

# HIGH IMPACT CHURCH BOARDS



Finally...  
you can develop  
HEALTHY,  
INTENTIONAL and  
EMPOWERED LEADERS  
FOR YOUR CHURCH.

**JOIN THE HI REVOLUTION!**

T. J. ADDINGTON

## INTRODUCTION

This book was not supposed to be published. When the major publishers saw the manuscript they said, “There is no market; it won’t sell. Try another subject.” After consulting with churches for well over a decade on leadership, governance and intentionality, I knew they were dead wrong. Boards everywhere are looking for help to lead better and to ensure that their ministries are more effective. So with the help of two great friends, Brian Kagan and Allan Hardin, I decided to bring the book to market myself.

**For too long we have settled for too little in the local church.**

This book is a labor of love for all church leaders who long for better results from their leadership. It’s written to encourage those brave souls who, in spite of the challenges and discouragements, have answered God’s call to lead His church. It’s written to remind those believers who, like me, believe that the local church is God’s instrument to reach the world with His great news of the gospel. And it’s written to motivate those leaders who long to see the fruit of their labor yield much greater fruit for God’s kingdom.

Let’s face it: For too long we have settled for too little in the local church. We have not embraced the promise of Christ for “much fruit, copious fruit” (John 15) in our ministries but have been content with modest fruit. We have allowed our church structures to hinder and handicap ministry initiatives. We have allowed accidental rather than deeply intentional ministry to characterize our leadership. And our structures have made leadership a chore rather than a joy as they creak along unchanged, decade after decade, while our churches and leadership needs *have* changed.

This is written for those leaders who want to see their church become everything it can be under God—those who want to maximize the missional impact of their congregation. It is for those not content with the status quo and who believe that a high impact board is not only possible but is the only kind of leadership Christ would want for His church. It is for those who want healthier leaders and more intentional leadership

paradigms, and who long for empowered leadership structures and cultures in their congregations.

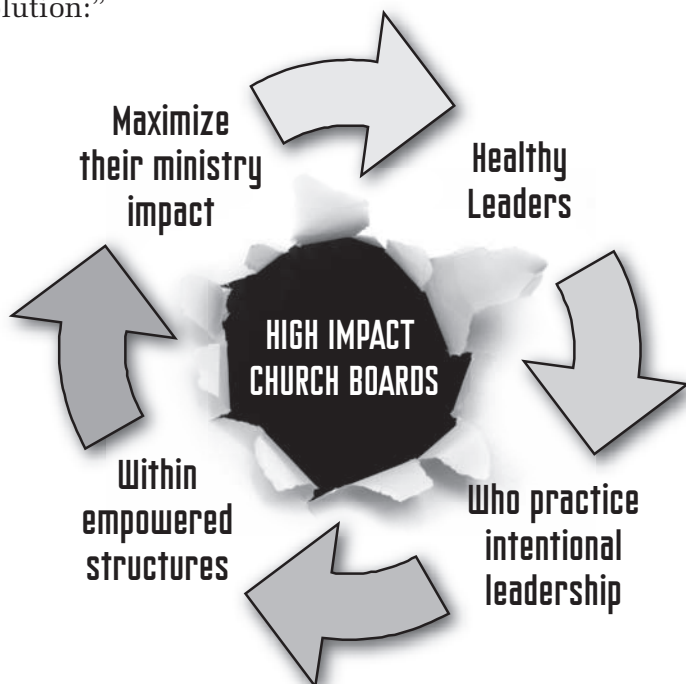
This is also a practical book. It is written primarily for leadership practitioners, not academicians. As a church leader, you want two things: tools that work and tools that are biblical. These are the two foci of the book. While I am an avid reader of leadership material both secular and religious and have learned much from them, the heart of this material comes out of my

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understanding of what God has called church leaders to be and do. It comes, as well, from having lived in the real world of church leadership for more than three decades.

Like you, I have seen the great, the good, the bad and the ugly along the way. I want to help church leaders move to the great, never settle for the good, and deal effectively with the bad and the ugly. If I could make one promise to you through this book, it would be just that.

Everything in this book revolves around the “High Impact Revolution:”



High impact boards do not happen by accident. They start with a conviction by leaders that we will not be satisfied until we lead our church in a way that maximizes ministry impact. To settle for anything less is unacceptable for the church of Christ. Those who are satisfied with the status quo don't need to read this book. I am writing for those who long for more, better, deeper and more fruitful ministry in their church.

To achieve that end, I am convinced that three areas demand our attention. First, health and clarity—the health of church leaders and clarity in what God has called them to do. This is the focus of the first section of the book.

Second, intentional ministry—a commitment to deeply intentional ministry on an annual basis rather than what I call accidental ministry. The second section of this book provides a simply, workable paradigm for moving your congregation intentionally in the direction to which God is calling you.

Third, leadership structures—friendly structures and an empowered church culture that allows leaders to lead and participants to minister. Too many churches have controlling and permission-withholding cultures rather than empowering and permission-granting cultures. This is the focus of the third section of the book.

I call this circle the High Impact Revolution because paying attention to these three areas—and getting them right—will revolutionize the leadership impact of your board and the ministry impact of your congregation. Show me any high impact congregation, and you will find that they got these three areas right.

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### **H.I.** Moment: Take the Test

When I engage in a leadership consultation with someone from the business world, I often ask, “What are your deliverables?” To help you answer that question, respond to the following questions with a yes or a no. Think about your leadership board and governance system as you answer.

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1. Are you ever frustrated by the pace of decision-making?  
Yes            No
2. Is it necessary to get the approval of more than one group in order to get something done?  
Yes            No
3. Do you find your board revisiting issues that you thought you had settled already?  
Yes            No
4. Is there confusion or conflict over what place the congregation, staff team or board plays in leadership or decision-making?  
Yes            No
5. Does your board have a clear job description and understand its responsibilities?  
Yes            No
6. Do you find that you spend more time “managing” day-to-day activities than thinking and planning for the future?  
Yes            No
7. Could you identify the clear “preferred future” for your congregation, and is this a shared dream of the board?  
Yes            No
8. Do your board and staff members have clear annual ministry goals and plans?  
Yes            No
9. Are you frustrated with the number of decisions that need to go to the congregation for approval?  
Yes            No
10. Is there a high level of unity and relational health among board members?  
Yes            No
11. Do your church structure and bylaws hinder rather than help leaders make timely decisions?  
Yes            No
12. Does your board have ample time for prayer and study of Scripture, and to dream and plan for the future?  
Yes            No

13. Does your board have a covenant that spells out its procedural and relational practices?  
Yes          No
14. Has the lack of such a covenant ever caused problems for the board?  
Yes          No
15. Do you have a process designed to find the very best leaders for your senior board?  
Yes          No
16. Do you have a process to mentor and train potential leaders before they become leaders?  
Yes          No
17. Do you believe that your church is maximizing its ministry impact?  
Yes          No
18. Does your congregation have more than one elected board?  
Yes          No
19. Is there tension or confusion between the staff and board over who is responsible for what?  
Yes          No
20. Are you able to attract and retain the best leaders in your church to serve on your senior leadership board?  
Yes          No

How many *yes* answers do you have? \_\_\_\_\_. A perfect score would be a yes for questions 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 20

How many *no* answers do you have? \_\_\_\_\_. A perfect score would be a no for questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 11, 14, 18, 19

Take a moment and find out how each member of your board answered these questions, and discuss the results together. The resulting conversation will help you identify issues in your church leadership paradigm that need to be changed—if you are going to maximize your congregation’s ministry impact.

At the start of a ministry consultation, I usually ask key staff members and members of the senior board of a church (and

other elected committees and boards) to identify the leadership issues that concern them. As I record them on a white board, we all see the results: Almost without exception, the issues fall into one of the three areas of the High Impact Revolution circle. They revolve around the board itself and how it does its leadership; the intentionality (or lack of it) in ministry; and the frustrations of actually getting stuff done and decisions made—the level of empowered structures and culture.

If you take this book seriously, and if you are willing to work through this book as a board (and as senior staff members), you can get to a perfect score above. You can become a high impact board that leads with great intentionality within an empowered structure and culture. If that is what you desire, then this book is for you! I invite you to join the revolution.

This book comes out of serving in leadership capacities in local churches since my late teens—as committee member, board member, board chair, pastor and, for many years now, in a consultancy role. While I love the church, it deeply frustrates me when we allow poor practices to muddle our ministry. My prayer is that this book will have a part in moving thousands of churches toward greater ministry impact and help thousands of boards become high impact boards.

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#### **CAUTIONS**

Do not read this book alone! The reason we have too few high impact boards and churches is that leaders and staff members are often not on the same page. It will not work for a pastor or a single board member to read this book. All it will do is frustrate you, because change happens only when there is shared understanding, robust dialogue and common commitments. If boards read this book, then key staff members need to read it as well, since the two groups are either doing a good dance together or are stepping on one another's toes.

This is truly a “working” document, so as you read it together, engage in robust dialogue. Adopt an attitude of “nothing to prove and nothing to lose.” All of us develop ownership over the way we have done things in the past. Yet healthy individuals and boards do not protect the status quo if there is a better practice. Remember, what worked at a prior stage in your

church's ministry may not work well now. So don't be afraid to acknowledge the need to change.

Do pay attention to those exercises labeled "HI Moments" (High Impact Moments) and "HI Practices" (High Impact Practices) that are spread throughout the book. Remember, high impact boards earned that title because of how they operate, not how much they know. There will be junctures in this book where you as a board need to stop and ask, "What should we change here?" And then make a commitment to do so.

I would encourage you to use this book as part of your training for new board members and staff members, helping ensure a common understanding of your leadership paradigm.

Here is the bottom line: Those in the business world are familiar with ROI (return on investment). A whole lot of successful business depends on the ROI. If the return on investment is not healthy, the business goes south rather than north.

I believe that church boards and staff teams need to pay great attention to ROM (return on mission). Christ has granted to you opportunity, resources, available fruit and a unique ministry

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to ROM: return on mission.**

to touch your community, your area and the world. At the end of the day, the question is, "What is your ROM?" My prayer is that, as you read these principles and practices together, your ROM will steadily increase on an annual basis.

Join in the high impact revolution!

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August 3, 2006