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## HELPING CHURCH LEADERS MAKE THE TRANSITION FROM THE PRESENT TO THE FUTURE

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### KEY PRINCIPLES OF 21st CENTURY NETWORKS

The network is emerging as the signature form of organization in the Information Age. In a 21st century world, networks are increasingly becoming an organizational form replacing the bureaucracy of the Industrial Age. Now, there are networks or groups of people working across all kinds of boundaries as knowledge replaces resources as the new source of wealth. Additionally, most of us have personal networks that cross professional and social lines. Remember the old adage, "it's who you know?" In today's environment, that has been expanded to include "it's who you know...who knows who."

In their book, *The Age of the Network*, authors Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps identify five key organizing principles of 21st century networks that offer insight for both organizations and individuals. The book can be ordered by calling 1-800-225-5945 (be prepared for a long voice mail trail); the price is \$16.95.

- 1. 21st century networks have a unifying purpose or mission.** Purpose is the glue or driver of the network. Common views, values, and goals hold a network together. A shared focus on desired results keeps a network in sync and on track. A network is not driven by a single person or leader, but rather the mission. The accountability of the network is then to the purpose or mission, not to a single person or bureaucracy.
- 2. 21st century networks have independent members.** Independence is the prerequisite for interdependence. While each member of the network whether a person or an organization can stand alone, they grow and benefit from being a part of the whole. There is a synergy produced by the network that cannot be duplicated by the individual.
- 3. 21st century networks have voluntary connections.** The distinguishing feature of networks is their links or connections. These connections are found in all directions...inside and outside, up and down. They cross all kinds of boundaries and the building block of the connection is a relationship built on mutual trust. Communication is essential and takes multiple forms...face to face, correspondence, telephone, fax, e-mail.
- 4. 21st century networks have multiple leaders.** Networks are *leaderful*, not *leaderless*. Each person or organization has something unique to contribute at the appropriate time. With more than one leader, the network also has more resilience.
- 5. 21st century networks have multiple levels.** They are not flat. They are instead very flexible and have several levels and shapes. Within an organization, there may be teams, work groups, and task forces. Individually, some relationships have a higher priority than others, depending on the purpose and usefulness of the network.

**As a 21st century leader, how intentional are you about building and maintaining your networks?  
In what ways does your organization resemble a network?**

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*A significant network of leaders ministering to Generation X has emerged in the past year and many of them will be at the Gen X Forum, April 29-May 2. For more information or an invitation to attend, send an e-mail to [LNGenX@aol.com](mailto:LNGenX@aol.com)*

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