

BUILDING TEAMS THAT WORK

Introduction: The Vital importance of raising up other leaders

Leadership in the New Testament is always a 'plural' rather than a purely individual enterprise. (**Acts 1: 21, Acts 14:23**). Usually, the senior leader is the only one who can give permission for other leaders to emerge.

Leadership as well as ministry needs to be shared if the church is to grow beyond the physical and spiritual limits determined by the capabilities and capacity of the senior leader. Drawing others into leadership results in an extension to the scope of the ministry in which we can engage as well as the creation of a structure for exponential growth. (cf Moses **Exodus 18:13ff**)

When someone casts a compelling vision and gets people excited about it, they're going to have to build great teams to support that vision. You simply can't build a prevailing church unless you build great teams. Once you decide what type of team you're going to build, you look for people's experience and passion. You look for people who want to get involved and you challenge them. You try to align people by their own gifts so they are doing a part of the vision that excites them and breathes energy into them. I have never seen a church reach its full redemptive potential unless there were fired-up people doing the work of God in teams. All Willow Creek really is is a big church made up of thousands of little teams, with leaders, with a focus, with a purpose, and people who are fired up to work together. (Bill Hybels)

In doing so we are being faithful to the example set by Jesus; much of his own ministry was concerned with the raising up and developing, releasing and equipping of other leaders. (**Mark 1:16-20, Luke 6:12-16, 9:1-6, 10:1-20, 24:44-49**)

All effective churches should be seedbeds for ministry and leadership. We should invest in the development of other leaders not just for our own short term benefit but for the longer term benefit of the wider church.

Most leaders have followers around them. They believe the key to leadership is gaining more followers. Few leaders surround themselves with other leaders. The ones who do bring great value to their organisations. And not only is their burden lightened, but their vision is carried on and enlarged. (John Maxwell)

The Functions of a Leadership Team

- Vision Sharing
 - Forming and identifying vision and values
 - Refining Vision
 - Communicating and Sharing Vision
- Overcoming leadership 'blindspots'
 - Facilitating the emergence and development of new areas of ministry
 - Safeguarding 'balance' within the leadership of the church
 - Followers will tell you what you want to hear; leaders will tell you what you need to hear.
- Mutual support and accountability
- The Training and development of leaders
- Quality Control

Recruiting a Team

Most teams will not be made up of many (if any) full time paid staff. We only bring in paid staff from 'outside' if we are completely unable to resource a ministry from within (either because the suitable person cannot be found, or because the suitable person does not have sufficient time to give).

Disadvantages of the 'paid outsider':

- The cost of salaries etc
- Lack of stability; people inevitably move on

- Employing a 'specialist' may inhibit the development of ministry and leadership from within the local church

There are many benefits in using those who emerge from within our own church.

We need to think creatively about recruiting people for leadership roles. Depending upon the size of our church (and things change as the size and scope of the church and its ministry changes) we will have a mix of full and part time paid and volunteer leaders/staff. Types of people we might recruit:

- Early retired. Often have plenty of energy, are financially secure and have many transferable skills, experiences and wisdom to bring.
- The downwardly mobile. Those who are prepared to invest their energies not in building a better career, but a Kingdom which cannot be shaken. Challenge people to reduce working hours and devote spare energies to leading and overseeing ministry areas in the life of the church.
- Interns/Gap Year assistants. Many people will be prepared to give up a year or more of their time and energies to invest in ministry in a local church in exchange for accommodation and pocket money with some supervision and mentoring. The cost of a Gap Year Intern may be in the region of c£4500 for a year's work.

Identifying leadership potential

We look in particular for people who:

- Are people of influence; others are affected by them in a positive way;
- Demonstrate character first and skills/gifting second. It is easier to teach skills to a person of character than to change the character of a gifted but awkward person;
- Have a servant heart;
- Love people – leaders exist for people and not vice versa.

It is often worth taking a calculated risk with people in whom we recognise passion and potential.

Leadership should be empowering. It is the process of giving power away, not collecting it. It is moving the power to influence into the hands of the people we are leading so that they can pursue the mission. Leadership exists to serve the mission and to serve the people. Like God's leadership, leadership is a relationship that cares enough to walk patiently with people towards a shared purpose. It is not about leaders; it is about the people we lead. (Walter Wright)

Danger signs to watch out for:

- People who lack grace even though they may be very gifted;
- People who crave position or a role;
- Pushy people;
- Those who do not related well to other people (leaders never lead in the abstract, they lead people!)

The challenges and frustrations of inheriting leaders in post whom you would not ideally choose yourself.

- Work with them, show them your heart and vision and give them every opportunity to get on board and to grow with it.
- Expect God to change some of them and to develop them (cf. Jesus and his own disciples)
- Work at helpful ways of letting them go.

The Role of Team Leader

The role of the team leader is significant, and you will certainly find your own role as overall Church leader will change as you lay down some hands on things in favour of devoting time to investing in others and supporting them in their ministries. This may be hard at first, especially if you have to deal with the pressure of expectations put upon you by others and by yourself. Key emphases in your own ministry should now be:

- Equipping other leaders (which means laying down less essential tasks; particularly difficult for those with a strong people-pleasing tendency!)
- Delegating responsibility with accountability (empowering others). We need to be prepared for some things to be done less well in the short term.

- Encouraging and affirming other leaders (and sorting out your own ownership issues). We must rejoice in the success of others rather than be threatened by it.
- Supervising, overseeing, managing etc other leaders and workers. This will include:
 - Helping them develop vision for their own areas of ministry
 - Working with others to help them set goals
 - Providing regular, appropriate and ongoing training for all leaders and potential leaders

Finding an Appropriate Leadership Structure

This should be one which is:

- Suited to context;
- Workable and practicable in terms of the demands and requirements it places on its members;
- Functional – it does the job it sets out to do in the best possible way
- Effective – the church is overseen more effectively
- Flexible – it never becomes a straightjacket but rather serves as a skeleton.
- Transparent – there is a clear rationale as to why each person is a member of this team, and the accusation can never be levelled that this is simply the 'Minister's clique'.

List the different overall ministry areas currently expressed in the life of your church. These may include such things as (inter alia):

Teaching, Evangelism, Pastoral Care, Discipleship, Training, Youth, Children, Ministry amongst the Elderly, Women, Men, Communication, Cell/Small group oversight, Administration, Worship, Prayer Ministry.

Now write down the name of the person who currently takes responsibility for the oversight of these areas (**NB** not all the people who are involved in these ministries). In a smaller church most, if not all of these ministry areas, will be overseen by the minister and perhaps one or two other people. However, if they all remain under the direct oversight of one person, the church has very limited potential to develop and grow, or at least to see growth sustained.

Then write down the names of the people whom you would like to see taking overall responsibility for each of these areas. Again, in a smaller church, we would still expect a number of these key functions to 'live' with the minister, though the more which can be effectively and appropriately devolved, the better the chances of the church developing and growing, and the less chance of the minister falling sick!

It may be that there is currently no-one suitable to assume responsibility for some of these areas, though you can identify someone with the potential to grow into such responsibility. Your priority then will be to develop such a person, to share more and more responsibility with them until they are able to take on responsibility themselves.

Draw up a Job Description for each area of ministry responsibility highlighting:

- Key areas of responsibility
- People from whom reports are received
- The person to whom the post-holder is accountable
- The specific requirements of the post (including meetings to attend etc)

Churches who are Cell-based may well wish to give special place in any leadership structure to those who either lead Cells or, in a larger Cell church, those who pastor groups of Cell leaders or clusters of Cells.

Put into your diary at the start of the year regular (half termly?) one to one meetings with each of the people who are going to oversee key ministry areas. At these meetings you will:

- Review the progress of the work since your last meeting
- Work with the post-holder to develop specific vision for their ministry, set goals and objectives, and think and plan strategically for the short and longer term future.
- Discuss practical details, resource needs etc to do with their ministry area. In this you are acting as a resource person, but never ever taking back from them overall responsibility for their ministry area.

- Encourage, affirm, and support them in the exercise of their responsibility, helping them to reflect on encouraging and challenging situations they have encountered.
- Encourage them in their own walk with God and ensure that they are being sustained for the demands of leadership.
- Pray with them and for them.

Growing and developing the Team

A leadership team is far more than just the sum of its individual parts. The next step is to gather these ministry overseers together and to form a team identity. This will involve regular (monthly) meetings at a time and place which is convenient for everyone. As well as 'practical business' these meetings should include worship and ministry to one another, mutual accountability for ministry areas, encouragement, visioning etc.

Team building events (meals away days etc) are also vitally important.

Teams function well when there is cultivated an environment of:

- Trust
- Honesty
- Encouragement and Affirmation
- Understanding and acceptance of diversity
- Generosity and Forgiveness
- Clarity of Purpose
- Accountability and Support
- Fun

You as leader can set the tone as you model these qualities and establish an appropriate leadership culture. As a team, it is well worth investing time and effort in exploring one another's strengths and weaknesses in a positive way, and establishing together the different roles played within the team by each member. Useful tools include:

- Belbin; team roles. Get the team to describe each other.
- The SHAPE course
- Myers Briggs and other similar Personality Type Indicators. These are useful in growing in our understanding of one another and equipping us to bring the best out of one another

Leadership is to help people achieve what they are capable of, to establish a vision for the future, to encourage, to coach, to mentor and to establish and maintain successful relationships. (Dale Carnegie)

For further reading:

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| The 5 Dysfunctions of a Team | Patrick Lencioni (Jossey-Bass) |
| Growing Leaders | James Lawrence (BRF) |
| Courageous leadership | Bill Hybels (Zondervan) |
| Developing the Leaders Around you | John Maxwell (Nelson) |

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