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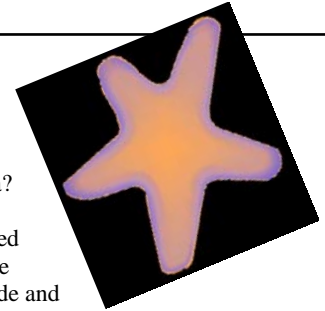
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Kingdom-focussed E-Mail news-bulletin with inspiring reports of God at work around the world, with special emphasis on the current global revolutionary reformation of Church and Missions. **Editor:** Wolfgang Simson. Subscription: €30/ US-\$ 40 per year. Freitagfax2, PO Box 1248, D-79397 Kandern, Germany. Email info@ffax2.com; website: www.ffax2.com. © Dawn Europa e.V.; 22 issues per year, available in English and German.



Spider or Starfish?

Have you ever asked yourself, what does craigslist have in common with al Qaeda? How were Skype and the Apache Nation linked? Or why people rather nowadays turn to Wikipedia than to Encyclopaedia Britannica for information? And do you recall the so-called "open source movement"? Officially born in 1998, rather than trying to monopolize the market like Microsoft and make the most of it, computer software developers actually published the source code and made it available, enabling anyone to copy, modify and redistribute the source code without paying royalties or fees. This new philosophy has given the world Linux, Apache or Mozilla Firefox, and many other excellent programmes. And have you thought about what all of this has to do with the current global reformation that sweeps and reshapes Christianity?



Its a revolution out there, according to TIME Magazine in a recent article on YouTube. You probably have heard that two young guys called Steve Chen and Chad Hurley had started an internet-platform for ordinary people to share their videos, and search, watch and rate those of others (even I am online there: go to www.youtube.com and watch a short interview called "Simple Church Interviews"). That was in 2004. On Oct. 16th, 2006, the company was bought by Google for \$ 1.65 billion, a phenomenal success story. There are three revolutions going on out there, says TIME: a **technological revolution** by ever cheaper hard- and software; a **social revolution** that analysts have called Web 2.0, where people create and share information together, and a **cultural revolution**, where people turn away from mainstream media and it's top-down culture (talking heads spoon feed passive spectators ideas about what's happening in the world) and rather choose to listen to unfiltered news and stories from folks like themselves.

The Decentralized Revolution

It has all to do with the big difference between a spider and a starfish, argue Rod A. Beckstrom and Ori Brafman, two young entrepreneurs, both with an MBA from Stanford who, on October 5, 2006, have come out with a new book called **The Starfish and the Spider: The unstoppable power of leaderless organizations**. "If you cut off a spider's head, it dies. But if you cut off a starfish's leg, it grows a new one – and the cut off leg can grow an entirely new starfish. Traditional top-down organizations are like spiders, but now starfish organizations are changing the face of business and the world", they say. Using the stories of Grokster, Napster, Emule, Skype, Ebay, Wikipedia and other recent movements with phenomenal success, and linking it with the stories of AA (Alcoholics Anonymous), the abolishment of slavery in England or even Early Christianity, they "lift the lid on a massive revolution in the making, certain to reshape every organization on the planet from bridge clubs to global government", comments Paul Saffo, director of "Institute for the Future". Klaus Schwab, executive chairman of the World Economic Forum in Davos, proposed ten action points for his own organization after reading the book. But what is this decentralized revolution (the original title for the book) all about?



A spider is a creature with a head and eight legs. It's a symbol of a centralized, top-down, hierarchical structure. In a spider-structure, there has to be a king, someone who is in charge, and legs: those who do the work, but are not required to think. In comparison, starfishes have no head; they are a flat neural system, a decentralized network of cells. If cut into pieces, the entire animal can replicate itself from a single piece of an arm. As a starfish has five arms, starfish organizations, Beckstrom and Brafman content, have five important foundations on which they stand:

1) Circles. Circles are self-organizing groups of people with a common cause or interest that can emerge, expand, multiply or die spontaneously, without red tape or authorization "from above". Circles are not lawless; they don't have rules (someone else's idea of what you should do), but they depend on norms (values, ethics, codes) that are the backbone of the circle. The members who start or join a circle, own, embrace and even enforce these norms themselves, and this is exactly why norms become more powerful than rules. A typical circle would be a group of Alcoholics Anonymous, peer-to-peer file-sharing Internet users, a group of Quakers (or a housechurch). "Ordinary people, organized into circles, gain immense power", say Beckstrom and Brafman.

2) Catalysts. A catalyst is an element that initiates (or speeds up) a reaction of other elements without being used up in the process. Catalysts in starfish organizations are the inventors, ideologists, inspirational people that refuse to control; they are like architects that are vital to build a house, *but then don't move in*. They function entirely different from a CEO (see box). Catalysts that stay around for too long become absorbed into their own creation and start to centralize the whole structure – the very opposite of what they want to achieve!

CEO	Catalyst
The Boss	A Peer
Command-and-control	Trust
Rational	Emotionally Intelligent
Powerful	Inspirational
Directive	Collaborative
In the Spotlight	Behind the Scenes
Order	Ambiguity
Organizing	Connecting

3) Ideology. A starfish organization needs a “Big Idea”, a founding vision. For AA the ideology is simple: “If you have a problem with alcohol, stop consulting the experts, and lets help each other and follow simple twelve steps,” which are the implication of the ideology. For Skype, the motto is: “Lets talk on the phone for free!”

4) Pre-Existing Networks. As much as you can't launch a rocket without a launching pad or a ramp, an idea needs a place, a platform from which to start. Bill W, the founder of AA, started with “The Oxford Group”, an independent Christian movement launched by a renegade Lutheran minister. Another historical example for this is the role of the Quakers in the abolishing of slavery in England. Here, Granville Sharp was the catalyst, Thomas Clarkson the champion, and the network of about 20.000 Quakers became the platform which helped birth a nationwide and finally successful movement (interestingly enough, failing to understand the power of a starfish organization, William Wilberforce, a politician, ally and spokesman for the movement in Parliament, has been wrongly credited for the main success of the movement). Centralized organizations are not set up to launch decentralized movements, and so the Internet is today a huge “breeding ground” for many starfish organizations.

5) Champions. While catalysts are the visionaries, champions are the implementers. They apply, embody, promote or sell the idea of someone else and give it wings. By yielding and becoming the echo to a voice, they make the vision work and incarnate the catalysts' original design. Both catalysts and champions are very different, but both desperately need each other for the entire enterprise to work.

Tools of a Catalyst

While a CEO is the Boss who is in charge and occupies the top of the hierarchy, he must be rational. Catalysts are different. Their job is to create personal relationships, networks, and instead of “maximizing profit”, they are mission-oriented. A good catalyst is a master at pitching the big idea, full of inspiring ideas, able to mobilize people by sharing inspirational stories, someone that can get people to do what they would not dream of doing on their own. “Catalysts have mysterious ways of getting things done”, say Brafman and Beckstrom. Taking a closer look, their tools, however, seem to be similar. Here a few of them that Beckstrom/Brafman mention:

Genuine Interest in Others. To a catalyst, people are like walking novels. Having a passion for people, asking the right questions brings out their true passion - and extremely valuable insights and information.

Loose Connections. Most people have a few trusted and close friends; catalysts have genuine interactions with thousands; they thrive on meeting new people all the time.

Mapping. If our personal maps are a sketch of a neighborhood or a city, the catalyst's map is a detailed satellite image of an entire country. Catalysts don't just know more people; they constantly think of how people fit into their huge mental map.

Trust. Flattened hierarchies are unpredictable, and therefore require a new level of trust. Catalysts cannot control outcome, but they can “trust the network”. And “the network trusts the catalyst because people know he trusts them”.

Hands-Off Approach. Probably the most counterintuitive element of being a catalyst is getting out of the way of people. Rather than being an automatic answer-man for “what are we supposed to be doing?”-questions, people need to learn to answer these questions themselves as they go - and that is exactly how such a high level of ownership evolves in starfish organizations.

Receding. After a catalyst has done his job, what do they do? They leave. If they stay around, catalysts might block the decentralized organization's growth. Only in the absence of the catalysts will people take the reins and move forward.

What could happen to Christianity if nobody's The Boss?

Officially, Christianity has no human boss. Jesus is the only head it needs. At the beginning, this is what Christianity looked like – and that is why on Brafmans and Beckstroms website www.starfishandspider.com they mention *Early Christianity* as a model of a starfish organization. I am hereby inviting your feedback (one paragraph only) on this question and would like to include some of the answers in the next issue of the Fridayfax – in January 2007. January 2007 will also see the launch of the new book of Wolf Simson, “The Starfish Manifesto”. You will be able to download it at www.thestarfishpartnership.net. Lastly: consider joining an exciting conference coming up called “Organic Church Movements Conference” in Los Angeles/USA Jan 26th- 28th, 2007. Ori Brafman will be speaking on the issue of “leaderless starfish organizations”; also there will be Alan and Debrah Hirsch, Neil Cole, Tony and Felicity Dale, Wolfgang Simson and many others. Sign up quickly at www.cmresources.org.