LIFT

Pre-Staff Development

Your church may not be big enough to have a ministry staff right now, but that is not an excuse to defer developing the skills necessary to lead one.

Some churches stay small because the leader chooses to remain small, manage everything themselves, and never position themselves (personally) or the church for growth.

Discuss: What are you currently doing to develop the leadership skills necessary to build a healthy ministry team?

There are some leadership applications and processes that do not fit a small congregation, especially when the ministry team is comprised primarily of the pastor and their spouse. However, there are some skills that can be developed that can facilitate the success of a future volunteer team or ministry staff.

- **Communication**

Working on your communication skills, including your tone, body language, facial expressions and hand gestures. Learning to communicate verbally and non-verbally is an essential leadership quality.

- **Active Listening**

Listening carefully to others and retaining the information they share builds trust and rapport.

- **Goal Setting**

Goals unify a team around a common purpose while driving cooperation. Practice communicating and setting clear, measurable goals.

Shop Talk:

Developing Healthy Ministry Teams

The Lewis Center for Church Leadership published an article in 2023 that discussed five characteristics of effective ministry teams. One statement from the article that resonated with me was this:

 "If your congregation relies on leadership teams to make ministry happen, the vitality of your church depends on these groups working well."

Ann A. Michel, the author of the piece, highlighted five characteristics that mark strong teams. In this resource we will look at four of them, but have included the link if you'd like to read the article in it's entirety.

Shared Vision

Strong teams coalesce around significant challenges, shared values, and strong vision. A good team understands what it needs to accomplish and how their work connects to the overall vision of the church.

Stephen Covey said:

"The greatest and most inspiring mountain climbing achievements in history are not so much stories of individual achievement, but are stories of the extraordinary power of a unified, talented, prepared team that stays loyally committed to one another and to their shared vision to the end."

Discuss: Are you able to effectively communicate the vision and mission of your church or ministry to others?

Pre-Staff Development (Cont.)

- **Conflict Resolution**

Quickly addressing any conflicts will ensure a positive work environment for everyone involved. Learning specific de-escalation techniques and conflict management skills can help you navigate these situations.

- **Motivation**

To effectively motivate your team, it's important to set a good example and empower them to achieve personal objectives. Let team members work autonomously instead of micromanaging.

- **Decisiveness**

Leaders are responsible for making many decisions, often with a quick turnaround time. These range from big decisions, such as hiring a new team member, to small choices, such as selecting a meeting time. The faster and more active you are in your decision-making, the better you'll be able to earn your team's trust and confidence.

- **Empathy**

You may think of having empathy as having lots of emotions or even a weakness. But empathy can make you a strong leader with employees who respect you and feel respected in return. When you're an empathetic leader, you tune into your team's thoughts, feelings and needs and understand how those things might affect their performance.

- **Integrity**

Integrity is often seen as simply being honest. However, it also means having a strong set of values and making ethical choices.

- **Dependability**

A dependable leader follows through on their obligations, meets deadlines and communicates openly.

- **Flexibility**

A good leader should be flexible, open to suggestions and feedback, learn to manage the unexpected, initiate new courses of action and propose new solutions.

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(Developing Healthy Ministry Teams Cont.)

Distinct roles

Teams function most effectively when each and every member has a unique and vital role to play. On a baseball team, for example, the pitcher and the catcher do different jobs, but neither can do their job without the other. Motivation, buy-in, and accountability are enhanced when each team member knows the group's success depends on their efforts. When you launch a team, think carefully about what different roles are essential. In a group that's worked together for some time, pause occasionally to ask what needs to be done and who should be doing it.

Discuss: How often do you evaluate your volunteer teams or ministry staff to gauge their effectiveness?

Constructive engagement

Teams achieve good outcomes when they get all the relevant issues on the table and fully evaluate their options before making decisions. Team members must feel free to express their opinions honestly and even risk disagreeing with one another. This type of open and honest engagement only occurs in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. Strong teams are deliberate in building this type of decision-making climate.

GOOD LEADERSHIP REQUIRES YOU TO SURROUND YOURSELF WITH PEOPLE OF DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES WHO CAN DISAGREE WITH YOU WITHOUT FEAR OF RETALIATION.
- DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN -

Discuss: Is your team allowed to disagree with you?

Size

Effective teams tend to remain lean. The group must be small enough for each person's participation to really matter. (I love this thought. It is easy for a person gifts and skills to be lost in a large team environment. People often quit if they feel like their contribution doesn't really matter or contribute to the overall mission of the church.)

In larger groups, the style of communication often shifts from inquiry to advocacy, making it more likely that a few voices will dominate the conversation and less likely that all participants will engage openly.

Discuss: How often do we build teams in order to foster inclusion rather than accomplishment? Is it possible to have so many people involved that a team becomes ineffective in accomplishing its mission?

https://www.churchleadership.com/leading-ideas/five-characteristics-of-effective-ministry-teams/

Indiana District
ASSEMBLIES OF GOD