

How can one creatively criticize to improve an organization without being fired or kicked out?

by Jeff Tallakson

<https://www.quora.com/How-can-one-creatively-criticize-to-improve-an-organization-without-being-fired-or-kicked-out>

This answer to this question is heavily dependent on Father Richard Rohr's teaching about Inside-Outside People, which addresses how we can criticize an institution like a company, university, church, spiritual movement, political party or the like.

Father Richard describes prophets as "inside/outside" people, another way of saying they lived on the edge of the inside.

None of the prophets held highly established or institutional roles within Israel. They were, by definition, inside/outside people. I've heard it said that in the world of business and management, after we're in a company for about two months, we begin to lose our ability to criticize that business or company because we're a part of it. Unless we somehow retain our distance, and have healthy and balanced outside voices, we become an insider and start protecting the institution. We start shoring it up and building it up. That's what happens to all of us in any system we get into. Once we accept these rules and this game, to a certain degree, we lose the ability to creatively criticize it anymore.

There are also those people who forever stand outside criticizing. Such people never participate and never become involved. There are that kind of people in every prayer group, and every parish, and every family, and every church. They go to services, but they never lay down their lives. They critique from without, and that doesn't work either.

We can only criticize something if we walk the narrow line of being an inside/outside person that the prophets dared to tread. I find so few people can do that. I think only the Spirit can create it. There are a few prophets who can love their church, their country, or their company so much that they see it clearly and deeply and are free to criticize it. But there's a difference when critique comes from anger and rebellion and spite, and when it comes from love. Our actions and prophetic words must come from an experience of gratitude for what is given. Only out of the joy and the fullness of what is given can we dare to speak against what is not given. Because if we speak against what is not given merely out of our own resentment and compulsion, we'll destroy ourselves and probably others too.

How many cynical and bitter people do we know in the church and religious life? How many clergy have lost the ability for that creative balance? No one has taught them to walk that narrow road of being inside/outside people. Anyone who didn't speak the party line was deemed a heretic. Anyone who didn't say it in the one and only orthodox and appropriate way to say it was kicked out. So, we lost those creative models to show us how to be inside and yet creatively speaking from an outside perspective.

That's the wisdom we need. The model of the prophet is one who can love and yet criticize, and who can speak words of correction out of an experience of gratitude.

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How many cynical and bitter people do we know in the church and religious life? How many clergy have lost the ability for that creative balance? No one has taught them to walk that narrow road of being inside/outside people. Maybe the church didn't allow many examples to stay around to show us, because for years we've eliminated the prophets. Anyone who didn't speak the party line was deemed a heretic. Anyone who didn't say it in the one and only orthodox and appropriate way to say it was kicked out. So, we lost those creative models to show us how to be inside and yet creatively speaking from an outside perspective. That's the wisdom we need. The model of the prophet is one who can love and yet criticize, and who can speak words of correction out of an experience of gratitude.