1. **Cultural Trends Church Leaders Can’t Ignore (But Might)** [CAREY NIEUWHOF](https://careynieuwhof.com/author/carey/)

When you lead an organization — especially when you are responsible for leading an organization like the local church — there is a temptation to ignore trends or minimize the impact they will have on how you operate.

It’s so difficult to gain and keep momentum, that when you have some momentum it becomes tempting to ignore the changes around you because they might force you to rethink your method.

But the truth is that **your method (your strategy, your approach, your plan) is not sacred; the mission is sacred.**

[Andy Molinski calls it global dexterity](http://www.forbes.com/sites/danschawbel/2013/04/10/andy-molinsky-how-to-adapt-to-cultural-changes-in-foreign-countries/): The ability to adapt behaviours across cultures without losing who you are in the process.

**Leaders who are willing to reconsider the methods to preserve the mission are usually the ones who succeed long term.**

While there are dozens of trends that are impacting the church, the trends outlined below are what I would call ‘organizational sleepers’.

We all see them.

Our lives are impacted by them every day.

*But many leaders are not talking about their impact.*

**One of the reasons we’re not talking about these issues might be that few of these trends have implications for the church that are clear cut or obvious.**

Most of the thinking around these trends lead to wet cement conversations — thoughts that are open to reshaping, rethinking and reconsidering. Not every leader is comfortable with that kind of conversation.

So I offer them as things we need to be thinking about, talking about and praying through.

**While there may be no clear answers, there should at least be conversation among leaders, boards and the thought leaders of any organization.**

Here are the 12 trends in no particular order:

**1. Online as the New Default.** You used to have to go to church to hear a message or music, or get the cassette or cd. Now you just need a phone. Every attender can (and often will) listen to any communicator, band or concert they want. And almost everyone who shows up at your door has checked out your church online before they came. *What are you doing to embrace the online world beyond a barely-supported and moderately outdated website, podcast or Facebook page?*

**2. Wifi and Smartphones.**They are googling you while you’re speaking, and checking out other options while you’re listing yours. *Do you assume your audience is intelligent, literate and has options?*

**3. Dialogue.**People want to talk, not just listen. While sitting around tables every Sunday may not be the answer, increasingly a church without conversation is a church without converts. *What scalable, meaningful venues do you have for people to go to online and inhouse for real conversation?*

**4. Loyalty.**Brand loyalty is low. [4 of the top 5 global companies](http://www.rankingthebrands.com/The-Brand-Rankings.aspx?rankingID=30)didn’t exist 40 years ago. Being around for a long time can be seen as a liability with the next generation. ([Rich Birch has a great info-graphic on this](http://www.unseminary.com/how-global-consumer-trends-are-impacting-your-church-infographic/).) *How are you showing the relevance of an ancient faith to the current generation?*

**5. Lack of guilt.**Guilt used to motivate people to change and even to come to faith. The next generation feels less guilt than almost any previous generation. *Are you still using guilt to motivate people?* (By the way, Jesus *never*used guilt to motivate outsiders.)

**6. Declining trust in authority.** People will still trust authority when the authority has earned their confidence. But they start out with suspicion. More than ever, trust is earned slowly and lost instantly. *How is the way you exercise authority worthy of people’s confidence?*

**7. Declining trust in institutions.** You have to show people how an organization can help them, because by default, they don’t think it/you can or will. *How are you demonstrating trustworthiness?*

**8. Personalized, eclectic spirituality.**  People want to find their own unique path, and most start out that way. They will embrace the path of Christ, but they don’t start out there. *How do you embrace where they start but encourage them not to finish there?*

**9. A desire for greater purpose**. Millennials will not stay long at work or causes that have little greater meaning or purpose. I wrote more on [why you need young leaders in your organization here](https://careynieuwhof.com/2012/10/why-young-leadership-is-essential-to-your-organization/).  *Is your mission and vision clear, compelling and inexhaustible?*

**10. Personal mission.**People aren’t waiting for someone to change the world, they’ll just do it. From charity runs to starting non-profits from home, the next generation not only believes they can have a global impact, many are having it. If your church doesn’t have a burning sense of purpose and vision, you look lame compared to the average 22 year old. *How is your vision motivating people who have vision?*

**11. Trust in user reviews**. What you say about your organization matters less than what others say. People place far more trust in user reviews than advertising copy.*What are others saying about your organization and how would people find that out?*

**12. The death of cash and cheques**. When was the last time you wrote a cheque or paid $500 cash for something? No one does that anymore. But every Sunday most church leaders expect most of their offering to come in via cash or cheque. *Is most of your giving happening online? Why not?*