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

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The Salvation Army and me

Before addressing this question, let me introduce myself. For thirteen years I have worked for The Salvation Army in the Netherlands at THQ. The first five years I worked in the Church Department, organising various training activities. I now work for The Salvation Army Social Work Foundation at THQ, specialising in the identity and culture of the organisation.

I am not a Salvationist. I studied theology and spent 14 years as a minister in two Protestant Churches. I am now fully employed by The Salvation Army but still serve in my church as an unpaid minister. I feel very connected to The Salvation Army. People have asked if I would consider becoming a Salvationist or even an officer. I answer – I am already ordained and one ordination is enough! I have promised to serve God and the Church. The Salvation Army is the church where I serve; the Protestant Church is the church in which I celebrate. For me, this is a fruitful combination.

Employees

It will also help if I make clear the perspective from which I have written this paper. I am focusing on employees working in Salvation Army Social Work in The Netherlands. I believe my conclusions can also be applied to employees working in Evangelisation. I am speaking from the Dutch and European situation because that is my context.

I do not know everything written about The Salvation Army but I have observed that employees are not referred to in the Handbook of Doctrine¹ nor are employees referenced in the recent Ecclesiological Statement.² This is despite the fact that employees make up a significant number of the people linked to The Salvation Army. On a worldwide scale 7% of all adults³ belonging or attached to The Salvation Army are employees⁴. In some countries it is much higher – in the United Kingdom territory, home of The Salvation Army, it is 12% and in the Netherlands it is 49%. These are significant numbers. I hope this paper can help put employees more on the Army map.

In the Netherlands, and I am sure in other countries, employees regard themselves to be part of the movement. Employees are not second tier service personnel but are frontline soldiers – proclaiming the gospel in deed and word.⁵

Mission

The Salvation Army is a churchlike movement that proclaims the gospel in word and deed. All churches should be like this, but the Army has developed a large social work.⁶ Both, deeds and words, are an offspring of the prevenient words and deeds of God's love to us – made clear once and forever in Jesus Christ, in his entire life, cross and resurrection. Through Him we may receive salvation and, as consequence, hope for the gift of holiness through God's Spirit, while working towards holiness ourselves.

This holiness can be worked out in private life, so that that I try to live in Christlikeness in the words I speak and the deeds I do. And this holiness can be worked out in public life – a social holiness. I regard the social work done by TSA as an expression of social holiness. It is this social holiness that contributes to the building of God's kingdom in this world.

Our Salvation Army approach

If our Social work is a form of social holiness, this has implications for how the work is done. It is not neutral. It should be rooted in the gospel as well as in our own tradition. We should question ourselves repeatedly about what difference our social work makes. I share an example from the Netherlands.

Based on our mission we have developed "The Salvation Army Approach" for social work. We have distilled our most inner values into the phrase: "Unconditionally concerned about people without a helper". Based on this we have defined our core qualities, main values, main goals, attitude, way of acting and dilemmas. Our four core qualities are:

- easy accessibility;
- coherent care;
- tenacity to stay near to people;
- attentiveness to the meaning of life.

We constantly evaluate if our methodology is in accordance with this Salvation Army Approach, especially when we import methods of working from 'outside'.⁷ Do values match or are they perpendicular to each other?

All our definitions are rooted in our belief in Jesus Christ, in our tradition that started with William Booth and are related to the context in which we work. I suppose other territories in their specific context have words to describe the character of the social work of TSA but I am sure there will be a big overlaps because all our descriptions derive from our common Christian belief and our tradition. As William Booth wrote we will be there for the submerged tenth of our society.

Actors

I identify three 'subgroups' of actors involved in Salvation Army social work.

Firstly Salvationists: officers, soldiers and adherent members. I do not see a difference between officers and non-officers except that officers have a covenant while soldier/adherent employees have employment contracts.⁹

Second, Christians of all kind of traditions: They may differ on many points and opinions from Salvationists, but share a belief in Jesus Christ and participate in building his Kingdom in this world.

Thirdly, people of goodwill: in many countries¹⁰ Salvation Army social work is also done by people who do not believe in Jesus Christ but who share some of our values. Often this is because of legal reasons that forbid discrimination in religion.¹¹

We can debate if "people of goodwill" are the best option. It is true that shared values and beliefs make an organization stronger in its performance. But at the other hand, if it is not possible to employ only Christian believers, the inclusion of "people of goodwill" raises a number of interesting challenges. Theologically speaking one could say that these people share in the general grace given by God to his creation, also outside the church. Maybe as Methodists one could say that in a way God's prevenient grace is at work in them. And one may hope and expect that God's Spirit works in a broader way than only in church and Christians.¹²

Belonging and education

In most countries employees will be a mixture of Salvationists, other Christians and non-Christians. Even if people have different experiences of faith, we all contribute to the expression of the social holiness, all contribute to the Kingdom of God, all are valuable colleagues.

Firstly, this means that all employees should experience a sense of belonging to the organisation. This sense of belong depends on how the organization views and interacts with their employees. Employees should be seen as an equal part of the movement, with their own gifts and possibilities.¹³

Secondly, if The Salvation Army wants the Social Work as social holiness be most effective, and in accord with the values the Kingdom, all participants should, as much as possible, be aware of the values, roots and background of that work. To create such awareness an educational and training programme is essential. Training and education is the key in integrating employees into our mission and sustain passionate engagement.¹⁴

Introduction into the Army

All new employees joining the Social Work Foundation should be 'baptised' into The Salvation Army Approach. This should not only be an education of the mind but also training of the heart. This would be a spiritual formation, bearing in mind that with employees with different backgrounds will be formed in their own way.

This training is in mixed groups, so that all people can gain from it. Salvationists renew knowledge of their tradition and learn to be exposed to critical questions from others. Other Christians can discover similarities and differences between their tradition and The Salvation Army and apply this in their work. Non-Christians will see in which tradition they place themselves in their work and learn what it means to work for and on behalf of The Salvation Army. Everyone can be strengthened in their beliefs, because they are challenged by others and Salvation Army tradition and values.

In the Netherlands we have¹⁵ a five-day programme during the first year of employment containing an introduction in history, organization, approach and methodology of the Salvation Army. On the first introduction day new employees receive a nicely illustrated small book, titled "Working with love" explaining our approach and a pin with Red Shield to wear on their clothes. They also have the opportunity to order for free branded clothing – jackets, polo shirts and caps.

Our experience of this approach is that people feel inspired to take their place in the organization. Many people wear voluntarily branded clothing and are proud of it. The Salvation Army history module is popular. People feel strengthened to know they work in a long and outstanding tradition.¹⁶

Regularly we hear people say: "There is something different in the way The Salvation Army works when we compare with other organizations."

Continuous learning

We have a pool of trainers recruited from our employees. In the future, these trainers will give trainings in all kind of subjects. We will no longer be dependent on trainers from outside who do not know our culture and approach. This means, that all employees will continuously be confronted and inspired by The Salvation Army approach.

Catherine Programme

A similar approach is being adopted across Europe. Seven years ago the "Catherine Programme" started – named after the Army mother who emphasised the importance of studying throughout her life. The Catherine Programme runs yearly a Summer School for one week for cadets, envoys, people in short-term appointments and employees at key positions from across Europe. First year participants are lectured in Salvation Army history,

doctrines and background of social work. An advanced course for second years places more emphasis on ecclesiological questions and Salvation Army distinctives in today's context.

After seven years, the number of participants has grown from almost 30 to more than 80 per year. For many people this Summer School has been an important way of sustaining their passionate engagement. All of us are moved to see people from so many countries, different backgrounds, different positions, yet working in one Army, with one message and one mission. Some Catherine Programme delegates have been called to officership; others have given Christ a greater place in their lives. Some have changed the way they work. Also in this case the mixture of people from different backgrounds appeared to be most fruitful. As one of the founding fathers of the Catherine Programme, having attended all the Summer Schools, I have grown more and more attached to this church in which I serve.

Conclusion

Finally, I summarize the main points of my paper:

- It is important that territories and commands are aware of the special character of Salvation Army Social Work and describe in plain words the approach they use in their context.
- The Salvation Army should make sure their employees experience a sense of belonging.
- Training and education is necessary to integrate employees into the mission of The Salvation Army and sustain their passionate engagement.
- All new employees should be trained deeply in The Salvation Army Approach. The training programme at least should include our history, values and methodology.
- Ongoing training is necessary.
- All of this will contribute to the strengthening of the diverse community of saints that is The Salvation Army and will contribute to building the Kingdom of God.

Notes

¹ "Salvation Story", London, 1998; or: "The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine", London 2010

² "The Salvation Army in the Body of Christ", London, 2008

³ These are active and retired officers, senior soldiers, adherent members and employees.

⁴ According to The Salvation Army Year Book, London, 2013.

⁵ I note Commissioner James Knaggs in his book "One Day", A dream for The Salvation Army (reprinted in "One for all", Frontier Press, USA, 2011) speaks more inclusively about employees.

⁶ I know there is an on-going debate on the relation between evangelization and social work, that dates back to the nineties of the 19th century, to the time of the formation of the Social Wing of TSA led by Commissioner Franklin Smith after the publication of William Booth's "Darkest England and the Way out", but I always say it like this: We proclaim the gospel on some occasions by words, in other occasions by deed. Both forms are a manifestation of proclamation in it's own independent right. And dialectically at the same

time both suppose one another. Words need deeds to live up to words, and deeds needs words to explain and interpret them.

⁷ So we have in the Netherlands a discussion how far we can use the so called “Strength-model”. At one hand it fits with The Salvation Army Approach were it make participants in our programmes more independent from for instance drugs. At the other hand we question how the expression “find your own strength” relates to TSA believe, expressed in the song: “I’ll go in the strength of the Lord” (TSA Songbook, hymn 734)

⁸ William Booth, *Darkest England*, London 1890, p. 17.

⁹ There is of course much more to say about the similarities and differences between officers and soldiers, but not at this point.

¹⁰ In the Netherlands it is possible to have as appointment requirement that a new employee is a Christian. General Shaw Clifton in “Who are these Salvationists” (Crest Books, USA, 1999, p. 151) regards this as the most desired situation. And in the Netherlands we are glad with that, because it strengthens the organisation and its mission. But as far as I know worldwide The Netherlands is the only country where by law this requirement is permitted.

¹¹ This expression is taken form the Bible, Luke 2:14, where in some translations following the Vulgata that says: “Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis”, this verse is translated as: “Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to people of good will.”

¹² James 1:17 (New King James Version)

¹³ I realize that this can imply a shift in the concept of the organization. In past days believing went before belonging. First one had to make a confession of faith and then belonged to the organization. Nowadays we discover more and more that often belonging goes before believing.

¹⁴ For me this would be an addition to the model presented by Dean Pallant in his dissertation “Keeping Faith in Faith-Based Organizations” (p. 169) in which – in my words – faith based communities like corps support for instance a health care institution.

¹⁵ I speak in presence because many elements of this programme are executed already. Other elements are in development, but will soon be implemented.

¹⁶ It is for that reason that we in the Netherlands started a Heritage Programme to disclose The Salvation Army history for the benefit of the future, that amongst others will contain a Salvation Army museum in the heart of the red light district of Amsterdam in which we will inspire people with the story of The Salvation Army, to be opened October 2014.