

Management Excellence in Christian Organizations: An Employee Perspective

Key Insights on Managing Christian Organizations

We are often asked, what does “well managed” mean when staff respond to the statement, our organization is well managed? Good management is important to any organization and Christian organizations are no exception. Moreover, the data indicates there are some unique aspects to managing Christian organizations.

This article is based on an assessment of management excellence in Christian organizations taken from survey data of 9,594 Christian workers surveyed in 2008. The perceptions of these Christian workers together with some statistical analysis of the data paint an interesting and informative picture. It’s a picture of how management can improve, what is most important to workers and where management can focus to make the most improvement. The large sample size provides a statistically valid representation of Christian workplaces and with a high level of confidence in the results.

An analysis of the Best Christian Workplaces Institute (BCWI) survey indicates nine questions highly correlate to the question “My organization is well managed”:

Item	Statement
10	My organization's leaders exhibit the fruit of the Holy Spirit (love, joy, peace, kindness, etc.).
12	My organization's leaders keep a focus on putting Christ first in daily decision-making.
14	There is a high level of trust at my organization between senior leadership and employees.
17	My organization's leaders behave with fairness and integrity.
18	My organization's leaders demonstrate compassion for people at all levels.
30	My organization promotes the most qualified employees.
32	My organization acts on the suggestions of employees.
35	My organization conducts its activities openly and honestly.
36	At my organization, people are responsible and held accountable for doing what they say they will do.

The Elements of Management Excellence. These questions are naturally grouped into five elements:

1. Spirit directed (10 & 12)
2. Trust (14, 17, 18, & 35)
3. Promotion fairness (30)
4. Acting on suggestions of employees (32)
5. Accountability (36)



Figure 1. BCWI's Elements of Management Excellence

Spirit Directed.

The first category, "Spirit directed," reflects the spiritual aspect of management. When employees perceive that management relies on Christ for daily decision-making, the perception of good management logically follows. So, how do employees accurately perceive if management puts Christ first in decision-making? Exhibiting the fruit of the Holy Spirit is one likely way employees decipher if management operates under submission to Christ or under their own power. Thus, we see a connection between the perception of good management in an organization, and the perception of submission to Christ.

Trust.

The second category, "Trust", is comprised of four questions that are highly correlated to management and highly correlated to each other. As discussed in a previous article in *The Positive Core*, "What the Data Tells Us: A Different Perspective on Trust," management is one of the three major components of trust and likewise trust is a vital component of effective management. These four questions also reveal that trust hinges upon leadership fairness, compassion and openness. Thus leaders need to sincerely look out for their employees and take the time to communicate with them.

Fair Promotion.

The third category related to management excellence is promoting the most qualified people. There are three major components related to this question. First, there is the question of fairness. If people believe management will reward hard work and competence with promotion, then there would be a sense of fairness. A second component is the perception that management is aware of the work and performance level of the workers. It follows that if managers do not know enough about the work that their staff are doing, they won't be able to accurately determine whom has best earned a promotion. Any poor decisions about promotions would then lower their staff's level of trust in the manager. The third aspect of this category is the downward spiral created in an organization when poor managers/leaders are placed in positions of responsibility. This question addresses a small part of the issue of getting people serving in their area

of giftedness. Or, as Jim Collins in his book From Good to Great puts it, get the right people in the right seats on the bus.

Act on Suggestions.

The fourth category, acting on the suggestion of employees, is an indicator of how well management engages the talents and passion of workers in the mission of the organization. If employees perceive their suggestions are listened to and used, they are more likely to be invested, engaged, and passionate about the mission of their organization.

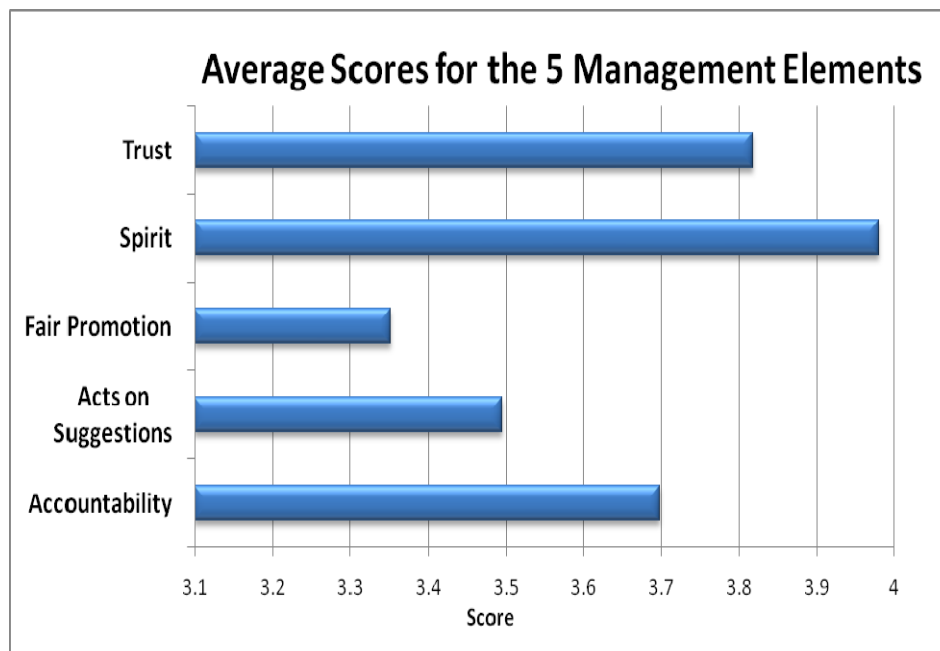
Accountability.

The fifth category, accountability, as discussed in a previous issue of *The Positive Core*, “*Surprising Findings About Accountability*,” is a key concept of management as well as transactional leadership. Without accountability, management becomes *laissez-faire*, which is one of the few proven counterproductive management styles. In other words, you will likely get more done with no management than with a *laissez-faire* manager.

Management Excellence in Christian Organizations.

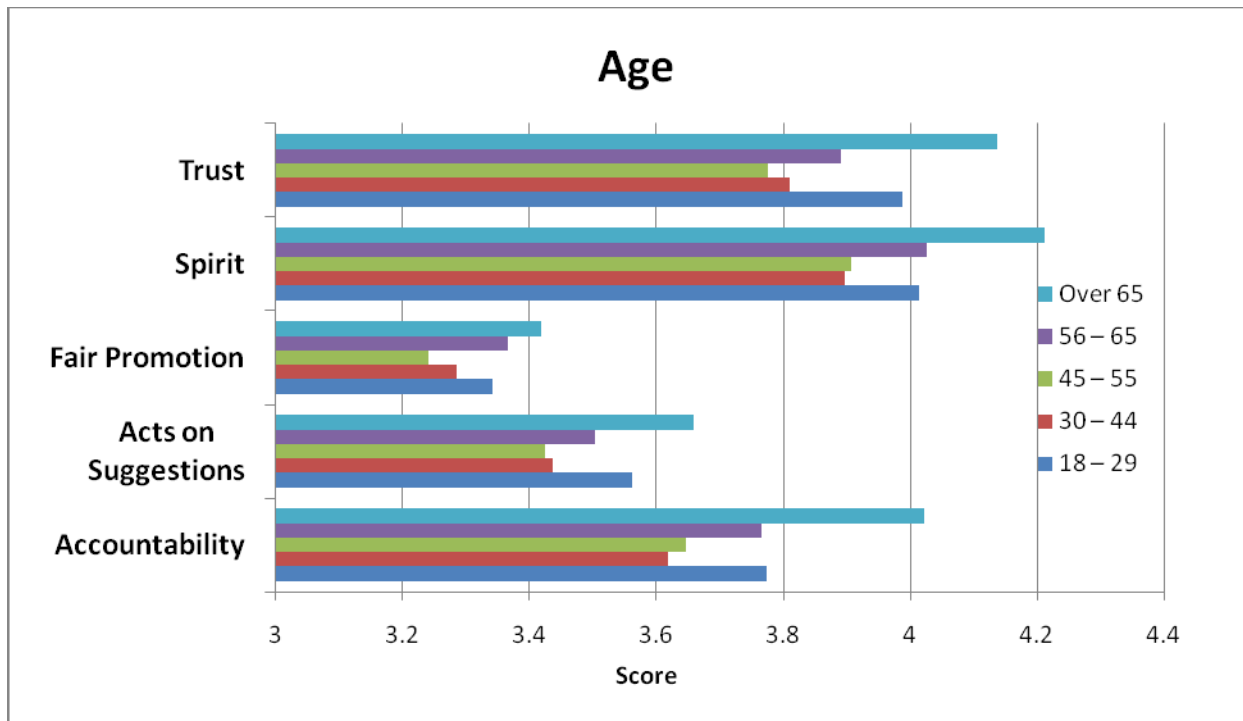
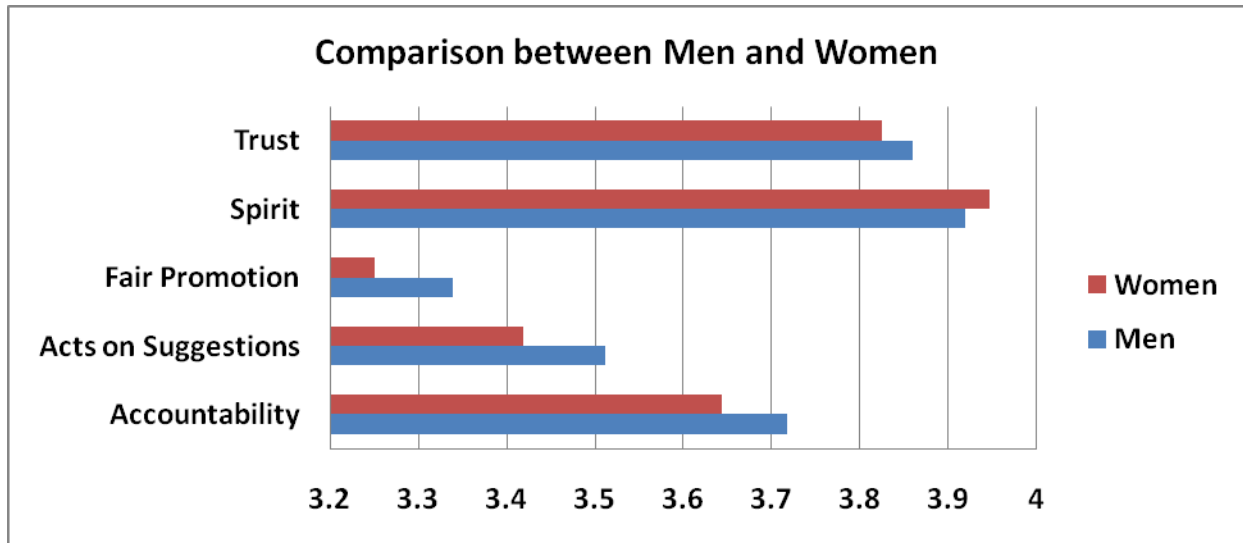
The graph below represents the results of the five elements from the survey. These results are surprising in that they suggest the employee perception of promoting the most qualified people has the lowest average scores, thus indicating an area which many organizations struggle. Since all of the questions listed in this article are fairly equally correlated to satisfaction in management, the area of fair promotion offers the biggest possible improvement. This is something managers should focus on.

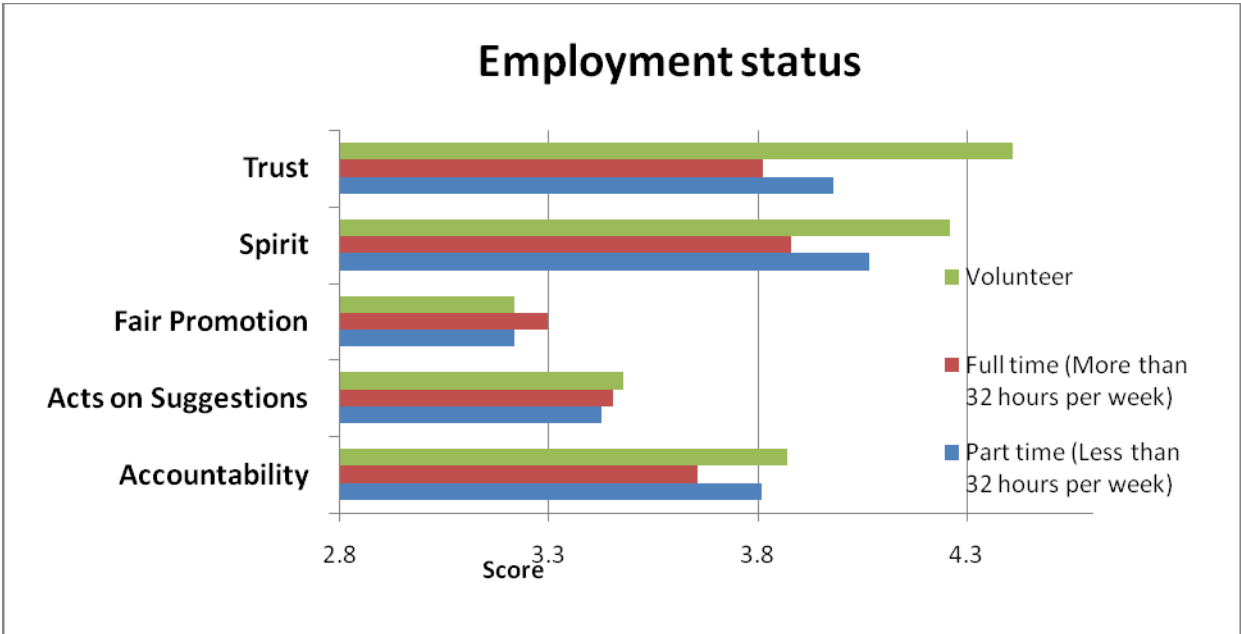
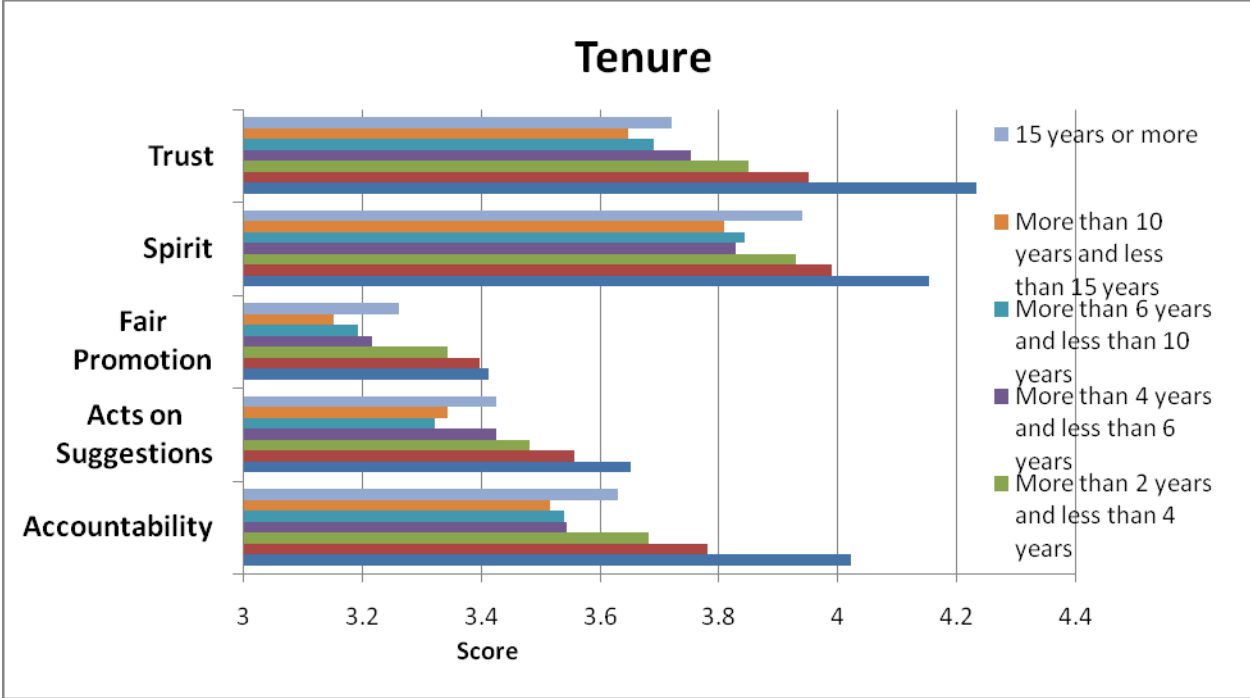
The next most negative category is acting on employee suggestions and the third most negative is accountability. Trust and the spiritual direction of management are relatively healthy compared to the other three.

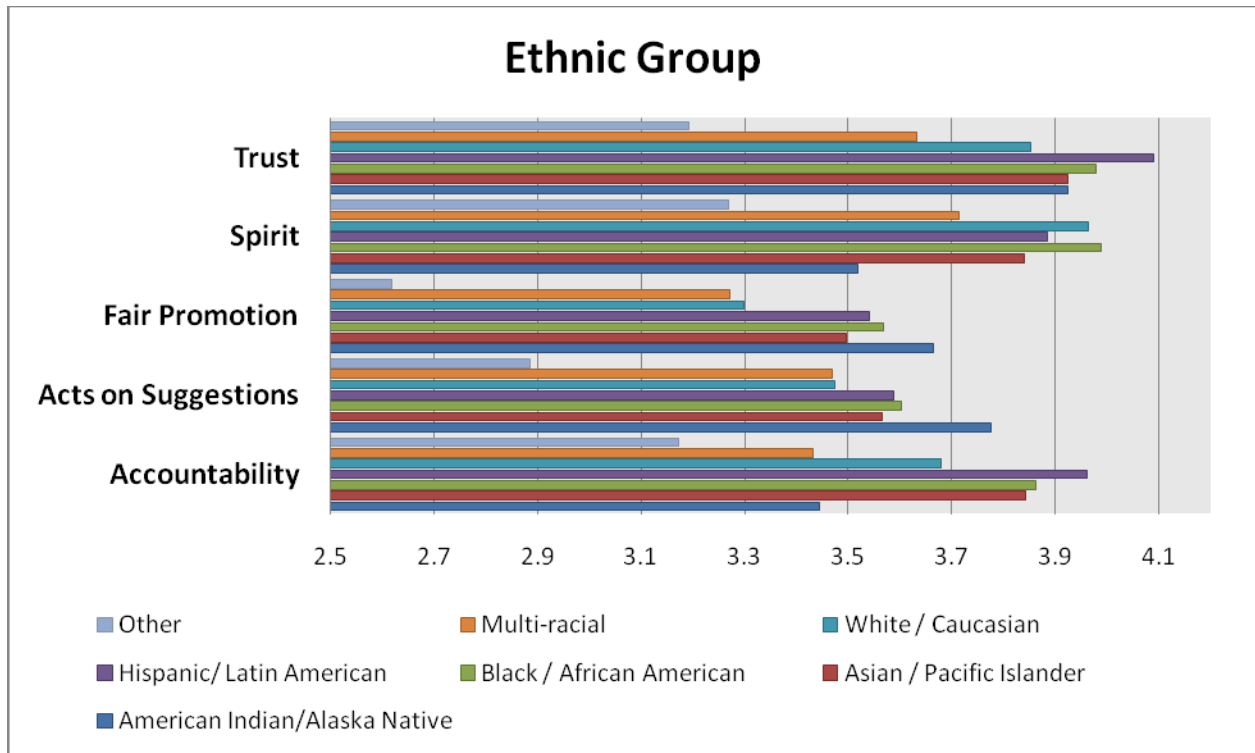


Demographic Variances

Demographic patterns in relation to the five elements described are displayed below. The demographic data follow typical patterns. The difference between men and women is not significant, age and tenure data shows new and young people are the most satisfied in every category, older people with the highest tenure are the second most satisfied and the ages and tenures in between follow a typical curve.







Conclusions.

So what is someone to do with this data? First, it is important to understand that the above data represents average scores of a very large sample. Although this data most likely is an accurate reflection of the entire Christian workforce population, it may not represent any one particular organization.

Surveying your organization is a recommended first step before taking action. If your organization follows the pattern above, then you know to focus on your process for developing, managing the performance of, and promoting people in your organization. Consider how you engage your workers by seeking their suggestions, ideas, and input to accomplish your mission. Finally, if accountability is an issue in your organization, refer to our previous article on accountability to take action.