That's the Kingdom of God: uniquely best and absolutely practical!

But, you might say, what in the world are you talking about?...I have been to churches that are really dysfunctional! Well, that's correct! That's why the standard is the Kingdom of God, not any particular church. Throughout the last couple of millennia, the really solid churches are much more conformed to the Kingdom of God than others that fall far short. Sad to say, many churches have and do fall far short.

Remember, for example, some of Paul's epistles to various churches where he had to correct those church's approaches? And remember the first several chapters of the Revelation to John? That illuminating passage unflinchingly calls out specific churches for key flaws.

And, yes, the current era is full of churches that are falling grievously short. How? Many ways. By cultishly adding new books to the canon of Scripture and claiming enhanced revelation of Christ. By claiming or just implementing their traditions above Scripture. By replacing Jesus as mediator with faulty political and social structures and solutions. By selectively abandoning key, necessary truths revealed in Scripture.

But be encouraged: we do participate in the Kingdom of God, here and now! Colossians 1:13 tells those born-again believers that they had been transferred to the Kingdom of God. Just like you and me, transferred already! This transfer coincides with believers becoming an ambassador for Christ, of course, everywhere they go, each and every day. Who ever heard of an ambassador without a country, a nation, a king to serve? That means the Kingdom of God is, very importantly, "here and now." Yet the Kingdom will still be more fully consummated in the "there and then." Living out these two truths fully in our beliefs and actions is the perfect balance regarding the Kingdom of God that the serious Christian is to pursue.

The Bible sets a stunningly amazing organizational framework for the alert studier, and more importantly, for the alert leader looking for the ideal, trustworthy benchmark. God's strategy, management, marketing, organizational structure, use and nonuse of power, and much, much more—all there, in the Bible, as the ultimate benchmark for every business or nonprofit enterprise. And certainly for you specifically as a leader...extending well beyond any church or seminary to your office, factory floor, or retail outlet!

When we realize this truth—really understand and truly embrace this truth—it will revolutionize our daily work lives. And the witness for Christ is made manifest according to the room we give these truths in our hearts and brains—in order to direct our thinking and to act upon that renewed thinking.

All that is exactly why The Whitestone Forum website exists. Two key Whitestone Seminars—Lasting Greatness and Match Made: The Power of Platforms—work to carefully explain and exalt these very amazing benchmarking truths of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in action...practical action...informative action...effective action...with very real results, both "here and now" and "there and then."

You and I should expect to benchmark our workplace enterprises elsewhere, too, of course, like Herb Kelleher did at Southwest Airlines benchmarking to the Indy 500 car race. But benchmarking to the Uniquely Best for extraordinary results? Yes: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! There for the embracing. Wow.

A&A: Application & Action

1. Which leaders or what enterprises have you been benchmarking to on behalf of your enterprise, even if it is simply a store, department, or division level in leadership assignment? Explain the specific benchmarking measure and the outcomes of your application of that benchmarking in your enterprise. Be specific. (If you have not been doing this, start now.)

2. Which specific portion of your overall workplace enterprise currently needs significant improvement? Be gentle and charitable. Nevertheless, which two or three enterprises do you recommend as worthy, practical benchmarking targets to start your benchmarking process?

3. Christians are to be conformed to Christ. As a Christian leader, identify three key Jesus-dimensions that you are lacking in and need to benchmark to. Be specific on these dimensions—in particular, something that can be observed and measured by others. Then identify your measurement and accountability methods to actually work towards closer conformity to Christ.