

MEETING ‘MAYHEM’ WITH HOPE

Allstate Insurance has been running an award-winning ad campaign featuring actor Dean Winters as the embodiment of mayhem, that uncontrollable force that puts us in the way of harmful incidents and accidents. “Mayhem” stars in such vignettes as a deer stepping onto a road and freezing in an approaching car’s headlights; a poorly tied Christmas tree rolling off a minivan into surrounding traffic; a teen driver who is too busy texting to pay attention to where she is going. The point is to heighten viewers’ anxiety about having adequate insurance coverage if Mayhem strikes. The ads usually end with the Allstate tagline — “Are you in good hands?” — offering a sense of hope that all will be well if only the viewer buys Allstate insurance.



**BRIAN
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We could make up our own “Mayhem Is Coming” campaign over the kinds of worries system-level mission leaders — those with the broadest scope of responsibility — believe their ministry faces as Catholic health care prepares for changes and challenges on the horizon.

Among the concerns they have voiced:

- Limited resources for addressing the mission needs of their organizations
- Limited support for executive teams as they face growing and more complex demands on their time and talent
- Difficulty maintaining the appropriate inter-relationship of mission commitment and financial issues
- Formation of lay leadership so they are able to maintain the integrity of Catholic health ministry
- Insufficient support of current local mission leaders as well as succession planning to meet the need for competent mission leadership at every level of their ministries

Add to the list these worries, among the ones repeated most often when we asked participants in the 2012 System Mission Leaders Forum to name the two biggest challenges they encounter in their interaction with boards and executive leaders:

- Getting adequate time on board and executive team agendas for formation opportunities,

which are often viewed as an infringement on the “real” business of the group

- Effective linkage of mission reflection and business decisions

■ Bridging the gap between “notional” and “real” assent to the church’s social teaching on the part of boards and executive teams

■ Inconsistent interpretations of the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services* from diocese to diocese, creating havoc in the development of strategic initiatives across broad geographic areas

■ The need for effective and ongoing formation of lay leaders so they may be trusted to maintain the integrity of the ministry

Our “Mayhem Is Coming” ad campaign for mission leaders might include scenes like this:

■ Mayhem locks the conference room door so a mission leader can’t get in while the hospital board meets to decide an important partnership with an other-than-Catholic entity

■ A CEO and a mission leader are trying to make a presentation about a new health service that will cross the territory of several dioceses. A chorus of bishops drowns them out as Mayhem conducts shouts of “Yes! No! Maybe!”

■ A mission leader tries to hold executive leaders’ attention during a session on ethical decision-making while Mayhem sends barrages of calls, emails and text messages to their smartphones

The point of making up these exaggerated scenes is to help us think about what “being in good hands” would look like as the health care en-

vironment moves through the significant changes ahead. Mission leaders want to impart a sense of hope to their colleagues in leadership. How do we address some of these concerns — what would be our hedge against mayhem?

Consider those with whom mission leaders must join hands in common effort to meet the challenges we face. Sponsors clearly play a key role in setting the framework and expectations for organizational characteristics that make our work a ministry. They are the link between our ministries and the larger church. There is a natural collaboration with mission leaders who are tasked with supporting and developing the Catholic identity of their ministries. This relationship was certainly affirmed in January 2012, during a joint session of the System Mission Leaders Forum and the Sponsorship Institute.

I have often observed that many of the current effective leadership formation programs are the result of clear advocacy by system sponsors. This is an example of effective engagement by sponsors with their ministries in a way that sets important standards and accountabilities. This formation also applies to boards, where sponsors often have their focus and where many mission leaders interact.

Formation itself is essential and non-negotiable as a hedge against mayhem in the future. Lay leaders are fully entrusted with key business decisions that generally do not come to sponsors. Those decisions shape the culture and ethos of our ministries one by one. We cannot be serious about Catholic identity and not provide for in-depth formation of lay leadership.

Along with support for formation, sponsors also have the capacity to set expectations for the role of mission, including its place in key decision-making. Asking about mission's role and input in decisions is an appropriate way to track its place and influence within their sponsored ministries. This addresses an ongoing concern among mission leaders — that they still find it necessary to invite themselves into important meetings and decision-making processes. While there is clear evidence this has improved, there is still more progress required.

Mission leaders themselves also serve as a support to one another in a variety of ways. The perspective offered by sharing ideas and experi-

ence with mission leaders across the ministry is important. CHA offers such networking opportunities through system mission forums, mission seminars, new mission leaders programs and the online mission leaders community.

The annual CHA Assembly is a prime location for important networking. I am aware that mission leaders also meet in ad-hoc groups on a regular basis to share ideas on important issues.

The management teams with which the mission leader works are also important partners. While many systems see the CEO as chief mission officer — with good reason — good CEOs understand the unique competencies that a mission leader brings to the management team. These include a familiarity with, if not an expertise in, ethics that allows them to flag important questions for deeper consideration; an in-depth knowledge of the church's theological tradition that allows them to bring a different set of questions to important decisions. Mission leaders have a good background in ecclesiology that allows them to act as support to their colleagues who deal with important issues that involve the larger church, most especially the diocesan bishop.

In short, while all CEOs are mindful of mission, few carry the specific competencies. Mission leaders are a resource that should be at the

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management table to assure congruency with our work as a ministry.

I invite you to think about the challenges you face — what does potential mayhem look like for you? What does “being in good hands” look like in your role?

How are you keeping mayhem in check and working instead from a deep sense of hope?

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