



## Integration

# Personal Foundation 4 of Sustainable Leadership

### Introduction

This fact sheet looks at the issue of personal 'integration' in the life of the Christian leader and its relationship with sustainable leadership. This is the fourth of six Personal Foundations of Sustainable Leadership outlined by NCLS Research. The second 3 can be grouped under the heading 'How we live' - qualities that reflect our current situation as well as our priorities and choices within it. Leader Survey results from the 2011 National Church Life Survey (senior leaders) show that those strong in this area are more likely to be thriving in ministry rather than burning out. NCLS Research has conducted extensive research into sustainable leadership - avoiding burnout and moving from surviving to thriving in ministry. Most church

leaders face many challenges in ministry and also experience many encouragements. Numerous factors need to be taken into account to understand why some leaders struggle while others manage



well. Some factors may be difficult or even impossible to change. Integration is one area where change can occur - where a leader can examine their own identity, priorities, practices, and relationships and consider what could be different and how positive results could flow.

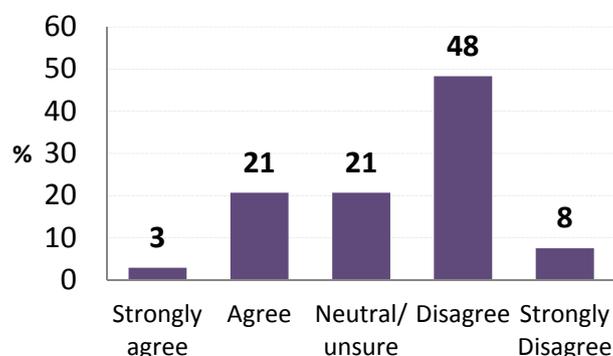
### What is integration?

Literature on work engagement and burnout has identified 'person-job fit' as a key area to consider. In the context of church ministry, leaders need to consider their own giftings, passions and experience and how they can most effectively serve in a role. Key questions

related to this area from the NCLS Leaders Survey are shown below.

*" There is a marked gap between my aspirations and what I actually do "*

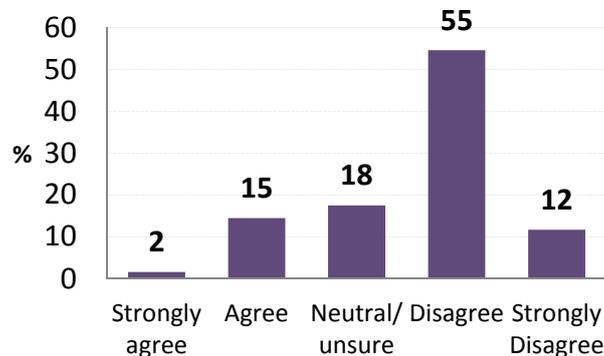
**Figure 1: Gap between aspirations and actions**



Source: 2011 NCLS Leader Survey Senior Leaders (n=1,863, weighted).

*" Much of my life seems to be spent on things that do not reflect what really matters to me "*

**Figure 2: Much of life spent on things that do not reflect what really matters**



Source: 2011 NCLS Leader Survey Senior Leaders (n=1,871, weighted).

Furthermore, church leaders would rarely have a dispassionate skill-oriented view towards their ministry. Rather, having a good sense of fit between aspirations

and role is often a question of personal authenticity or integrity. It means one feels they can live out their role, and be a genuine model to others. The term 'integration' is intended to reflect this. The results above show that while most senior church leaders express a reasonable fit between their aspirations, priorities and what they actually spend time on, there is a significant number who agree with these negatively worded questions.

### Areas of mismatch in ministry

Leaders completing the 2011 NCLS Leader Survey were presented with a list of roles and asked to indicate which 'should be' their main roles, and which they 'actually carry out'. They were restricted to choosing 3 from the list both times. Table 1 shows the percentage of senior leaders who indicated each role, in descending order by what they believe they 'should be' doing.

**Table 1: Leaders preferred and actual roles**

Main roles of ministry	Indicated they 'Should be' doing this %	Indicated they 'Actually' do this %
Teaching about the Christian faith	66	73
Training people for ministry and mission	60	42
Conducting worship/ administering sacraments	55	74
Developing a vision and goals for the future	51	42
Visiting, counselling, helping people	40	57
Offering prayer, being a spiritual role model	31	38
Converting others to the faith	27	22
Involvement in wider community groups or social issues	21	19
Administering the work of the church	17	55
Other	3	4
Don't know	1	0

Source: 2011 NCLS Leader Survey Senior Leaders (n=1,807, weighted). Leaders could choose 3 roles from list.

The table indicates several important issues: what senior church leaders in Australia generally believe they should be doing, are doing, and which are the areas of greatest discrepancy. The fact that so few leaders

indicated 'other' and 'don't know' suggests the list was sufficiently comprehensive for almost all leaders to choose options they identified with. Two thirds of senior leaders (66%) indicate that teaching is one of the top 3 roles they should be performing. A larger number (73%) indicate this is one of the top roles they actually do, so some leaders hold it as an area of some mismatch. Other areas where a considerable number of leaders indicate they are doing roles that should not be a priority are: 'Administering the work of the church' (by far the largest discrepancy), conducting worship/ administering sacraments, and visiting and counselling/ helping people. On the other hand, roles where leaders are doing less than they believe they should be: training people for ministry/mission, developing a vision, and converting others to the faith.

### Integration, thriving and burnout

While table 1 reveals general areas of mismatch, it's important to remember that integration is an individual phenomenon. A leader who believes their strengths are in counselling and they should be performing this role will be encouraged that they actually are, while one who feels forced into this as a role they should not be doing is less likely to be thriving.

Overall 16% of senior leaders did not indicate any matches between their preferred and actual roles. This represents a risk group, who in their current position would likely be feeling very low levels of integration between who they are and their ministry. As such, they are more likely to be feeling lower levels of satisfaction in their role and personal achievement. They may also be feeling more emotionally exhausted and find it more difficult to engage with people and aspects of their ministry.

NCLS Research has found that leaders with a higher sense of integration between their aspirations and their actual role are more likely to be thriving. While one cannot usually determine their own job description, it highlights the value of a good personal fit, and may well make one more resilient in times of challenge.

### Data sources

Powell, R., (2011) [computer file], 2011 NCLS Leader Survey. Sydney, Australia: NCLS Research.

### Citation

Sterland, S. (2014) Integration: Personal Foundation 4, Factsheet 1.14005. Sydney: NCLS Research.