



MAKING  
THE  
VISION  
REAL:

# Change at Casey Family Programs

Casey Family Programs was established in 1966 by Jim Casey, a man largely unknown outside UPS, the package-delivery company he led for more than 50 years. Innovative in business and philanthropy, Casey had an abiding interest in child welfare and delinquency prevention. Recognizing the importance of continuity in a child's life, he established Casey Family Programs to provide long-term foster care for children who had little or no prospect of returning to their birth parents.

By Marty Rosenthal and  
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With generous support from the Casey family, the organization has grown from a small two-room office serving a handful of young people in Seattle to the second largest operating foundation (that is, a foundation directly responsible for achieving charitable purposes) in the U.S., with more than 800 employees serving children and youth in 21 mainly western states. Long synonymous with direct service delivery, CFP now uses its 35 years of experience providing effective parenting for children who have led troubled lives to serve a much broader population. In addition to continuing direct service delivery (which is one of the ways Casey learns what works), CFP now also advocates for improved public and private services for the approximately 500,000 children in foster care nationwide, works to be an information and learning resource for the child-welfare community and provides grants to other organizations.



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The late Jim Casey, one of the founders of United Parcel Service, once said, "A hard part of management's problem is to know when to make changes and when to hold fast to what is still good." Casey's observation has particular relevance today to one of his philanthropic legacies: Casey Family Programs, a Seattle-based operating and grant-making foundation that provides long-term services to children who cannot live safely in their own homes. Ruth Massinga, CEO of Casey Family Programs, had a vision of an organization that would be not only a practice leader in its field, but would have broader impact by expressing this leadership through major partnerships and knowledge sharing. For years, Casey Family Programs has been recognized for providing highly effective services directly to foster children and their families. As good as this work was, it directly served fewer than one percent of the children in this country who need long-term, out-of-home care. As the CEO worked to redirect CFP's strategy to have much greater impact through knowledge sharing and collaboration with other organizations, she encountered significant opposition.

It is one thing for a leader to have an aggressive vision for her organization's future. Guiding the organization through the change needed to achieve that vision is much more difficult. Organizational resistance to change is, among other things, the cumulative effect of individuals fearing that they will lose what each perceives as good. Admittedly, the change at CFP would be profound. Many members of the organization saw the demands it made on economic and human resources as preventing rather than supporting "doing the good work."

What follows is the story of how Casey Family Programs built the organizational capacity to achieve the vision and respond to an evolving environment. The essence of the process CFP worked through involved redefining success, then changing organizational behaviors and redefining core values so that different communities of practice would more cohesively work toward a greater common goal.

### **PROBLEMS OF EXPANDING THE MISSION**

Ruth Massinga became the CEO of Casey Family Programs in 1989. For five years, she oversaw a rapid expansion of a scattered and unconnected field organization in fourteen states, and put basic management systems in place in a classic top-down management style. During 1995 and 1996, the CEO began promoting a vision of expanding Casey's impact beyond direct service delivery. She won the support of the Board, and together they developed a new 5-year strategic plan and significantly expanded headquarter resources in Technology Services, Finance, Research and Communications.

By the fall of 1996, internal passions were running hot, however. Members of the organization understood the new plan clearly enough but did not agree how to get there or whether CFP *should* get there. The CEO saw that the old command-and-control leadership model no longer worked for the organization; it was inefficient, it hampered the development of future leaders and it got in the way of creating broad-based ownership of methods for achieving the vision. She eliminated the chief operating officer position when the incumbent left and advanced the notion of a senior management team with a mandate to bring about the changes, but with no clear sense of how change would happen. Many in the field feared that these headquarters-based people would take action at the expense of direct operations.

Designed to win the organization's support for the broad, new vision, the strategic plan included 18 key initiatives—something for everybody. Headquarters-based groups expanded efforts to standardize operations for greater effectiveness, developing new systems to support and codify Casey's processes, increasing research programs to learn what really works and pushing advocacy activities out to the field. Those in the field felt overwhelmed. They believed that they were bearing most of the cost of change. Not only were they being asked to "focus on everything," but their budgets increased at a slower pace than expanding HQ units which were generating more requests for information from the field, further depleting their time and energy for work with kids and families. In short, direct service personnel began to feel that the future direction of Casey was not about them.

## People had to agree on goals before the organization could agree on how to achieve them.

From the field's perspective, the final "insult" was that the senior management team consisted entirely of HQ managers—it had no field representation. In addition to feeling overwhelmed, field staff did not believe the leaders would help them achieve their goals. All of these factors combined to create frustration around decision-making, setting priorities and internal communication. The organization lacked clear agreement on what constituted valued work or how to allocate resources equitably.

The CEO knew that she needed to broaden representation on the senior management team, but had not yet seen the directors of the field offices come together as a team that spoke with a common voice. A critical meeting of division directors in late 1996 provided an opportunity to hear that voice and built momentum for change. The meeting focused not only on what was wrong but on what to change to solve those problems without undermining the broad vision. The CEO reinforced the vision, making it clear what its "givens" were; then she listened. The meeting convinced her that a significant restructuring of leadership should begin right away and that the field organization had to have a major role in the redesign.

The CEO also recognized that she had to create a passion for change by redefining what being the family services leader meant. Prior to the change, being the gold standard in foster care defined success. Massinga wanted to redefine the collective view of Casey's success as both being that gold standard and having maximum impact on the overall problem of children who cannot live safely in their own homes. Redefining success was critical for building agreement. People had to agree on goals before the organization could agree on how to achieve them.

The CEO drove the vision, but turning a vision into reality requires broad-based involvement. Working with Interaction Associates, a leading designer and facilitator of collaborative change, the CEO appointed a seven member Management Redesign Team from various management levels and functions across the organization. Their charge: to assess the issues and make specific recommendations for improving CFP's management structure and practices to support improved results, business practices, and working relationships—in short, to make the CEO's vision and the new strategic plan work.

CFP was not interested in importing pre-existing solutions that would not fit its culture and needs. They chose to work with a consultant who focused on transferring skills and providing guidance to people inside the organization who would make the decisions and do the work of bringing about change. Making a credible group of peers within CFP the principle change agents was an important

factor in generating broad-based support. Having the Redesign Team conduct work in ways that demonstrated effective decision making, clear priority setting and good internal communication was a critical aspect of beginning the change—demonstrating the desired behaviors in action rather than just talking about them.

What did these new behaviors look like? First of all, the Redesign Team consisted primarily of middle managers widely respected for their integrity, creativity and willingness to speak out. The team included only one member of the senior management team. Members were selected for their diversity of styles to increase the team's ability to grapple with issues of results, process and relationships and develop recommendations that balanced all three. With help from the consultants, the CEO drafted a charter for the project, then worked with the team to refine it and to build their commitment. The charter defined the team's purpose and goals, including identifying barriers to success, defining core values, and exploring and assessing alternate approaches to change. It also set key constraints and identified critical aspects of the approach necessary to promote strong support from the organization. The team conscientiously gave people opportunities to offer ideas and recommendations but made clear when final decisions would be made and the fact that they were genuinely final, not to be second-guessed.

Key issues identified by the Management Redesign Team included:

**LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT.** CFP was not doing a good enough job of identifying and grooming leaders within the organization. Although fortunate to have good people who managed their own work units well, CFP needed to increase the number of leaders who understood the organization's larger vision.

**DECISION MAKING.** Decision-making processes were sometimes cumbersome and often unclear. In some cases, decisions flowed up through several levels of management, when critical information and knowledge resided at a lower level. In other cases, personal influence supplanted formal decision-making mechanisms.

**WE-THEY ATTITUDES.** Parts of the organization viewed the emerging advocacy and technology agenda as an unwelcome departure from the foundation's core mission. Moreover, some staff viewed this departure as simultaneously diverting resources from the field while increasing demands.

**COMPETING PRIORITIES.** Work was generated in many places with no clarity about who had authority for beginning or terminating projects. This led to individuals holding tightly to "their" work and limited their willingness to contribute to "other people's" work.

**TRAINING.** Many staff members felt they lacked the knowledge and expertise necessary to do the new work of the organization. They wanted better training that focused specifically on the organization's changing roles and new areas of work.

**INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS.** Staff wanted more feedback about decisions, policies and procedures affecting their day-to-day work, as well as communications about the broader vision and values.

## CHANGING THE BOXES

By the end of January, 1997, the Redesign Team had completed its work. Its recommendations included a new leadership structure as well as leadership behaviors and business process redesigns necessary to support operating in a new way. Two high-level leadership teams were created to balance the need to "do the good work" with the aim of making the learnings about that work relevant and available to the larger child welfare arena.

The Strategy Teams sets the strategic and spending agenda. Its members carry out long term planning, monitor progress toward the goals of the strategic plan and recommend broad allocation of resources to meet these goals. The Cross-Regional Management Team is responsible for the operational agenda—services provided directly by Casey staff and those carried out with collaborators—and for key headquarters functions that support this work. Having appropriate headquarters support functions report to the operations leadership team shifts the focus of these centralized groups from self-directed work to support of organization-wide operations. Although the areas of responsibility of the two basic leadership teams overlap somewhat, separating their management functions has increased the clarity of the Program's decision making. In many ways, the dynamic tension created by dividing the responsibilities has worked.

As of mid-year 2000, staff and managers say that the Strategy Management Team is doing a good job selling the plan to constituencies, keeping it fresh and alive and keeping the organization focused on what to achieve this year. The Cross-Regional Management Team has put an effective regional structure in place and served as a forum for Regional Vice Presidents' perspectives on how to challenge their Divisional teams. They have established a process for assessing and coordinating new project proposals in terms of the goals set by the Strategy Team. They have also had moderate success in integrating the work of HQ support functions to minimize demands on the field.

A second structural change involved dividing the direct service operations organization into four regions, led by regional management teams. Though this risked creating new bureaucratic problems, it has in fact made the organization more responsive. Putting significant decision-making responsibility and accountability for program planning and expenditure at the regional level has both made the organization more responsive to the needs of the operational units and given them a more strategic perspective.

The regional teams are a critical mechanism for consolidating and integrating learnings from the work of the different divisions—one of the goals of the new vision. They share responsibility and accountability for mutual successes and serve as local elements of a learning and support network. We have seen better coordination between divisions within a region and increased sharing of resources and best practices. Part of the strength of these regional teams comes from the fact that division leaders within the region make commitments to each other at a more personal level than was possible in larger groups. One key to accountability is the Leadership Profile, a set of critical leadership attributes

and behaviors. Regional teams report effectively calling each other to embrace organization-wide goals by using the profile as a reminder of what Casey regards as effective leadership behaviors.

Some regional offices have become program incubators—an unanticipated benefit. For instance, the Great Plains region has created an Indian Resource Center that quickly gave CFP presence in Denver while increasing support for the Native American children and families that Casey has historically served in this region. The Western region rapidly responded to Los Angeles County's need to serve former foster youth by creating an alumni center for young adults that provides concrete support services in a welcoming environment surrounded by their peers. So creativity is being applied to meeting large issues quickly. This new development is clearly valuable, though it brings potential dangers, including excessive focus on creating unique new programs in competition with divisions rather than replicating what works elsewhere.

Concurrent with the rise of multi-function regional teams, Casey created a Washington D.C. office in 1999 from which to launch increased advocacy and expansion activities in communities where the organization had not had prior experience. The Enterprise Development unit creates new areas for program and funding partnerships with federal and state agencies that share missions with Casey. It also searches for new opportunities to help children and youth in the child welfare system nation-wide by developing a foster care awareness campaign that, in concert with a national foster youth alumni network, focuses on giving youth opportunities to be powerful advocates for themselves.

## MANAGING THE TRANSITION

How did Casey get from a plan for “moving the boxes” to a successful new way of operating? The Redesign Team completed work in approximately three months, an extended time that reflected the decision to seek broad stakeholder input during the process. Once the CEO and the Board approved the redesign, the plans, supporting principles, and logic were distributed to the organization. A two-day offsite meeting in February 1997 gave all managers an opportunity to engage with the plans. During that gathering, the managers went through a series of discussions and exercises to begin to wrestle with the key principles driving the design and what making it a reality would mean.

Structural change this extensive is not easy on an organization. Seven leadership positions were eliminated, staff were reassigned (and some chose to leave), people had new reporting relationships and new leaders were brought in from outside the organization. These changes called for additional transition projects, including constant two-way communication about how change was proceeding, getting people involved in high-profile projects that allowed them to apply the concepts of the redesign to their own work and involving them in the nitty gritty of setting up a new organization structure. This meant recruiting for new positions, establishing new regional offices, reconfiguring space at headquarters, and developing severance and relocation packages.

## The values of the management redesign continue to be reinforced through promotions and selection for key assignments.

Most importantly, leaders moving into new roles had to demonstrate consistently the new values and leadership practices that the Redesign Team had identified as being so critical to successful change. They needed to be clear about how decisions would be made and not condone “back door” influence that would subvert the process. They needed to question more and assume less. They needed to be clear about expected outcomes and constraints, and then let managers decide how to achieve the outcomes. They needed to ensure that the organization had the information necessary to know where CFP was going and why, so that people had a context to make appropriate decisions.

Changing actions is harder than changing words. In many ways, Casey has succeeded. In four years, it has become a very different place. As the various implementation teams worked, they were encouraged to stop periodically to assess whether the way they were doing their work was consistent with the goals of the redesign. Questions they asked themselves included:

- Have we made the expected outcomes clear and allowed staff flexibility for initiative, innovation and creativity in reaching those outcomes?
- Have we succeeded in pushing decision-making authority down to the level where the knowledge and accountability are?
- Have we been clear and consistent in our decision making?
- Are we communicating our decisions, the reasoning behind our decisions and how these connect to the direction of the organization?

For some, this self-assessment helped them to “get” the redesign at a gut level. For some, it became part of the way the organization tests ideas. Others merely ritualized the “props” instead of embedding the new behaviors.

In October 1997, the new organizational structure became operational. Broad staff participation in the redesign and transition contributed to a generally positive and optimistic view of the changes, a sharp contrast to the uncertainty and anxiety usually associated with institutional reorganization (and which CFP itself had experienced). The values of the management redesign continue to be reinforced through promotions and selection for key assignments. The organization is also more actively committed to increasing its capacity for learning, to continue to strengthen the organization's capacity to accelerate the cycle of change. Performance bonuses are now based half on achieving current year goals and half on achieving personal development plans, to send a strong signal that continuous growth is important to the organization.

## Rapid change can be exhausting. People need to be periodically re-energized.

Midway through the transition, Casey undertook what the CEO referred to as “the broad-based inoculation of the organization in our leadership model.” Every manager in the organization participated in a three-day Facilitative Leadership<sup>®</sup> training program that provided a framework of seven key leadership practices, with practical tools to support them. This gives managers a common language and tools, equipping them to succeed in demonstrating the desired new behaviors, and helping them to hold each other accountable.

A Leadership Mastery program has been put in place to help develop leadership strength that can eventually be exported to other organizations. Managers with leadership potential get training on strategic and systems thinking, business management, the business of human services and the art of leadership. The Leadership Mastery program energizes participants and focuses them on both the bigger picture and delivering tangible results. One leader from the San Antonio Division undertook a project to convene a summit of African-American leaders in his region to create and apply plans to reduce the large numbers of African-American youth in the system in that community, succeeding in both his personal goals and in promoting important organizational goals. Emerging community leaders and members of partnering organizations have been included as participants in the most recently offered Leadership Mastery program.

### ONGOING CHALLENGES

Four years later, challenges remain. The field organization has grown, but the perception remains that Headquarters functions take resources from direct services. Centralized services continue to need to focus on how to make their work directly relevant to the field work.

Over time, partnering with other service organizations has emerged as a key to expanding Casey’s impact. People are learning new ways of operating and have to change their perception of what value Casey brings. Developing a consistent technology platform is emerging as a key tool for monitoring the quality of partnering programs. There have been successes and failures. As people learn what works, the success rate increases. Some of the challenges are these:

- Research capabilities need to continue to evolve to develop metrics and help to monitor and interpret the flow of data from projects, to identify emerging trends within the organization and throughout the nation.
- Leaders need to continue to focus on the goals of the whole organization and push each other to remain accountable for achieving them. Over time, it is too easy to fall into a pattern of mutual “non-interference pacts” that do not advance the organization.

- As staff and leadership development programs expand, the organization continues to struggle to ensure that individual goals are tied to organizational needs. Providing incentives for those who acquire new skills is also a challenge. To date, only one person who completed the Leadership Mastery program has moved into a more significant leadership position.

- Rapid change can be exhausting. People need to be periodically re-energized. Prior to a critical meeting in mid-2000, the CEO held an orientation session with ten new managers, showing them a movie about a team of fire jumpers in the 1940s who perished because they could not change behaviors in the midst of a crisis. She used this story to help people grasp the possibilities, challenges, and fears tied to the new goals. These people then went into the full managers’ meeting focused on the future, fresh voices committed to the new strategic plan.

### BENEFITS ACHIEVED

Although challenges remain, Casey has seen major benefits:

**ALIGNMENT ON GOALS.** When CFP started this process, they were serving 1,300 children. Last year, Casey has had an impact on over 15,000 children. Their new strategic plan calls for them to improve the lives of over 100,000 children per year by 2005. The vast majority at CFP believe that this aggressive goal will be achieved and that it is the right goal. The goal of influencing the lives of 30,000 children in 2001 is within reach.

**SPECIFIC MEASURES OF SUCCESS.** A major focus of the redesign was to link decision making and resource allocation to outcomes. Changing the culture has meant changing the models of what is valued. Prior to the redesign, the number of children served was the sole indicator of success. Now the focus is on quantity and quality at the best cost. Success is now measured by the number of children helped, with positive impact measured by graduation rates, GPA, significant relationship with an adult and no repeat child abuse incidents.

**CLARITY IN DECISION MAKING AND MAXIMUM APPROPRIATE PARTICIPATION.** In the past, CFP’s strong bias toward inclusion often resulted in cumbersome, drawn-out decision making. With clearer decision-making structures and a more deliberate approach to when and how to include stakeholders, staff are doing a better job identifying the people who should participate in a particular management process. Leaving decisions open for extended periods so anyone can provide opinions or second guess recommendations is rarer. Division Operations Directors and their teams now make numerous decisions that used to be made more slowly by the Board or top management.

**PRIORITIZING WORK.** The new structures and focus have created a more collaborative planning process with less second-guessing and greater synergy between projects. Before, many successful programs in local divisions were not propagated across the organization, and field support for cross-organizational projects was limited. Now multi-year budget decisions are made in the context of a five-year integrated plan developed by the Strategy and Finance team. Divisions submit

outcome-oriented, specific business plans that the Cross-Regional Management team reviews, approving, declining, adjusting or requesting that work be done to integrate, align or consolidate with other groups' plans before forwarding recommendations to the Executive Team.

**INCREASED EFFICIENCY.** Cost-effectiveness is increasingly part of the conversation. Giving division offices flexibility around how to meet their plans based on local needs has increased cost effectiveness without losing efficacy. Last year, for instance, the San Antonio Division refocused their resources, moving away from primarily providing direct care and putting significantly more effort into transition and prevention. The number of youth served increased by over 100 percent with little budget change.

**LEARNING AND TEACHING.** The change has improved CFP's capacity to gather internal and external information on child-welfare and other trends that can potentially affect their work. They are also transferring their experience and best practices more easily and effectively between divisions and to the broader child-welfare community.

**PARTNERSHIPS.** The changes have facilitated CFP's ability to partner with other organizations. Before, CFP was involved in two or three minor partnerships at a time. The organization now engages in more than 60 active partnerships, and is aggressively increasing this number. For example, CFP provided significant funding for "Take This Heart," a sixty-minute public television documentary about the lives of three boys in foster care. Casey worked with national child-welfare organizations and grant-making foundations to promote the film and the largely unheralded contributions of foster parents. Many of the divisions worked with local public television partners to use the documentary as an organizing vehicle for collaborative efforts with local child welfare agencies to recruit foster parents and to encourage people to become involved in the lives of children in foster care. It is an example of Casey managers achieving results through networks rather than through "doing."

The Idaho Division provides an example of partnership and teaching. Casey staff train state workers to use Casey technology, practice guidelines and measures of success. CFP also provides small sums of supplemental support to youth in areas that the state will not cover. By using the state infrastructure as the delivery mechanism, Casey supports supplemental services with money that would have been spent to build a duplicate infrastructure. Focusing on what has now been proven to have the highest impact in partnership with the state has expanded that division's capacity from 75 youth to 175 youth without compromising the quality of care or increasing costs.

**PERSONAL REWARDS.** Casey attracts people who value strengthening their communities. While job stress may be higher now, the people succeeding in the new organization enjoy their jobs more because they are having much greater impact, doing more of what their community needs.

## Being the champion of change cannot be delegated or made a secondary priority.

### WHAT IT TOOK: ADVICE FOR LEADERS

Redesigning leadership structures, processes and capabilities at Casey Family Programs was not easy. Looking back, the CEO has identified a dozen key levers that she needed to focus on to move her vision from idea to reality:

**TIME.** Major change in organizational culture does not happen quickly. People need to work with the new concepts, develop new processes that support the changes and build new relationships across old boundaries. At the same time, you need to move faster than people find comfortable to maintain momentum.

**PATIENCE.** Even when you understand that change takes time, it will take much longer than you expect. Once you "get it" you will become impatient when the rest of the organization naturally lags behind you. You will need constantly to communicate and over-communicate. This will be a major distraction from "getting the real work done" and will stress the organization, but the transformation must remain one of your highest priorities.

**FUNDING.** Change does not come cheap. The new structure will not necessarily be less expensive and may be more expensive than the old structure—but it should support significantly greater end results. Design and implementation are significant efforts; the teams that create the design and make it real need financial support. Eliminating positions and hiring for new positions mean additional human resource costs.

**CONSULTING SUPPORT.** It is difficult to perform major surgery on yourself. Organizational development consultants can bring methods and frameworks to guide the process, coaching to provide perspective and promote necessary change in behaviors of key leaders (including your own), a sense of urgency and focus to keep the project on track, high performance team-building skills to support the project teams, training to support organization-wide learning of skills needed to operate in the new design and capabilities for promoting broad-based commitment to change.

**LEADERSHIP.** You must show compassion to those disrupted by the change but also be clear that we are holding the course for very good reasons. You must consistently ensure that leaders are living examples of the values and behaviors that are part of the desired new way of working. Many times the back hall chatter here said, "She did work differently this time, but next time is the real test."

**RESOURCES.** Put your best people on the team and expect them to take on the consultant's role over time. Push their capabilities and help them grow. Provide significant coaching to support this growth and develop your future leaders. The transformation teams must demonstrate the values and new behaviors in action.

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**MISSION-DRIVEN CHANGE.** Tap the power of your organization’s mission. People at Casey put up with significant disruption and personal change because they were focused on the customer. Improving the lives of kids was the lever that kept our change going.

**NEW EXPECTATIONS.** You need to create and solidify a new set of expectations about how the organization will work and what the organization does. You need to make the vision concrete with examples, resource allocation, targeted recognition and constant communication, reinforcing the connection between vision and the strategic work of the organization. Ultimately, you are changing the core mental model of how the organization defines success.

**CHAMPIONING FROM THE TOP.** Being the champion of change cannot be delegated or made a secondary priority. The organization needs to see that this is the leader’s passionate priority, so much so that the leader dramatically changes her own behaviors and invests significant time in the initiative. As sponsor, you must ensure that the teams have clear goals (and the right goals), then hold them accountable for achieving those goals while helping them overcome barriers.

**INSTITUTIONALIZING NEW PROCESSES.** Old management processes and decision-making methods reflect the behaviors, values and organization structures of the status quo. Change these processes and methods to operate in ways that use and reinforce the organization structures, behaviors and values you are striving to put in place.

**RETOOLING BEHAVIORS.** Once the change process was well underway, most managers would say, “I now believe in this redesign, but will you give me the tools to operate effectively in this new way?” Broad-based training in the desired leadership model and a set of practical tools to support each of the leadership practices are important. Once people have a tool set, you need to maintain the understanding that the tools will be used and provide coaching in applying them to everyday work.

**REFLECTION.** If you get lost in the day-to-day, the urgent *will* crowd out your sense of where you are trying to go. It is too easy to fall back to old ways of working in a crunch. A powerful tool in making change happen is building points in the work where people consciously and explicitly ask themselves if they are working in ways that are consistent with the plans.

## THE STORY CONTINUES

As we write, the Program has just gone through a significant budget reduction in response to the effect of the stock market’s decline on our investment portfolio. Despite initial shocked disbelief, we completed the adjustment process within three weeks. So far, we are on track to meet our goals. Four years ago, a process like this would have dragged on for months, with many decisions bumped up to senior management and implemented with a good deal of confusion. While we have a lot that we can continue to improve, we truly have built the organizational capacity necessary to accelerate the cycle of change.

The management redesign has succeeded in building organizational capability for rapid change and has shifted the focus of Casey’s true core competence. Casey used to define its core competence as having the skills and funding to provide the best direct service delivery. The organization now sees intimate knowledge of and focus on the needs of the children, youth and families who are its customers as its core competence, the means by which it will become the force for positive change in the lives of those children. In some cases, we provide direct care alone or with a host of partners as care providers. In others, we use what we know about these children’s needs to create new knowledge and to make the knowledge relevant and available to the broader child welfare community.

By making direct service delivery part of the means rather than its ultimate end, the organization reflects a capacity to persevere while “...holding fast to that which is still good”—in Jim Casey’s words. He built a global package delivery service by going from bicycles to cars to trucks and planes. He built an agile organization that could continually evolve to achieve its strategic intent. For the Casey Family Programs, holding fast to improving the odds for the children in public and private child-welfare systems nationwide is our real goal. How well we succeed in doing that is the ultimate measure of the success of this transformation and of the organization we have become.

