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“How can The Salvation Army integrate employees into our mission and sustain their passionate engagement?”

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In preparing this paper, I spoke with colleagues (officers and employees) from the Canada and Bermuda Territory. The officers either had experience in the international context of The Salvation Army or were appointed with us from another territory. Employees were those engaged by The Salvation Army in senior leadership positions including Executive Directors and Department Heads.

This first section addresses the question: How can The Salvation Army integrate employees into our mission?

The art and science of human resources practice provides specific vehicles for the integration of employees into our mission. Recruitment, hiring, orientation and training are opportunities to ensure that the persons working with The Salvation Army are both a “fit” in terms of values and equipped in terms of competencies and skills to advance mission.

Expectations: The desire to integrate employees into mission demands that we understand mission and communicate it in the most accessible and practical terms, that we can name expectations related to that mission and can assess the capacity of those wishing to work with The Salvation Army to meet these expectations.

Where territories have established values statements or a listing of their values, these would be used to create a list of expectations in relation to values. For the assessment of competencies and skills a list of expectations would be developed from the position description and/or job classification for the role being considered. Interview questions and scenarios would be created to assess the prospective employee’s capacity to meet the expectations identified.

Hiring Experience: If employees are to be integrated into the mission of The Salvation Army their hiring experience would be defined by: an identification that The Salvation Army is a faith based organization, receiving a description of the mission and values of the organization, personalized

communication that reflects The Salvation Army's value of respect and an experience where they felt that their talents and skills are recognized and valuable to the advancement of the Salvation Army's mission. Theirs would be an informed choice where expectations were clearly defined and where they were able to make a decision as to whether they would want to integrate into The Salvation Army mission.

Orientation: To promote integration into the mission of The Salvation Army orientation for employees would include: a condensed Salvation Army history, an articulation of why we do what we do, a description of the theology of The Salvation Army including the theology of vocation so that employees might understand both the organization and the role of officers in The Salvation Army and a well- defined description of The Salvation Army's mission and how it is expressed at the local ministry level.

During orientation the difference between secular vocation and religious vocation would be presented with the understanding that employees are expected to bring a strong feeling of fitness for the particular role that they have been selected to perform. While employees do not claim a divine call to religious life as do officers they are expected to demonstrate dedication in their employment. They should understand that, as a faith based organization, The Salvation Army is not focused solely on the material world or affairs of the world but has a focus on the eternal and spiritual world and will address the spiritual needs of all persons that come within its sphere of influence.

Individual orientation would include a reiteration of the mission and values of The Salvation Army with specific examples of how these are 'lived out' in the context of the person's job or role. The goal would be to make it clear how the person's role links with mission and contributes to mission advancement.

One executive director described how she integrates staff into mission during orientation: "At our unit we engage persons as soon as they are hired through orientation and training. We have our community chaplain (an officer) participate in the orientation discussing the history of The Salvation Army, the mission and the various services offered."

Barriers: It is clear that as a foundation for staff integration into mission, clear expectations around competencies, skills and values related to mission and mission advancement would be articulated. So then, why are such expectations absent in many of our hiring discussions?

One barrier to the stating of such expectations for Salvation Army leaders are long held beliefs that tie the responsibility for mission and mission advancement to the calling and role of the officer. Integration of employees into mission demands that the responsibility for mission and mission advancement be shared between officers and staff. These shared responsibilities must

be clearly described in the context of expectations in order for these to be understood by both officers and employees.

Another barrier is that senior leaders may have difficulty defining mission in terms that are specific to social services and health ministry. It is my experience that The Salvation Army has language in the context of corps ministry to describe mission. Here a focus on evangelism is embraced and mission is described in the context of saving souls. In social service and health ministry the challenge is to define mission in the context of programs and services where evangelism is not the primary objective.

In the Canada and Bermuda Territory steps have been taken to address this barrier through the articulation of a territorial mission that states: to share the love of Christ, meet human need and be a transforming influence in the communities of our world. This mission statement provides a platform for the articulation of mission and mission advancement in the context of excellence in program delivery, community development, evangelism, advocacy and spiritual care.

In the absence of a clear articulation of mission and mission advancement and clear expectations as to how staff are to integrate in to that mission staff develop their own understanding of mission leaving the organization with mission expression that in some cases is inconsistent with that desired by The Salvation Army and in other cases is absent all together.

Emerging Opportunities: While it remains clear that The Salvation Army prefers to have officers providing leadership from a divisional and territorial perspective as well as serving as leaders in ministry units this approach is no longer sustainable in many parts of the world. This is a result of the number of officers available and the capacity of officers to meet the education and experience requirements for specific roles and functions outside of those associated with congregational leadership.

Senior leaders have an opportunity to define new boundaries between officers and employees in terms of functions and responsibilities particularly as it relates to mission and mission advancement.

In some Territories employees have leadership roles in key functional areas including finance, human resources, program and legal. Here the employee serves in a role that supports mission and mission objectives. These employees are not directly responsible for mission or mission advancement. In other Territories, employees assume roles where they do have responsibility for mission and mission advancement. These employees may serve as chaplains, executive directors, youth pastors or program leaders. In these cases employees both support and lead in relation to mission.

If we are to engage employees into Salvation Army mission, we will need to create the processes and systems that increase the potential for recruitment and hiring of those persons ready and able to advance that mission. We will need to clearly articulate the potential for mission and mission advancement in social service and health ministry and we will need to embrace a role for employees and staff in the leading of that mission.

This second section speaks to how The Salvation Army can sustain passionate engagement of employees in mission?

One of my colleagues responded to this question with another question. “Do we automatically have passionate engagement from officers?” He then went on to say:

“We would hope that we have passionate engagement from Salvation Army officers however lived experience would identify that passionate engagement is not automatic whether we are speaking of officers or employees. We know that officers are subject to an appointment process and as a result may resist becoming particularly engaged in a role because chances are that they will be moved to another role in another location sooner rather than later.”

It is conceivable that such absence of engagement could negatively impact mission and mission advancement. For employees changes to appointments and moves are less relevant. Once a person is hired, job satisfaction becomes critical to employee engagement. Employee satisfaction is significantly impacted by the internal quality of the working environment. The work environment includes things like workplace design, job design, employee development, rewards/recognition and tools for serving clients and customers.

Satisfaction is also impacted by the presence or absence of evidence that an organization’s articulated values are active in practice and that these values drive decision making. Ultimately employees want to feel that they have the ability and authority to achieve the expected outcomes or results for their program or service and that their work and contribution is valued and appreciated. Gifted and engaged employees are then retained through training and advancement.

So how do we sustain passionate engagement? To ensure passionate engagement in the area of mission, supervisors and leaders need to understand why an individual has chosen to work for The Salvation Army. The employee may be a Salvationist who wants to work within the context of their faith community, they may be persons who wish to “make a difference” for the poor or marginalized, they may have graduated from a Salvation Army program and wish to “give back” or remain close to the source of the change in their life situation, they may need an opportunity for “entry level” work, they may have specific training that is required by the organization, they

may be a new immigrant and know of The Salvation Army as a safe and supportive environment or they may wish to work in an organization that shares their values.

Understanding an employee's motivation for working with The Salvation Army allows the supervisor or leader to start with that motivation in any discussion as to how their role impacts mission and to define expectations related to mission clearly and specifically. Knowing what is expected, being equipped to meet those expectations and being recognized for the contribution in relation to mission reinforces staff engagement with mission.

In one unit in the Canada and Bermuda Territory, the leader ensures that the yearly performance evaluation discussion includes conversation around the contribution that the staff person has made to the transformation of the lives of those they serve. She also engages her whole team through informal weekly sessions that highlight stories, events and successes in the unit.

Another leader shared how she sustains the mission engagement of her staff.

"All staff receives notification of local and territorial Salvation Army events, local church services and opportunities for fund raising. *The Salvationist* and *Faith and Friends* are distributed to all programs. In this unit a 'partners in mission' spaghetti dinner was hosted with attendance from employees, participants and family members."

Opportunities: As a matter of good practice The Salvation Army would show respect towards its employees, ensure consistency between articulated values and practice, be intentional in building a culture of partnership between officers and employees, be clear and consistent around expectations in relation to mission and mission advancement, celebrate the contribution of employees to that mission and value the work and roles of employees in the context of mission advancement. All of these elements support passionate engagement.

A colleague shared: "In my experience I am still treated at times as a "second class citizen" and the message conveyed both explicitly and implicitly is that I am not important because I am not an officer. I am certain that if I feel this way other employees across the organization would feel the same".

Relationship Development: Of particular importance to employee engagement is for officers to build collegial relationships with staff. Building relationships reduces the potential for segregation between officers and employees. Segregation can create opportunities for misunderstanding, tension and competition. Each of these disengages officers and employees from a focus on mission. Relationship development on the other hand, has the potential to draw people toward a shared focus on mission and increased potential for mission advancement.

Leadership: Leadership is critical to sustaining passionate engagement of employees. Leaders are responsible for creating a culture that is centered on mission and ministry. The best leaders build bridges to employees, establish trust, talk to them, work alongside them and engage them in the mission of the organization in clear and specific ways. A leader who models passion for mission and mission advancement creates and maintains the passionate engagement of those around them.

A colleague shared these thoughts: “Leaders are often remote and disengaged from those who are involved in front line ministry, particularly if those persons are employees. Once hired we create a ‘get the job done’ work environment where we expect employees to perform tasks out of a sense of duty, with little to no connection to their leaders and without performance appraisal or coaching. “

Decision Making: Passionate engagement is sustained when employees see that mission is considered in every instance of decision making and work planning. A focus on mission in strategic planning provides opportunity to inform, inspire and engage employees. It also provides opportunity to frame mission in the context of an employee’s work, their particular unit and the roles and contributions of others on the team.

Spiritual Care: If we are to ensure passionate engagement of employees in mission we will need to make spiritual care a priority in all units including social service and health ministry. A commitment to appointing or hiring a chaplain in each unit provides the opportunity for spiritual care to be available to all employees as well as clients or residents. Chaplains who attend management and staff meetings become known to employees and are given the opportunity to describe their spiritual care program in the context of mission and mission advancement. Building partnerships between those responsible for spiritual care and those responsible for other programs increases engagement in mission and promotes mission advancement.

Inclusion: Passionate engagement is enhanced when we invite employees in to significant discussions. The Salvation Army still operates in many places with the practice that key leadership events and meetings are tailored to officers. The exclusion of employees from such gatherings impacts the potential for passionate engagement. When mission advancement, expectations and information related to strategic direction are not shared with employees an opportunity is lost to release potential for mission and mission advancement.

Clearly to sustain passionate engagement of employees The Salvation Army should ensure that the individual’s motivation for working with the organization is understood, that relationships are developed and nurtured between officers and employees and that employees are respected as partners in mission and included as full participants in advancing that mission.