

Running head: HOW HEALTHY IS ILV'S HIERARCHY?

A Proposal for Continued Growth and
Improvement of ILV Peru's Hierarchy

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Introduction

Today the word hierarchy is often considered a four letter word. In the past couple of decades there has been a whole host of writings dedicated to flattening out organizations. Hierarchies are seen as evil and so the less layers of management we have, the better our organization will function. But is this really true? I believe that hierarchies are not necessarily evil; in fact one could argue that they are ordained by God.

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. (Romans 13:1-3 NKJV)

I believe that it is wise for us to minimize the hierarchy in our organization. But what I would like to focus on here is not minimizing our hierarchy but examining the health of the hierarchy we have and offer suggestions as to how we can improve that health. The vertical relationships in an organization need to be healthy if we want to meet our goals, fulfill our vision and succeed in what we do. If there are walls or boundaries separating people vertically, there will be trouble. We need to have open and trusting vertical relationships where information, ideas and relationships flow freely.

The age-old challenge of balancing control and freedom is still alive and well today. Leaders have, and always will, struggle with knowing just how much they need to be involved in the work of their subordinates. How much do they let their workers go free and how much

should they seek to control what goes on? One thing is clear: each and every situation is different, and calls for different settings on the control versus freedom continuum.

In this paper I will take a look at ILV (Summer Institute of Linguistics) Peru. I will specifically dive into issues related to our hierarchy. I will outline my findings from a questionnaire I sent out, I will evaluate the health of ILV's hierarchy and then I will suggest ways in which we could improve the health of our vertical relationships.

Questionnaire Overview

In order to get a clearer picture of the health of our hierarchy in ILV, I sent out a questionnaire to a handful of our members. The results have been calculated and averaged out from the questionnaires that I received back. The full questionnaire with its average scores can be found in appendix 1.

Success Factors

The first section of the questionnaire dealt with what Ashkenas et al refer to as the four success factors. Today's organizations need to be characterized by speed, flexibility, integration and innovation (Ashkenas, Ulrich, Jick, & Kerr, 2002). Speed is important in today's world of instant communication. We need to be able to react quickly to things like funding crisis and opportunities. We need flexibility in our roles and we need to be flexible in our leadership. Our people can no longer be locked into carefully defined job descriptions. They need to be able to constantly learn new skills and be able to fill in where needed. Integration is very important for us to pull together the whole big picture. The South Peru team is a good example of a language team that is seeking to be more integrated. They are made up of specialists in various fields working together to affect change. Integration does not do away with our specialists but it is all about our specialists being able to collaborate with others to create an integrated whole. That

integrated whole for us is changed lives through the translated Scriptures, not just the translated Scriptures. The hundreds of thousands of Bibles collecting dust on shelves around the world attest to our need for more integration. We need solid vertical relationships in order to lead flexible and integrated teams. Innovation is crucial for us to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world. The administration needs to lead the way in terms of innovation and needs to create a context throughout the organization that will foster innovation. (Von Krogh, Ichijo, & Nonaka, 2000)

Yesterday's successful organizations were characterized by size, role clarity, specialization and control (Ashkenas et al, 2002). I believe we, as an organization, can identify with these twentieth century success factors. We have experienced success in the past by focusing on these factors. But what about these new success factors? How can we change to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world? I believe that if we further open up our vertical boundaries and seek to be characterized by speed, flexibility, integration and innovation, we will finish well in Peru.

Red Flags

This section lists five warning signs, or red flags, which we need to watch for, that signal an unhealthy hierarchy. A slow response time can happen when an organization becomes overly bureaucratic. If decisions always need to be made at the top, one of the results will be a slow response time. Rigidity to change is another red flag to an unhealthy hierarchy. When the phrase, "we've always done it this way," is frequently used, there is a problem. Underground activity is a major red flag and a signal of dysfunction. When people try to keep new ideas quiet, out of fear that someone may stop them, you have major hierarchy issues. Internal employee or member frustration can be a sign of an unhealthy hierarchy. Red flags need to go up when we see

employees frustrated with the way things are done in an organization or the way people are treated in an organization. The last warning sign in the questionnaire is customer alienation. When those we are here to serve feel that we do not listen to them, we likely have problems in our hierarchy. This may be a result of members having to bring these needs to people higher up before responding. The result is a slow response and people who sense that we don't care. (Ashkenas et al, 2002, pp. 43-44)

Vertical boundaries profile

This section gives us a profile of where we are at on the control versus freedom continuum, looking specifically at the four critical dimensions of information, competence, authority and rewards. We look at information in terms of whether or not it is tightly held at the top or if it is widely and openly shared. The next is competence and measuring where we are at in terms of people being extremely focused and specialized and only doing one job, to people doing multiple tasks as needed. Authority in terms of decision making can either be held at the top or it can be brought down to the appropriate place. Rewards may be based on position or they may be based on skills and accomplishments. Every organization will find itself somewhere along this continuum in each of these dimensions. (Ashkenas et al, 2002, p. 45)

Interpreting the Results

In table 1 I have the results from a previous survey that found that ILV's vertical relationships are stronger than its horizontal, external and global relationships. In that survey I found that ILV has healthy vertical relationships. This last questionnaire that I did confirms my previous findings. Our hierarchy is healthy. Although it is healthy there is room for improvement and it is important that we continually seek to improve it rather than grow complacent. After calculating the results from the questionnaire I discussed my findings with others in order to get

a deeper sense of the state of our hierarchy and to hear what people think we could do to improve it.

Table 1

<i>Rating</i>	<i>Boundaries</i>	<i>Points</i> <i>Above 16=strength</i> <i>Below 12=needs work</i>
1.	Vertical Boundary	12.62
2.	Horizontal Boundary	10.63
3.	Global Boundary	10.41
4.	External Boundary	9.46

Success factors

The findings from the questionnaire with regards to success factors can be found in table 2. Flexibility was rated as being the most critical and speed was considered the least critical. It is important to our members that the organization is flexible. Members of ILV believe that our administrators are flexible and attuned to the needs of the members.

Table 2

Ranking	Success Factor	How critical is it to ILV?
1.	Flexibility	High minus
2.	Integration	Medium plus
3.	Innovation	Medium minus
4.	Speed	Low plus

Red Flags

In table 3 underground activity and customer alienation are seldom seen. This is because ILV has very open and honest communication. People rarely do things behind the backs of administration. There is a high level of trust throughout the organization.

Rigidity to change appears sometimes. Because we are an organization that is finishing up its work in Peru, people become somewhat complacent when it comes to change. Many people are rigid to change because they think the effort necessary for change is not worth it when the organization will only be around for another five years.

A slow response time also appears sometimes and for much the same reasons that there is a rigidity to change. It is important that we maintain a quick response time and remain open to change so that we finish our work well. This is not the time to slow down and become complacent.

Table 3

Ranking	Red Flags	How often do these red flags appear?
1	Underground activity	Seldom
1	Customer alienation	Seldom
2	Internal member frustration	Not often
3	Rigidity to change	Sometimes
4	Slow response time	Sometimes

Vertical Boundaries Profile

Our hierarchy profile shows a healthy organization. Table 4 clearly places ILV's hierarchy on the side of being healthy. It was noted by several people, outside of this

questionnaire, that we could do better at placing decision-making authority closer to the action. The results in table 4 confirm these comments. Even though ILV does not have any type of formal rewards there are informal rewards of prestige that are based on skills and accomplishments.

Table 4

<i>Traditional Hierarchy</i>		<i>Healthy Hierarchy</i>
Information is closely held at the top.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 X 9 10	Information is widely shared.
Authority to make decisions is centralized at the top.	1 2 3 4 5 6 X 8 9 10	Authority to make decisions is distributed to wherever appropriate.
Competence is specialized and focused—people do one job.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 X 8 9 10	Competence is widespread—people do multiple tasks as needed.
Rewards are based on position.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 X 10	Rewards are based on skills and accomplishments.

Contributing Factors to ILV’s Health

The questionnaire, from which this paper is based, lacks aspects of relationship. Healthy relationships are at the core of any healthy hierarchy. The dimensions of information sharing, competence, authority and rewards can contribute to healthy relationships but they do not guarantee them. As I dug into the results of the questionnaire and discussed its results and significance with several members, I came to realize that there were several factors that contribute to our healthy hierarchy that are not taken into account in Ashkenas’ questionnaire. In this next section I will look at several additional factors that have led to a healthy hierarchy in ILV. Many of these factors are rooted in the fact that ILV is a missionary organization made up of people with a deeply shared vision, as opposed to an organization of people with selfish personal ambitions.

Family

ILV members treat one another as family more than as employees and administrators. Calvin Miller tells us that, “Spiritual oneness is indispensable to every network that dreams the noblest dreams of God.” (1995, p. 55) There are more occurrences of formal and informal prayer times in ILV than staff meetings. We care for one another in terms of our personal and spiritual lives.

As expatriates, living far away from our extended families, *the organization has become our extended family*. For many members they have received greater personal support from within the organization than they have ever received from their biological family. This sense of family has been a characteristic of the organization since its formation sixty years ago.

This sense of family means that administrators are not viewed as enemies, but instead are brothers and sisters whom God has put in authority over us. It means that fellow members are friends and are not competitors trying to be the first ones to the top. A loving, caring and God-fearing family is the best model of a healthy hierarchy for today’s organizations.

The apostle Paul says, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” (Romans 8:16 NKJV) The Spirit of God unites us as brothers and sisters.

Shared vision and calling

Each member of ILV has left family, country, comforts and money because God placed in them a vision to see all people on earth have access to the Word of God in a language that will speak to their heart. This shared vision is so strong among our members that personal ambition is laid aside and in some cases people have literally laid down their lives. A shared vision throughout an organization is important for a healthy hierarchy. Not only do we have a deeply shared vision, but we also have a deep sense of God’s calling on our lives.

Formal structure-ownership

The way in which ILV is formally structured reinforces a sense of ownership throughout the organization. A sense of ownership throughout an organization contributes to a healthy hierarchy. All the members of ILV annually vote for the executive committee (EC) and the executive director. These are only one year positions. This democratic process places the ownership of the organization, and the decision of who leads, in the hands of the members. It also maintains a healthy relationship between those in leadership and the membership.

Servant leadership-godly ambition

For today's organizations, 'climbing the ladder' is a fact of life. It is assumed that people will climb the ladder of their organization's hierarchy in pursuit of greater power and financial rewards. In ILV climbing the ladder is frowned upon. Positions of leadership are not sought after in an ambitious manner. Instead, members are placed into positions of leadership, most of the time by their peers. Everyone in ILV is responsible for raising their own financial support, or salary, as well as their personal ministry funds. This means that there is no financial reward for taking on positions of greater responsibility. When we elect members to the executive committee or elect our director, people will not openly promote themselves. Instead, members will stand up and call for support of another person, never for themselves. This follows the model that Jesus Christ set for us in Luke 14.

But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

(Luke 14:10-11 NKJV)

In following this model, ILV also demonstrates faith in God's will. In not pursuing leadership roles, our members demonstrate faith that if they are elected into a leadership position, then it is God's will. This not only boosts the confidence of those in leadership but also reinforces followership among the members, thus reinforcing a healthy hierarchy.

Our administrators see themselves as support workers who have been placed in their position in order to help and support those who are working on the front-lines. They see themselves more as servants than holders of authority and decision makers.

Intentionally climbing the ladder is not bad if it is done out of pure motives. When it is done so that one can make a greater contribution and not for the sake of money or power, it can be a very positive thing. We need to make a distinction between worldly ambition and godly ambition and ILV certainly encourages the latter.

Maintaining and Improving Health

The vertical boundaries in ILV are quite permeable. Our hierarchy is healthy. But we can improve it. One of the greatest enemies to tomorrow's success is today's success. By not growing complacent and by actively seeking to improve our organization, we will ensure tomorrow's success. (Gryskiewicz, 1999, p. 17) We do not need to make constant revolutionary changes that disrupt work flows. What we need to do, as leaders, is view our management practices as evolutionary. In this way we seek to constantly make small changes to our existing hierarchy and administration. "Evolutionary practices encourage managers to sustain commitment to change." (Ashkenas et al, 2002, p. 69)

In this section I will highlight some areas where we could improve our vertical boundaries in order to maintain and grow a healthy hierarchy.

Decision making

The Carver model of governance, or the Policy Governance model, has helped our EC place decision making where it belongs: in the hands of those who are best prepared to make a decision. The EC used to be far too controlling, and they needed to be consulted on any and every major decision, and also on far too many minor decisions. They are now much more focused on vision and policy setting. I think that it was a wise move for the EC to give more decision making authority to administration. (Carver, 1997)

It is now up to administration how many of these decisions should be brought down to the frontlines. “The goal is to place decisions as close to the action as possible—so that people who have the most current read on a situation can act immediately.” (Ashkenas et al, 2002, p. 88)

Administrators need to ask themselves these questions.

- Who has the information and skills to make sure this is a high-quality decision? Have these people been involved in the decision?
- If you had to trust one person with this decision, who would it be? Has this person been involved in the decision?
- Who will be required to implement this decision? Have these people been involved in the making of the decision? (Ashkenas et al, 2002, p. 88)

Program management support

Administration in ILV has traditionally been very focused on providing background support for language teams. This support has given linguists and literacy workers the freedom to manage their own projects as they see fit. With this level of freedom came a heightened level of risk. Many language teams have done a good job of managing their own programs and others

have struggled because they lacked management skills, even though they may be great translators and linguists.

Language teams have always had a strong sense of ownership of their programs. In recent years there has been an increased move to have administration work closer to the language teams and share the ownership and responsibility. We did this through setting up regional program administrators (RPA). The idea is that these RPA's will provide the managerial support that has been lacking in the past among many language teams.

The administration has shown flexibility by allowing the language teams that are well managed, to continue managing themselves and so RPA's have had little involvement with these teams. This flexibility is commendable and will need to continue to grow.

RPA's will need to possess a great amount of wisdom in finding the balance between control and freedom. Each language team will require a different level of control or freedom. If the RPA steps in too much, they will communicate a lack of confidence in the language team and will create tension between administration and language teams. If the RPA gives too much freedom the language team may be ineffective and poorly manage its project. In order to find this balance RPA's need to be good listeners. Robert Greenleaf says, "...listening builds strength in other people." (Greenleaf, 1991, p. 17) This building of strength in other people is what servant leadership is all about and what RPA's need to see as their principal responsibility.

This switch to listening means that RPA's need to play the role of coach as opposed to decision-making manager. By being a coach they will be able to give people freedom, yet they will be there to give support and encouragement. (Ashkenas et al, 2002, p. 94)

Management training for language teams

Another way to approach this issue is to train and develop our language teams in management. Our traditionally strong focus on linguistics training does not encourage those with administrative skills to join our organization. It also does a poor job of preparing people to run a translation or literacy program. We need to be sure that our training programs are aligned with our strategies. (Ashkenas et al, 2002, p. 83)

We could offer basic workshops to language teams on Results Based Management, funding proposal writing, sustainability, building partnerships and a host of other topics that are not well developed in the traditional SIL training. We could offer mini-workshops along with team meetings.

The Quechua Old Testament project is a model of how we could approach some of our current language programs and it would address the issue of lack of managerial skills among many linguists. This project spans over several Quechua languages and it draws on the specialty skills of various consultants. A couple of mother-tongue translators, from each of these languages, work on the OT translation alongside translators from related languages. In this way they are able to do their exegesis together and only one person needs to manage the entire project.

By changing the way we set up our teams we could better utilize people's competencies. By having several related languages work on a translation project together we will be able to form multi-language teams that have a variety of skills, from exegetical consultants to CARLA (computer assisted related language adaptation) consultants, to good managers. No longer would people be left on their own, needing to be an expert in everything from management, to linguistics, to literacy, to computers. By changing the way we look at our strategic groupings we

could deal with this issue without having to add the layer of RPA to our hierarchy. (Tushman & O'Reilly, 2002, pp. 88-89)

Establish 360-degree reviews

It is important that we develop the critical skills that are needed to effectively and efficiently do our jobs. Critical skills need to be developed wherever they are needed, at any level of the organization, regardless of rank or position. (Ashkenas et al, 2002, p. 79)

By establishing 360 reviews, throughout the organization, administrators will be able to identify the areas that need to be developed to ensure success. By getting feedback from peers, partners, and others, a good picture is drawn of competencies. The information must be discussed and plans for growth must be considered by the one being reviewed. The process must be kept simple and automated. If it is too bulky and time-consuming it will not become a regular practice. (Ashkenas et al, 2002, p. 86-87)

Conclusion

God has blessed the work of ILV in many ways. We need to be thankful and give thanks to our heavenly Father for the blessing of healthy vertical relationships in our organization. We cannot take this for granted. We must take what God has placed in our care and grow it. There are many ways in which we could improve our hierarchy so that we will remain effective in the way we lead ILV. If we continue to strive to be servant leaders and seek out wisdom on a daily basis, we will maintain and grow our healthy hierarchy so that we can truly finish our work well.

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Appendix 1

How Healthy Is ILV-Peru’s Hierarchy?
Questionnaire Result Averages

Success Factors

Instructions: Determine how critical the four success factors are in ILV-Peru. Are they highly critical? Medium? Low? Write high (H), medium (M) or low (L) for each factor.

1. Speed – L+
2. Flexibility – H-
3. Integration – M+
4. Innovation – M-

Red Flags

Instructions: Evaluate how often the following five danger signs appear in ILV-Peru, giving a number of 1(too often) to 10(seldom). Five would be for sometimes.

1. Slow response time – 5.33
2. Rigidity to change – 5.67
3. Underground activity - 8
4. Internal employee frustration – 7.17
5. Customer alienation - 8

Profile of our Vertical Boundaries in Our Hierarchy

Instructions: Assess where ILV-Peru stands today, on this spectrum, with regards to information, authority, competence and rewards. Replace a number with an X where you think ILV-Peru is on this spectrum.

	<i>Traditional Hierarchy</i>	<i>Healthy Hierarchy</i>	
Information is closely held at the top.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 X 9 10		Information is widely shared.
Authority to make decisions is centralized at the top.	1 2 3 4 5 6 X 8 9 10		Authority to make decisions is distributed to wherever appropriate.
Competence is specialized and focused—people do one job.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 X 8 9 10		Competence is widespread—people do multiple tasks as needed.
Rewards are based on position.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 X 10		Rewards are based on skills and accomplishments.