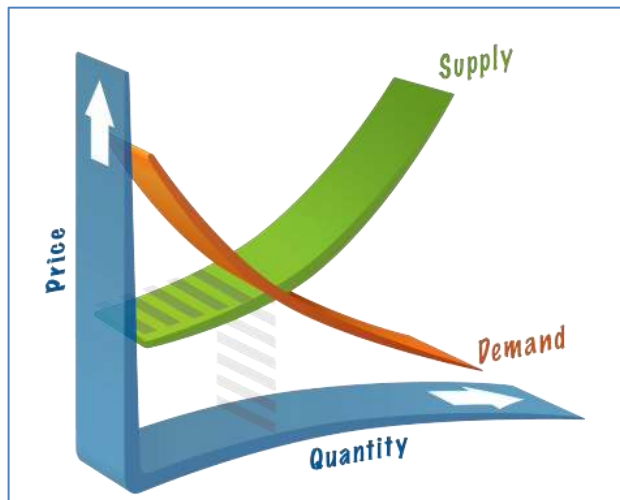


## Let's Start Selling the First Blessing Again

Graham Simon  
September 14, 2015



Running a successful business is not easy. Statistics show that 50% of new businesses fail within the first five years. Companies wishing to survive in a competitive marketplace have to ask themselves such basic questions as:

- Are the management, organization and financing of the company fit for purpose?
  - How can we best market our product or service?
  - Has the sales force sampled the product or service and are they sufficiently motivated to go out and sell it?
- How great is the demand for the product or service we are offering?

While a spiritual organization may be very different from a firm, there are many parallels too. Any spiritual organization that seeks to grow through proselytizing can usefully look at itself and ask these same four questions. This approach is particularly pertinent when attempting to discover why the Unification Movement has failed to grow in the West over the past quarter century.

Let us address each question in turn.



Graham Simon

### **Are the management, organization and financing of the movement fit for purpose?**

In the U.S. and UK of late, a lot of change has occurred in the management, organization and financing of the FFWPU. In the UK, the FFWPU is constituted as a charity. The trustees of the charity have successfully turned around the finances of the movement over the last five years. Last month, the membership was presented with a detailed proposal, which had been more than nine months in the making, for the restructuring of the UK movement. The proposal sets out a plan for improving both the operational management of the charity and fulfilment of its providential aspirations. However, while all of this is important, it is not essential to the expansion of the Providence, because if any one of us is truly motivated, we are quite at liberty to franchise the “product” that the FFWPU is offering and sell it ourselves. We call the franchise *tribal messiahship*.

### **How can we best market our product or service?**

Much energy has also gone into the question of marketing. The argument goes: we have the perfect product, but have just not been able to package it correctly. If we work on the presentation of the product and pay more attention to our PR and media strategy, then sales will start to rocket. We have seen it happen in Brazil and the Philippines. Perhaps we can adopt similar strategies in the West. Certainly improvements are being made in this area, but the results to date have been marginal.

### **Has the sales force sampled the product or service and are they sufficiently motivated to go out and sell it?**

The question of the motivation of the sales force is also one to which we pay a significant amount of attention. If our own families can be happier, more successful, and more assured about the choices we have made over the course of our lives, then why would we not want to go and tell others about the product? In fact, if the product really does what it says on the tin, we should not even have to tell others: the benefits should be so self-evident that people will inquire about the product themselves. Sales leads will be self-generating. This is a nice idea and one that may be actually taking place in a few cases. But the question of motivation is really one we can only answer ourselves, as individuals, couples or families.

### **How great is the demand for the product or service we are offering?**

Whether there is demand in the marketplace for the product is the most critical question of all. All

students of economics are introduced to the law of supply and demand within the first couple of weeks of study. On a simple chart with price on the y-axis and quantity on the x-axis, demand is generally represented as a line or curve that slopes downwards from left to right, indicating that the lower the price, the greater the demand from buyers. Conversely, supply is generally represented by a line or curve that slopes upwards from left to right, indicating that the higher the price, the greater the quantity that producers are willing to supply. The point at which demand and supply intersect is the point of equilibrium and indicates the price that buyers will pay and the quantity that will be sold.

If we acknowledge the stark reality that new members are hardly joining the movement in the West and that any growth in income is being generated by more productive uses of assets rather than increased donations, then we are forced to admit there is little or no demand for the product we are offering, at any price.

Unfortunately, most debate focuses on supply-side issues — better organization, better marketing, how to motivate the sales force (resulting in more witnessing), rather than the fundamental question of whether there is actually demand for the product itself. And, heaven forbid, if there is no demand, could it be that the product we are trying to sell either has limited value or that we are actually selling the wrong product?

At this point, it may be useful if we come to some consensus about what product we are offering to the public today. When asked this question, the four responses given by a group of members in the UK were: The Divine Principle, True Parents, The Blessing, and Change of Blood Lineage.

There was a time, especially in the 1970s and early 1980s, when our movement was growing fast. In the early '80s, between 10 and 30 new people a week were passing through the two- and seven-day workshops in Camp K near San Francisco. Similar occurrences were taking place at teaching centers in other parts of the U.S. and no doubt in the UK and some European countries too. There was a palpable demand for what we were offering and the sales force was highly motivated.

Was it subsequent adverse publicity and reputational damage that killed sales of the product? Was it Father's indictment and imprisonment? Was it just that times and fashions change and where there had previously been a demand for the product, changes in taste caused it to evaporate? Or was it simply that we changed the product line? Could it be that the product we were selling back in 1980 is neither the product we are offering today nor one we have sold for the past 25 years?

In the post-hippie era of the late '70s and early '80s, people may arguably have been more optimistic and idealistic than they are today. Nonetheless, deep down people, and young people especially, are primarily concerned with the same fundamental issue now as then — their own spiritual development.

While large segments of society have always been preoccupied with the banal or simply bogged down in the routine of daily life, there remains a huge demand for answers to the deeper questions of life and especially for paths that lead to spiritual development. One only has to visit Amazon.com and look at the popularity of "spiritual books" to appreciate this.



Here is just a small selection of titles from the top 100:

- *The Untethered Soul: The Journey Beyond Yourself*
- *The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment*
- *The Surrender Experiment: My Journey into Life's Perfection*
- *Journey to the Heart: Daily*

## *Meditations on the Path to Freeing Your Soul*

- *Change Me Prayers: The Hidden Power of Spiritual Surrender*
- *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God*
- *Your Illustrated Guide to Becoming One with the Universe*

Even a basic understanding of the Divine Principle gives each of us the ability to speak intelligently on any one of these topics. So why are we not competing in this marketplace? When did the product we started selling cease to address the questions people were asking?

Perhaps the answer is the late '80s. The early growth of the movement coincided with sale of the First Blessing. Most members had not yet been blessed in marriage. It was first necessary for members to achieve a level of spiritual maturity, greater mind-body unity, and develop their own personal relationship with God. Or, put in terms of providential restoration, members needed to build their own foundation of faith and foundation of substance. Only then would they be ready to meet the messiah and receive the Blessing, albeit conditionally.

Since the late 1980s, there has been a shift to the sale of the Second Blessing which coincided with the transition of most of the core membership from being single to becoming one-half of a married couple. It also coincided with the huge rise in the number of people being blessed. The 2,075, 6,500, 6,000, and 1,275 blessings all took place in the '80s. In the 1990s, the numbers jumped to 30,000, 360,000 and beyond, encompassing large swathes of couples in the unseen spiritual world.

The fundamental problem here is that the Principle teaches about three blessings and three stages of growth, with the Second Blessing bestowed at the top of the growth stage of the First Blessing.

Is it surprising that the movement lost momentum at this point? By way of comparison with Christianity, it is instructive to look at the teaching of German Lutheran pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who took a stand against Hitler in World War II and was executed in 1945.

Bonhoeffer wrote a seminal work, *The Cost of Discipleship*, in which he predicted that the newly emerging evangelical branches of Christianity that offered salvation purely on the basis of belief would irrevocably damage the religion. He elaborated on the term "cheap grace":

"Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."

With the Second Blessing freely available and our movement focused on how many we have been bringing to the Blessing rather than the spiritual development of new members, the movement has spent 25 years in the doldrums.

If we want to become relevant, we have to start selling the First Blessing again. In practical terms, we need to develop a coherent path to spiritual development based on the core teachings of the Divine Principle. We must create programs so that people can incorporate basic principles in their daily life and see measurable results. It is only on this foundation that men and women will be able to commit wholeheartedly to an eternal union centered on God and strive to become true parents in their own right.

---

*Graham Simon met the Unification Movement in California in 1981. He has lived in the UK, USA and Japan and worked extensively for international corporations, including IBM, Shell and Itochu Corporation. He holds an MA in Economics from New York University. He now lives in London and is a trustee of the FFWPU-UK charity.*