

Running head: LEADERSHIP THAT BREAKS DOWN BOUNDARIES

A Proposal for Improving ILV's
Potential for Becoming a
Boundaryless Organization

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Introduction

Have you ever walked through a field of corn? Not a field of small stalks but tall, seven foot stalks? It can be a little unnerving when you can no longer see where you came from or where you are going. The stalks block all your view except up, and sometimes they will also block that view.

This is what it is like for many people today as they go about their jobs. They cannot see beyond the artificial walls that have been built around them. All they can see is their immediate task. They do not see the big picture. They do not see how they fit into the great scheme of things. As such, they cannot improve what they are doing because they don't understand the larger context. They are stuck in their silo.

It is a great challenge for leaders today to break down those walls. When leaders do begin to break down those walls they move their organizations toward being boundaryless.

I believe that ILV Peru needs to move towards boundarylessness. We have many boundaries that separate people from one another, both internally and externally. In this paper I will examine my findings from a questionnaire I recently did that examines where we are at in becoming a boundaryless organization. It also examines where we need to be in order to become a healthier, boundaryless organization. In this paper I will do an assessment of the gap between where we currently are and where we should be. From there I will propose a few simple changes that we can immediately implement that will move us toward being a boundaryless organization.

The Boundaryless Organization

Ron Ashkenas, et al, in their book, *The Boundaryless Organization* (Ashkenas, Ulrich, Jick, & Kerr, 2002), tell us that in all organizations there exist four types of boundaries. Vertical boundaries are those which separate people by hierarchy, rank, and status. In this we consider

issues of information sharing, reward systems and who makes the decisions. Horizontal boundaries are those that separate different units within the organization, which in our case would be departments and language teams. Internal boundaries keep us looking inward and separate us from our clients, stakeholders and other outside partners. The last boundary is geographic, which separates us from SIL in other countries. In this section we consider issues of cultural diversity, sensitivity to local contexts and the international experience of our leadership.

The more permeable these boundaries are, the more successful we likely will be. “When these four boundaries remain rigid and impenetrable - as they so often do today - they create the sluggish response, inflexibility, and slow innovation that cause premier companies to fall.”

(Ashkenas et al, 2002, p. 12)

Questionnaire Overview

The full completed questionnaire can be found in appendix 1. (Ashkenas et al, 2002, pp. 320-323) This questionnaire focuses on leadership and not directly on the boundaries. The idea behind this questionnaire is to look at specific actions of leaders that have a direct affect on how boundaryless the organization is. The fifth section considers issues of overall leadership that affect how we make boundarylessness happen. For each section there are three to five issues in which an O was placed on the scale to determine where our leadership is today. An X was then placed along that same scale to determine where our leadership needs to be in order to move ILV ahead as a boundaryless organization. The difference between these two numbers is the gap score, which is found on the right hand side of each scale. It is the gap between where we currently are and where we want to be.

Each section's gap score was averaged out so that they could be rated. At the bottom there is a total gap score. As seen in table 1, our total gap score is 48. This is a middle of the road score. This means that we have many areas in which we can improve.

Interpreting the Findings

In table 1 I have the average gap score for each section as well as the total gap score at the bottom. In this section I will look at each of the five sections individually and interpret the gap scores and their significance for us. I chose to keep the focus on the senior administration rather than the executive committee (EC) even though the EC is the ultimate authority. It is the administration that provides the day to day leadership to the branch and not the EC.

Table 1

<i>Boundary</i>	<i>Average Gap score</i>
Leadership to break down vertical boundaries.	2.7 (#2)
Leadership to break down horizontal boundaries.	3 (#3)
Leadership to break down internal boundaries.	3 (#3)
Leadership to break down geographic boundaries.	1.3 (#1)
Overall leadership to make it happen.	3 (#3)
Total Gap Score	48

Vertical Boundaries

The gap between where we are and where we should be, places this section as our second highest strength, with geographic being our greatest strength.

The first scale, as seen in table 2, deals with decision-making and whether or not the administration holds onto most decisions or whether or not they put the decision making close to the action. I believe that within the branch there is variation here. Some language teams have tremendous autonomy and others are heavily dependant upon their administrator when making any major decision.

Table 2

You and your senior management team make most decisions.	1 2 3 4 5 0 7 8 X 10	Most decisions are made close to the action.	3
You hold information close to the vest—and promote a need-to-know approach to information sharing.	1 2 3 4 5 6 0 8 X 10	You share information about overall performance and business strategy with as broad base of constituents as possible.	2
Your recognition and reward system is based solely on individual contributions.	1 2 3 4 5 0 7 8 X 10	Your recognition and reward system is primarily team based.	3
Section Gap average			2.7

The Carver model of governance, or the Policy Governance model, has helped our EC move in the direction of placing 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, although there is more to be done.

(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)

The second scale deals with our level of information sharing. I do not believe that administration hordes information but there is room for improvement. Internally a lot of information is shared but externally we are lacking.

The third scale deals with our reward and recognition system. ILV has virtually no formal reward system for members. What we have is informal recognition.

Horizontal Boundaries

This section’s rank (Table 1) reveals some need for improvement. In table 3, the first scale shows that we, in ILV, lack integration. We lack integration in the sense that people tend to work in their own silo and do not cross over to other functions. In order for this to happen people need to see their part of the larger picture and they need to be willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done. They need to be more focused on the end product than on their specific job.

The next scale is closely related to the first in that people need to be focused on the end product. For us, in ILV, this end product is changed lives via the Word of God. In this scale, the extreme left represents those leaders that have a plan and make sure that everyone follows that plan. They lack flexibility and lack getting people involved in the big picture.

The next scale represents where we are in creating a streamlined end-to-end process that gives people freedom to get the job done. With regards to language projects the administration has traditionally been somewhat uninvolved and they have usually stood back and let linguists do what they saw fit. I do not believe that it is always healthy to be on the far right in this. We have plenty of examples of people losing focus because of a lack of accountability. Many people need

additional accountability and help. Others function best when left alone. I think our administration is trying to find this balance.

Table 3

Your people have narrowly defined roles, responsibilities, and skills.	1 2 3 4 0 6 7 8 X 10	You encourage people to develop multiple skills—so everyone feels ready to do what it takes to get the job done.	4
You have clear functional agendas that determine the way things get done and the pace of implementation.	1 2 3 4 5 0 7 8 X 10	You ensure everyone is focused on shared goals, across functions.	3
You have in place strong controls—with multiple hand-offs and sign-offs—to get work done effectively.	1 2 3 4 5 6 0 8 X 10	You push for integrated end-to-end processes with a single point of accountability to get work done—streamlined, efficient, and value-added every step of the way.	2
Section Gap average			3

Internal Boundaries

Internal boundaries hold us back from becoming truly boundaryless. When we have these types of internal boundaries we tend to be inward looking rather than outward looking. In table 4 the first scale received a gap score of two. This is because we still tend to evaluate ourselves more on our tasks rather than looking to the churches and other partners that are using the newly translated Scriptures. We need to look to them and evaluate ourselves according to whether or not Scriptures are impacting lives.

Trust is central to a boundaryless organization. We must have a trusting relationship with our partners rather than a cold relationship. In the second scale the X has been placed at the far right because of the high importance of trust.

In the third scale we have a large gap because of the time that is spent internally rather than externally relating to our partners. This is a particularly significant issue for ILV since we are an organization made up of mostly expatriate missionaries. For many expatriates it is intimidating to be doing so much relating externally when there are so many cultural unknowns. It is usually quite comfortable and safe when we spend our time internally.

The fourth scale touches on a challenging issue for us in ILV. On the extreme left you have those leaders that look for new business solely on the organization’s current capabilities. With these leaders there is little flexibility and little vision of what could be accomplished if they dialogued with external partners. On the far right you have leaders who start new projects according to the needs of the current and potential partners. With the leaders on the right there is a risk of losing focus and turning with any and every passing need. With those on the left there is a risk of becoming irrelevant. I believe that it is possible to move to the right, base new projects on genuine needs, and changing contexts, and still maintain a solid vision.

Table 4

<p>You and your senior management team focus most of your attention on your own company’s current performance.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 0 8 X 10</p>	<p>You are focused primarily on maximizing value to the end user.</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>You encourage a tough negotiating approach to interacting with customers and suppliers.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0 9 X</p>	<p>You actively seek partnerships and relationships of trust with customers and suppliers.</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>You spend a significant portion of your time in internal meetings and in running in-house committees.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 0 6 7 8 X 10</p>	<p>You spend most of your time with customers, suppliers, and other outside constituents.</p>	<p>4</p>

You look for new business opportunities solely on the basis of your company’s capabilities.	1 2 3 4 0 6 7 8 X 10	You formulate new business in partnership with our customers—based on their needs and changes in their markets.	4
Section Gap average			3

Geographic Boundaries

We have good leadership for breaking down geographic boundaries. There is plenty of cultural diversity and sensitivity in our organization. We also place a high level of importance on international experience, although we do not have a lot of personnel with experience outside of Peru or their home country. We, as an organization, are usually quite sensitive to local cultural contexts. Sometimes we try to apply a method from elsewhere and it hobbles along because it was never truly contextualized.

Table 5

You promote a look-alike culture—hiring and promoting people who look like you.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0 X 10	You seek diversity in the people you hire and promote.	1
To get a shot at the top positions, executives need to “punch their ticket” in a series of domestic positions.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 0 X	Significant international experience is a prerequisite for top positions.	1
You try to apply the domestic model of doing business to each international market you are involved in.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0 9 X	You always start from the local market conditions and build your business practices around these—taking very little for granted.	2
Section Gap average			1.3

Overall leadership to make boundarylessness happen

Table 6 looks at five issues that are central to boundaryless leadership. The first two are of particular importance. In the first scale we have a significant gap. In order for us to become boundaryless we cannot get stuck in the trap of task management. We need to stay focused on results. An example would be our publication process. We need to set forth a reasonable, desired end result and let people get there however they want, as long as it is ethical and legal.

Table 6

<p>You are preoccupied with task management—constantly trying to explain to your subordinates the step they need to take.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 0 6 7 8 9 X</p>	<p>You are focused on results—you clarify expectations about the desired end results and let your people figure out how to get there.</p>	<p>5</p>
<p>You exercise a command-and-control model of leadership.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 0 X</p>	<p>You lead through articulating clear goals, then coaching, counseling, and cheerleading people to achieve them.</p>	<p>1</p>
<p>You prefer to wait for all the analyses, reports, and studies to come in before taking a position about the issues facing the organization.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 0 6 7 8 X 10</p>	<p>You are comfortable sketching out a rough-and-ready vision of where the organization needs to go and using actions as a way to test and refine the vision and the overall direction.</p>	<p>4</p>
<p>You are constantly worried about giving people more than they can handle—considering everything else on their plate.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 0 8 X 10</p>	<p>You are comfortable putting out exceptional challenges to people—even if you have no clue how people will deliver on them.</p>	<p>2</p>

You promote a keep-your-head-down policy—one mistake can derail a career.	1 2 3 4 5 0 7 8 X 10	You create an environment in which coming up with and exploring new ideas is encouraged and rewarded.	3
Section Gap average			3

The second scale deals with another important issue for a boundaryless leader. Our administration does quite well in this regard. They do not follow the authoritarian, command-and-control model of leadership. It is important that administration continues to grow this strength since this model of leadership has the highest potential for long-term, sustainable impact.

In the third scale we have a large gap. At the right side of the scale are those that act fast. These leaders are able to move ahead with a certain level of ambiguity. “The challenge for executives is to get comfortable with the anxiety that an undefined end state can generate.” (Ashkenas et al, 2002, p. 307) The traditional scholarly history of ILV holds us back from making decision and/or taking a stand on new issues. We want to see all the facts and get a report before making any major decisions. This makes us a slow and sluggish organization.

The last scale deals with innovation and one’s openness to new ideas. It has to do with the leader creating an environment where people can explore new ideas and where people are rewarded for coming up with new ideas. In ILV we are not all that open to new ideas. Innovative thinking is generally not rewarded.

Practical Proposed Changes

Now that we have taken a look at the gap between where we currently are and where we would like to be, we need to consider specific actions that will help us close that gap. In this

section I will propose several practical changes and will also offer some practical suggestions to improve some of the things we are already doing. I will present simple changes that can easily be implemented. Ashkenas gives this practical suggestion for changing to a boundaryless organization, “Perhaps the most important lesson to be learned here is that measurable business results must be the initial focus of change.” (Ashkenas et al, 2002, p. 310)

Vertical Boundaries

In order for our leadership to break down vertical boundaries they will need to place decision making as close to the action as possible. In order for administrators to determine who should be making what decision, they need to ask themselves the following 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)

Horizontal Boundaries

Leadership that breaks down horizontal boundaries needs to encourage dialogue across functions, across the silos and from language team to language team. I propose that we resurrect the practice of having regular organization-wide team meetings. The team meetings of the past died a slow death because they slowly became less and less relevant. If our members do not see any advantage in attending team meetings then they will not come, or they will come harbouring resentment. If we are to re-instigate team meetings, they will need to be completely revamped and possibly renamed so that people will see them in a new light.

These meetings need to have dialogue as their core purpose. The reason to call the meetings would be to generate dialogue, which would lead to information sharing, which would lead to the generation of new and innovative ideas. This would also ensure that everyone is focused on the same shared goals. The organization is ripe for innovation meetings since so many language personnel and administrators have recently received training in dialogue education, through the Learning that LASTS workshops. This would be a good opportunity to put into practice the training that we have invested in our members.

Geographic Boundaries

What we need in ILV are people with experience working in other countries. This is not an easy thing considering that the branch will be closing in the next five to six years. People with experience in other branches, and particularly those outside of Latin America, have the potential of bringing in many new ideas. An outside perspective is what we need as we talk about completion in Peru. If this is not possible, outside consultants should be considered in order to bring a balanced perspective to our completion planning.

The new person has one primary function, and all the existing members must accept it without rancor. This person's job is to continually ask, "Why are we doing it this way?" The rest of the team knows that this will create some disruption, but it will force them to rethink some issues and clarify their process.

(Gryskiewicz, 1999, p. 65)

Internal Boundaries

Leadership that breaks down internal boundaries, for the sake of external relationships, is a leadership that is outward focused. I applaud recent discussion about having a partner day during our annual conference. I believe that this would greatly lower our internal barriers. A day

spent in dialogue, both formal meetings and informal discussions, will help everyone in the branch catch an outward looking vision and it holds a great potential for new ideas. We could also do similar activities along with our team meetings.

Overall leadership changes

“The world is changing so rapidly that any fixed master plan is outdated before the ink dries.” (Ashkenas et al, 2002, p. 313) It is important that our administrators lead the branch in planning but it is crucial that they hold loosely their plans. Our SPEL (Strategic Planning at an Entity Level) document needs to be revisited, as a minimum, on an annual basis and not just every few years as is our current practice. When issues and opportunities arise that don't fit our SPEL document then we should be willing to revisit the sacred master plan. A distinction must be made between changing the SPEL document and changing our vision. Changes can be made to the SPEL, to take into account a changing context, without affecting our vision.

Conclusion

Many of the leadership and management theories of the past decade or two have emphasized restructuring and flattening out of organizations. These were usually major changes that often produced good results but at a high cost. Moving toward being a boundaryless organization offers us in ILV ideas that we can implement given our limited timeframe before branch completion.

If we consciously place daily decision making close to the action, if we initiate horizontal dialogue via regular team meetings, if we bring in an outside perspective, if we create dialogue between members and partners and if we hold loosely our plans but maintain a strong vision, we will close the gap between where we are and where we should be. If we do these things I believe that we will honor God by truly finishing well.

References

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Appendix 1

Stepping Up to the Line: Are you a Boundaryless Leader?

Instructions: On each 1 to 10 scale, place an X where you need to be, to move you organization forward into the twenty-first century. Then place an O where you think you currently are on the scale. The difference between the two score (X-O) is your gap score, found on the right.

The first (blue) score is of ILV Peru’s senior leadership. The second (red) score is of my own leadership as related to the South Peru Project.

1. Leadership to break down vertical boundaries.

You and your senior management team make most decisions.	1 2 3 4 5 0 7 8 X 10	Most decisions are made close to the action.	3
	1 2 3 4 5 6 0 8 X 10		2
You hold information close to the vest—and promote a need-to-know approach to information sharing.	1 2 3 4 5 6 0 8 X 10	You share information about overall performance and business strategy with as broad base of constituents as possible.	2
	1 2 3 4 5 6 0 8 X 10		2
Your recognition and reward system is based solely on individual contributions.	1 2 3 4 5 0 7 8 X 10	Your recognition and reward system is primarily team based.	3
	1 2 3 4 5 0 7 8 X 10		3
Section Gap average			2.7
			2.3

2. Leadership to break down horizontal boundaries.

Your people have narrowly defined roles, responsibilities, and skills.	1 2 3 4 0 6 7 8 X 10	You encourage people to develop multiple skills—so everyone feels ready to do what it takes to get the job done.	4
	1 2 3 4 5 0 7 8 X 10		3
You have clear functional agendas that determine the way things get done and the pace of implementation.	1 2 3 4 5 0 7 8 X 10	You ensure everyone is focused on shared goals, across functions	3
	1 2 3 4 5 6 0 8 X 10		2
You have in place strong controls—with multiple hand-offs and sign-offs—to get work done effectively.	1 2 3 4 5 6 0 8 X 10	You push for integrated end-to-end processes with a single point of accountability to get work done—streamlined, efficient, and value-added every step of the way.	2
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0 X 10		2
Section Gap average			3

	2.3
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3. Leadership to break down internal boundaries to external relationships.

You and your senior management team focus most of your attention on your own company’s current performance.	1 2 3 4 5 6 0 8 X 10	You are focused primarily on maximizing value to the end user.	2
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0 X 10		1
You encourage a tough negotiating approach to interacting with customers and suppliers.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0 9 X	You actively seek partnerships and relationships of trust with customers and suppliers.	2
	1 2 3 4 5 6 0 8 9 X		3
You spend a significant portion of your time in internal meetings and in running in-house committees.	1 2 3 4 0 6 7 8 X 10	You spend most of your time with customers, suppliers, and other outside constituents.	4
	1 2 3 4 0 6 7 8 X 10		4
You look for new business opportunities solely on the basis of your company’s capabilities.	1 2 3 4 0 6 7 8 X 10	You formulate new business in partnership with our customers—based on their needs and changes in their markets.	4
	1 2 3 4 5 0 7 8 X 10		3
Section Gap average			3
			2.8

4. Leadership to break down geographic boundaries.

You promote a look-alike culture—hiring and promoting people who look like you.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0 X 10	You seek diversity in the people you hire and promote.	1
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0 X 10		1
To get a shot at the top positions, executives need to “punch their ticket” in a series of domestic positions.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 0 X	Significant international experience is a prerequisite for top positions.	1
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0 9 X		2
You try to apply the domestic model of doing business to each international market you are involved in.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0 9 X	You always start from the local market conditions and build your business practices around these—taking very little for granted.	2
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 0 X		1
Section Gap average			1.3
			1.3

5. Overall leadership to make it happen.

<p>You are preoccupied with task management—constantly trying to explain to your subordinates the step they need to take.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 0 6 7 8 9 X 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0 9 X</p>	<p>You are focused on results—you clarify expectations about the desired end results and let your people figure out how to get there.</p>	<p>5 2</p>
<p>You exercise a command-and-control model of leadership.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0 9 X 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 0 X</p>	<p>You lead through articulating clear goals, then coaching, counseling, and cheerleading people to achieve them.</p>	<p>2 1</p>
<p>You prefer to wait for all the analyses, reports, and studies to come in before taking a position about the issues facing the organization.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 0 7 8 X 10 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0 X 10</p>	<p>You are comfortable sketching out a rough-and-ready vision of where the organization needs to go and using actions as a way to test and refine the vision and the overall direction.</p>	<p>3 1</p>
<p>You are constantly worried about giving people more than they can handle—considering everything else on their plate.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 0 8 X 10 1 2 3 4 5 6 0 8 X 10</p>	<p>You are comfortable putting out exceptional challenges to people—even if you have no clue how people will deliver on them.</p>	<p>2 2</p>
<p>You promote a keep-your-head-down policy—one mistake can derail a career.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 0 7 8 X 10 1 2 3 4 5 6 0 8 X 10</p>	<p>You create an environment in which coming up with and exploring new ideas is encouraged and rewarded.</p>	<p>3 2</p>
<p>Section Gap average</p>			<p>3 1.6</p>
<p>Total Gap score</p>			<p>48 38</p>