A Leadership Matrix

A matrix structure for organizational decision-making is a system that has different people taking the lead and affecting outcomes, depending on the problem, challenge, or endeavor. The selection of leading parties is based on well-reasoned considerations. The traditional pyramid structure is a system in which someone at the top ultimately decides what happens or doesn't, even if someone else is the designated point person.

Let's demystify the word "matrix." The term "matrix management" became popular during the 1970s. Former Intel CEO Andy Grove credited NASA: "To put a man on the moon, NASA asked several major contractors and many subcontractors to work together, each on a different aspect of the project. An unintended consequence of the moon shot was the development of a new organizational approach: matrix management."[1]

A similar management model was promoted in the 1950s by W. Edwards Deming, an engineer largely credited for the turnaround of Japan's postwar economy. He didn't use the term "matrix," but he promoted similar concepts of intraorganizational and interorganizational dependence. Deming was also unique in how he believed members should feel respected and valued for their contributions and ideas. Being a deeply devout religious man, Deming used 1 Corinthians 12:14–21 to demonstrate his management model:

> *A body is not one single organ, but many. Suppose that the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it does belong to the body none the less. Suppose that the ear were to say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it does still belong to the body. If the body were all ear, how could it smell?… There are many different organs, but one body. The eye can not say to the hand, "I do not need you."*[2]

It is remarkable that successful actors in secular endeavors grasped a biblical concept, while many faith affiliations and individual congregations still operate with the pyramid structure. It turns out that healthy organizations, including congregations, operate like the human body, which possesses asynchronous (nondirected) and synchronous (directed) functions. This means two things: that separate systems can operate at the same time with aspects that are independent, intra-dependent (within a congregation) and interdependent (between ministries). There is not a model promoted in the New Testament that focuses on dependence (always doing whatever one role or person dictates all the time).

The old ICOC model often resembled CEO, old military, or sports-team leadership styles that left little room for variation and dissent. And certainly, it wasn't an idea meritocracy, which allows for the best ideas to come from within the congregation, so members feel

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[1] Andrew S. Grove, *High Output Management* (New York: Vintage, 2015), 131.

[2] W. Edwards Deming, *The New Economics: For Industry, Government, Education* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1994), 65.

their thoughts are valued. Such an approach helps challenge the status quo and weakens oligarchy (whereby a few people control everything). It is difficult to make the switch to a culture in which the most suitable people are involved in decisions and the best ideas are considered. That said, the apostolic leaders of the church modeled following the lead of the Holy Spirit, considering members' gifts, openly listening and communicating, being answerable, and sharing responsibility.

Roles and Gifts in the New Testament. There were many roles and gifts that played an important part in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul and Luke provide most of what we know about their purpose and benefits.

New Testament Ministry Roles & Gifts
Acts; 1 Corinthians 12:27–30; Ephesians 2:19–21, 4:11–13; Romans 12:3–8

	Roles & Gifts	The Benefits	Distinction	Named Individuals
Equipping & Leading	Apostles	unity, knowledge & maturity	foundation	The Twelve, Paul
	Prophets	unity, knowledge & maturity	foundation	Silas, Judas & Agabus
	Evangelists	unity, knowledge & maturity	proclamation & training	Philip, Timothy
	Shepherds	unity, knowledge & maturity	oversight & protection	James, Peter
	Teachers	unity, knowledge & maturity	doctrine & theology	Simeon, Lucius
	Leading	belonging	guidance & strategy	
	Administration	belonging	self-explanatory	
	Serving	belonging	self-explanatory	Rhoda, Phoebe
	Encouraging	belonging	self-explanatory	Barnabas
	Giving	belonging	self-explanatory	
Needs & Edification	Showing Mercy	belonging	self-explanatory	
	Miracles	interdependency	faith	
	Healing	interdependency	self-explanatory	
	Helping	interdependency	self-explanatory	Tabitha, John Mark & Erastus
	Tongues & Interpretation	interdependency	faith	

It only takes a little bit of imagination to see how important various roles were at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, which met to address an incident that occurred in Antioch, and its ramifications. There were individuals with different perspectives, including Paul, Barnabas, and believing Pharisees; other believers from Antioch; the apostles with Peter as their spokesman; the elders with James as their spokesman; the prophets Judas and Silas; and the congregation. In the larger context of Acts 10–15, there were even more elements, including witnesses to the work of the Holy Spirit at the home of Cornelius. We don't have evidence of every aspect of the council, but we see an open approach to decision-making.

Who and What Drives a Decision? A well-functioning congregation will be driven by whatever the situation requires, in keeping with its North-Star principles. An unhealthy organization will tend to always rely on the same individuals and their visions. Some decisions in the apostolic church originated in unplanned practical considerations and were reached using differing mechanisms: Acts 1—replacing Judas; Acts 6—meeting a need; and Acts 15—resolving a dispute. Others involved going on missions (Acts 13:1–3) and supporting a brotherhood need (2 Cor. 8–9).

There are five possible driver and human influences behind a decision. Each of the five drivers can be summarized as follows: (1) Command—authority by position, which provides governance, structure, and order. It's possible weaknesses are the unawareness and silos enabled by the distance between the top-down power bases and those lower in the hierarchy. (2) Charisma—trusted, inspiring individuals who provide motivation and direction. Its potential weakness is the leaders' blind spots that are often overlooked. (3) Relationship—loyalty that is associated with family and fraternal legacies. Its frequent weakness is that it easily leads to favoritism. (4) Community—the instinctive needs and perceptions of the organization or society. Its common weakness is that groups of all sizes are vulnerable to mood swings and manipulation. (5) Expertise—subject matter competence, evidenced in research and data. Its weakness is that egotistic experts can be unable to blend their disciplines and perspectives with others.
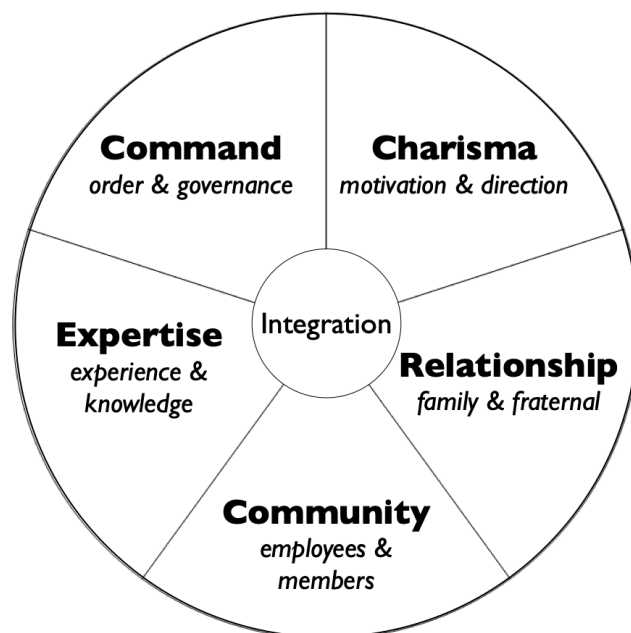
Any of the five drivers can play an **outsized role** in influencing outcomes. The most common way this happens is when a leader overreaches or thinks too much of their authority. Even when authority is consolidated in an ecclesiastical role, the Bible does not portray the notion of automatic compliance and acceptance. On one occasion some circumcised believers criticized Peter, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them." The apostle did not appeal to his own authority. Instead, he shared a story that involved witnesses, divine intervention, and the reasons for his choices. The episode concludes with "When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, 'So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life'" (Acts 11:1–18).
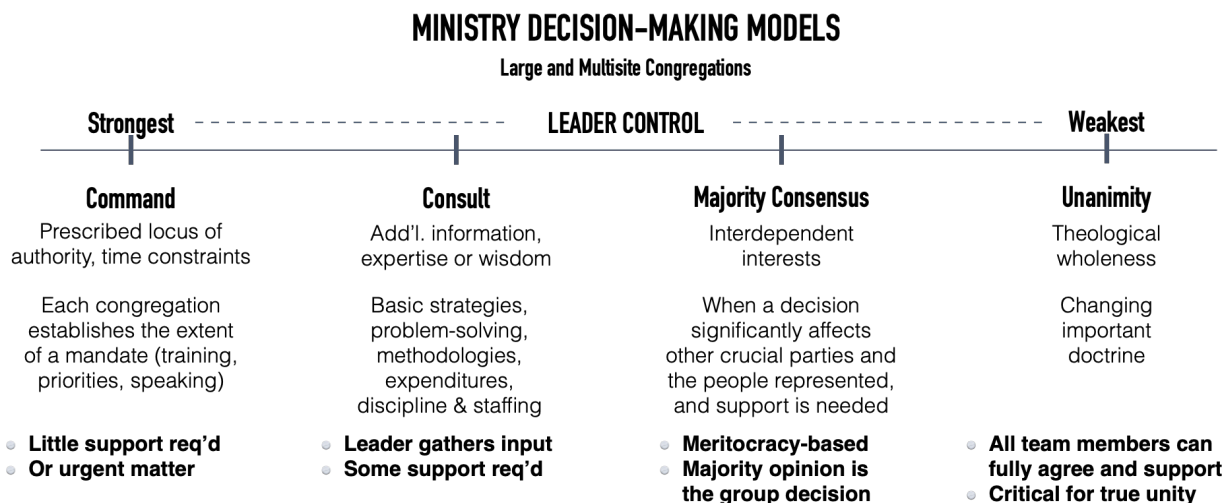
One way to avoid the outsize and overreach traps is to define in advance the way decisions should be developed. This is especially true when the congregation becomes a multisite entity. It is important to define its independence, interdependencies, and

decision-making. The distinct ministries will operate asynchronously but have defined obligations to the whole system. It becomes important to know how decisions are to be made in this situation.

Some of the most **common topics, proposals, and situations** include:

- evangelism methods
- spending on missions
- launching new ministries
- other new projects or ventures
- setting yearly budgets and other financial matters
- the establishment and preservation of doctrine
- staff hiring, firing & alignment
- meeting an unmet need
- resolving a dispute
- church discipline
- assessments of all kinds
- selecting a meeting location
- merging ministries
- setting the calendar

Which **decision-making model** will produce the most durable outcome for the given situation? Most decisions are made by the Consult and Majority Consensus models outlined here:

MINISTRY DECISION–MAKING MODELS
Large and Multisite Congregations

Strongest		LEADER CONTROL		Weakest

Command	Consult	Majority Consensus	Unanimity
Prescribed locus of authority, time constraints	Add'l. information, expertise or wisdom	Interdependent interests	Theological wholeness
Each congregation establishes the extent of a mandate (training, priorities, speaking)	Basic strategies, problem-solving, methodologies, expenditures, discipline & staffing	When a decision significantly affects other crucial parties and the people represented, and support is needed	Changing important doctrine
◦ Little support req'd ◦ Or urgent matter	◦ Leader gathers input ◦ Some support req'd	◦ Meritocracy-based ◦ Majority opinion is the group decision	◦ All team members can fully agree and support ◦ Critical for true unity

Considerations. When decisions involve the combination of consulting and majority consensus of those who are involved in the various decisions, it is especially wise to have a commitment to a matrix approach in advance. The main considerations in developing a matrix have to do with the following:

1. What is the category described? (such as those from the above list--common topics, proposals, and situations)
2. Does the scope relate to evangelists, elders, teachers, administration, others, or some combination?
3. Which individuals might be impacted by a decision?
4. Which groups might be impacted by a decision?
5. Who has crucial information? Similarly, who has expertise or gifts?
6. Who will be consulted? And if majority consensus is necessary, who will be involved in the discussion or collaboration?
7. If the category is a radically new venture, is it beneficial to have a pilot program?
8. Who will be required to effectively carry out the decision?
9. Who is best equipped and/or available to present a perceived problem, challenge, or endeavor and a first draft of the solution? Once there is direction, who is best to lead the way?
10. Is there risk involved? If so, will the group commit to endorsing an after-action review to take place at some interval?

A decision-making matrix is not much more than a reminder to consider our intra-dependencies and interdependencies, our biblical roles and gifts, and being respectful of those impacted by decisions.

Exhibit: Ministry Decision–Making Matrix

Topic / Proposal / Situation	Point Person(s)	D/M Model	Consulting or Consensus Partners	Test Group	Follow Up
sample: an idea is put forward to bring more neighbors to regional Zoom worship that will take minimal funds but some degree of coordination of 1 person/sector	An evangelist & team with social media skills and knowledge	Consult	Present to evangelists	Pilot the project in one sector	
sample: there is a great degree of marital burnout because of financial issues connected to the Covid-19 crisis. An idea is in development to address the topic	An elder, alongside a team that he forms	Consult or Consensus	All elders and evangelists	Present to the staff	
sample: a sector is weak, stakeholders complain about its long-term "stuck-ness," its leader is better suited in another role, and a new proposal could affect other sectors	A senior Evangelist	Consensus	Other evangelists (present to elders)	Representative stakeholders from affected sectors	

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