



Briefing

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EDITOR

Statistics confront us with the harsh reality of radical change in the nation's healthcare system. For example, a Catholic Health Association survey indicates that about a third of members are considering arrangements that involve governance changes, and more than 650 U.S. hospitals were involved in mergers and acquisitions in 1994, according to *Modern Healthcare* reporter Sandy Lutz. But the cold statistics do not reveal the warm dimension of change—the human reactions and relationships that either make change easy or derail an organization's attempts to adapt. Management literature is replete with examples of companies that were never able to accomplish needed changes because their employees did not support the new directions.

As William Bridges points out in his book *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, few workers today show much interest in Tom Peters's notion of "thriving on chaos," nor in complying unquestioningly with orders from the top. And healthcare executives, who are highly skilled in managing tasks, often feel less adept at managing people. But, Bridges notes, whether or not managers feel comfortable with "the people side of things," they cannot afford to ignore it. So our special section this month is devoted to helping you deal with the human aspect of change—the aspect known as the organization's culture.

Key Messages The first article, on p. 20, gives you the basics, the "key messages," about cultural transformation. Here the authors—a team assembled by CHA—define the components of "culture" in the context of Catholic healthcare and identify roles for change leaders (who can be people at all levels).

Chaos Leaders often naively assume that "the familiar sights, sounds, and routines in which people are nurtured [culture] can be obliterated overnight through an administrative decision without negative results," according to Rev. Gerald A. Arbuckle, SM (p. 25). But he insists that when change evokes chaos, with accompanying feelings of loss of identity and security, leaders can and must act to help employees use chaos constructively. Fr. Arbuckle takes this concept

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beyond the level of the organization. His article contains a profound message for everyone in Catholic healthcare: Chaos can engender the renewal and refounding of the entire Catholic health ministry.

Ritual Ritual helps us through our personal times of change and chaos—the passages of birth, marriage, retirement, death. It also can help employees navigate the chaotic passages in work life. The article on p. 40 offers practical ways to use healing ritual to meet people's emotional and spiritual needs.

Case studies Every organization must find its own path through change. We have included case studies on pp. 30 and 34 to help you learn from others as you construct your unique strategies and solutions. If you have an experience to share with your colleagues, the *Health Progress* staff can help you tell it. Please contact me with your story.

Commitment to Change Cultural transformation is essentially about change and gaining the organization's and individual employees' commitment to the organization's vision and goals so that they will accept changes needed to sustain the mission.

Poet David Whyte, in his book *The Heart Aroused: Poetry and Preservation of the Soul in Corporate America*, suggests that organizations which ignore employees' souls—"the indefinable essence of a person's spirit and being"—will not obtain their commitment and will be "forced to rely on expensive management pyramids to manipulate their workers." To learn more about how leaders can tap into their own and others' souls in order to create corporate cultures that inspire commitment, see the report on p. 62.

ANNIVERSARY ARTICLE

To commemorate *Health Progress's* 75th anniversary year, each issue of the journal in 1995 will contain an article of special significance to the Catholic health ministry. In this issue Susan A. Ross (p. 50) encourages those in the ministry to find a place of strength as they struggle against pain in a hostile world.