When Culture Trumps Reason...

How the Avoidance of Scandal Puts Children at Risk

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Societal Cost of Child Sexual Abuse

3.69 million children abused in 2009
(Child Maltreatment Report)

US Prisons are filled with men and women who were abused or neglected as children.
Impact of Child Sexual Abuse

• Harm to victims, families
• Reputation of organization/program/mission
  • External sanctions
    • Litigation
    • Financial
  • Relationships
  • The future
Exhibit A
Commonality of Avoidance of Scandal

Damage to reputation of institution, individual or creed
It Can’t Happen to Us!

- The Catholic Church - US, Ireland et.al.
- Los Angeles Unified School District
- Boy Scouts of America
- Young Men’s Christian Association
- Deerfield Academy
- USA Swimming
- Horace Mann Academy
- The Citadel
- Fundamentalist Church of Latter Day Saints
- Penn State University
- Prestonwood Baptist Church
- Anglican Church of Australia
- New York Public Schools
- Satmar Hasidic School Brooklyn
- Kindherhook Town Park Camp, NY
- USA Gymnastics
- Canadian Jr. Hockey League
- USA Figure Skating
- USA Track
John Jay Study Findings

• Canonical restrictions re info sharing
• No reports to law enforcement
• Files scarce or secret
• Rigorous victim intimidation
• Failure to understand victims
• Parishioners not told
• Deflect liability - to therapists
• Rogers “Diffusion of Innovation”
Penn State Report

- Culture permitted behavior and contributed directly to failure of leaders to report and respond

- Certain aspects of culture laudable, but overemphasis on Penn State Way of decision making

- Resistance to outside perspectives

- Excessive focus on athletics

Freeh Report on Penn State
Unreasonable Actions

• Settle, Treat, Transfer
• Denial
• Dismissal of Harm
• Cover-up and subterfuge
• Neutralization of Critics
Situational Narcissism

• Sense of entitlement
• Superiority, self-centered, grandiosity

• Lack of empathy

• Impaired mental judgment
• Moral justification for one’s behavior
Culture Always Trumps Reason

Richard Sipe

Mother Church and the Rape of her Children
Culture is...

More than the character of the organization,

... a dynamic reality *sustained* or *sullied* by its members
Positive Aspects of Organizational Culture

• Values and personal and professional standards

• Camaraderie and sense of belonging

• Loyalty and commitment
Good Culture

- Basis of youth-serving organizations

- Equates with image

- Guides strategies, actions, inactions

- Drives preservation of image and avoidance of scandal
What Should Organizations do?

• Create a values and ethics centered community that places the needs of children before the needs of adults

• Establish and maintain environment of reporting, transparency and accountability

Freeh Report on Penn State
Cultural Caretakers

Leaders are responsible for the way in which a culture creates a family from strangers and leads the organization toward success and away from disaster.
Leaders and Culture

• Motivate personnel

• Enhance brand and reputation

• Improvements

• Course correction
Progress in Preventing Abuse

1950-2004 600

2004–2011 12
Prevention of Child Sex Abuse in Youth-Serving Organizations

1. Policies
2. Security Measures (Facilities, Procedures)
3. Training (Awareness, Reporting, Response)
4. Compliance/enforcement
5. Accountability
6. Transparency
7. Leadership – Leadership - Leadership
Responding to Allegations of Child Sex Abuse

1. Apologize appropriately
2. Put people first
3. Prevent continued damage
4. Prompt and decisive
5. Be there
6. Communicate liberally and relentlessly
Responding to Allegations of Child Sex Abuse

7. Document actions

8. Gather facts continually

9. Crisis = Opportunity to improve and lead

10. Tell your own bad news

11. Legalities vs. the right thing

12. Emphasize character and values
Any church (organization) that cannot tell the truth about itself runs the risk of having nothing significant to be heard.


*Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church: A Decade of Crisis* (2011)
Issue Fatigue

The plight of the victim is too grave to be relegated to history.
References

• John Jay Report – Causes & Context
• National Review Board Report
• Penn State Report
• Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church: A Decade of Crisis