Generating Relevant and Realistic Recommendations

As you have gathered information about each of the objectives, you will also have sensed some recommendations which will move the church forward towards these goals. These often will have come from discussions and small group interactions. With experience, consultants often get a feel for good ideas and note them down as the process unfolds.

Recommendations do not need to address all of the issues. Nor do they have to be perfect solutions for the problems identified. Often the most important recommendations are simple achievable ideas or processes which assist the church become a healthier community. This then positively influences many other parts of the organisation some beyond the focus of the consultancy.

1. It is important that recommendations arise clearly from findings or observations. Recommendations need to be justified by the information gathered in relation to each objective. Check through your report to ensure that there is a solid basis for each recommendation put forward.

2. While on occasions, recommendations may arise from your own experience and background, i.e. in crisis interventions, for the most part the recommendations should come from the church or organisation itself. Learn to listen for positive good ideas on addressing objectives throughout the consultancy and wherever possible follow these up to get a good understanding of the idea so that it can be presented well if it is supported by others and by the findings.

3. Make sure recommendations are specifc and easily understandable. For example: A recommendation; "That the elders work as a team" is not very clear or achievable. In contrast; "That the elders invite a facilitator to lead a weekend retreat before the end of the year to establish a teamwork covenant for 2009 and to conduct an evaluation of team roles".

4. Watch out for recommendations which are linked to personalities or the need for someone in the organisation (often the pastor) to change their style or nature. Focus instead on changes to create healthy structures and processes rather than seeking to change people.

5. Think about causes and effects. Often targeting the change 'one level' above the area you want to change works best. If the problem is in youth ministry itself, think leadership development, support and mentoring for the youth leaders. This often brings about the needed change in youth ministry.

6. Recommendations need to be about processes or situations over which the church or leadership has some ability to control. Things like church attendance can be encouraged but not controlled.

7. Recommendations also need to be important to the church and about things which the church is clearly committed to. If these are linked to the objectives this should be straight forward.

Standard Recommendations

1. **Release of the Report**
   It is normal to recommend the release of the report at a constituted meeting of the church and that the recommendations be presented and put before the church for adoption.

2. **Implementation Group**
   A key recommendation is the appointment of an implementation group who will be responsible to the Church for ensuring that all recommendations adopted by the church are in fact implemented.

3. **Follow Up Consultancy**
   Often churches benefit from a follow up consultancy in 2 -3 years time, partly to review what has occurred but also to move the church forward the next step. Many of the growing churches in the nation have regular consultations with outside facilitators.

4. **A clear prioritisation of recommendations, timeline and who should be responsible**
   Place the recommendations in priority order. Allocate a time in which the recommendation should be complete and suggest who or which group should be responsible.