Adventist book promoting corporate integrity finds traction among leadership

‘Transparency and Accountability’ a response to recommendations made by church’s auditing service board

Online evangelism from Brazil connects with young audience

Young adults worldwide watch livestream of prophecy series; ‘Countdown’ a trending topic on Twitter

Adventist book promoting corporate integrity finds traction among leadership

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Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN

Seventh-day Adventist Church officers say a new book promoting integrity among leadership will transform corporate culture within the church and inspire greater confidence among membership.

The book, called “Transparency and Accountability: A Global Commitment of Seventh-day Adventist Church Leaders,” was distributed earlier this month at the Leadership Educational and Development (LEAD) Conference at Adventist world church headquarters.

Already, top church leaders worldwide have pledged to embrace the book’s principles and model them back home. The commitment signals a move toward greater transparency, church officers said.

“Constituents and other stakeholders want to have confidence in church leadership and their stewardship,” said Paul Douglas, director of the church’s General Conference Auditing Service (GCAS) and editor of the book.

“The principles and best practices presented in this book provide the basis for leaders to meet this expectation,” he said.

The book includes a “code of conduct” for Adventist leaders anchored in humility, integrity, trust, respect, accountability, collaboration and excellence; a thought paper on transparency within leadership; and best practices for organizational governance, local church leadership and financial
administration. It also contains responses from church leaders on how to “promote, model and support” fundamental principles of integrity.

“Leadership needs to set the tone,” one leader said. “Ensure openness. Diminish the risk of people being afraid to talk just because of organizational structure or lack of communication channels,” another added.

In recent years, church leaders have called for increased transparency and accountability among Adventist leadership worldwide, stating on numerous occasions that “communication is at the core of effective governance.”

“As a Christian organization, there is a greater expectation for each person, but particularly leaders, to ensure that behaviors conform to biblical principles, legal parameters, professional standards and denominational policies,” Douglas said.

The book is a direct response to recommendations made by the church’s auditing service board, among them to “promote a culture of transparency and accountability that is modeled by church leaders at every level of the denomination.”

Another recommendation urges leaders to “revise policies to incorporate best practices related to the receipt, response and resolution of issues identified in audit reports.” The recommendations came after the frequency and recurring unresolved nature of certain audit findings raised concern among church auditors.

Adventist world church President Ted N.C. Wilson, who oversaw the book distribution at the LEAD Conference and urged leaders to pledge their support, has advocated for greater transparency during his administration. At a church business meeting last year, he urged church leaders worldwide to make corporate integrity a matter of personal responsibility.

“On committees, ask questions,” Wilson said. “Don’t assume somebody else is going to take care of it.”

The book takes this idea a step further, prompting leaders to “create a corporate culture where openness is valued and rewarded.”

The benefits of cultivating a high level of organizational transparency can be “huge,” said Adventist world church Secretary G. T. Ng in a thought paper called “Transparent Leadership,” included in the book.

“Transparency boosts a leader’s credibility. Greater credibility engenders loyalty, commitment and optimal performance. Organizations benefit from a more efficient process of decision-making as followers are more informed, and problems are more readily identified along the way,” Ng said.

-- Click here download a pdf of “Transparency and Accountability: A Global Commitment of Seventh-day Adventist Church Leaders”

Online evangelism from Brazil connects with young audience

Oct. 24, 2012
Brasilia, Brazil
Mârcia Ebinger/ANN staff

Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders in South
America say a new method of interactive, online evangelism is connecting with young adults worldwide.

Called “Countdown,” the prophecy series was broadcast last month as a livestream on the church’s Spanish and Portuguese websites in South America. The web-based format meant viewers could interact with speaker Luís Gonçalves throughout the series.

“We are keeping up-to-date on modern media that reaches the youth, but the message we share is prophetic and Biblical, the same message that has always transformed so many lives,” said Areli Barbosa, general program coordinator for the series.

Series organizers said they chose the subject of prophecy after young people who participated in a church-administered survey said they were most interested in learning more about end-time events.

Statistics seem to confirm that interest, organizers said. During the series, the hashtag #ContagemRegressiva ("countdown") was a repeat trending topic in Brazil.

“We reached almost two thousand tweets per hour at the start of the program,” said Rogéria Ferraz, technical coordinator for the series.

An estimated 84,000 viewers watched the Portuguese livestream and some 45,000 watched in Spanish. These numbers are based on a survey of sample Internet users after the series, organizers said.

The survey also revealed that viewers ranged in age from their late teens to early thirties and watched from as many as fifty countries worldwide. Indeed, viewers from South America to Slovakia sent questions to Gonçalves about the signs of Jesus’ Second Coming, the Millennium and other end-time topics. Organizers are following up with video chats and said they plan to make the online evangelism series an annual event.

Erton Köhler, president of the church’s South American Division (SAD), said the “Countdown” series will serve as a model to build upon in the future.

“As a church, we have to go where the people are, and if they’re on their computers, we need to go to them, speaking a language they understand,” Köhler said.

“I think that this program has incredible potential, not just for South America, but for other areas, too. Here, we have youth gathered together in their homes with groups of friends to watch Countdown,” said Johnatan Elias Adarme Rodríguez, who watched from Colombia.

Viviane Souza Paz, a viewer from Brazil, said the series clarified Scripture for her. “I’ve never understood the Bible as well as I do now,” she said.
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