



STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CULTURE IN YOUR MINISTRY

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Building a culture in your ministry where the Kingdom of God is being served and expanded and where leaders are being intentionally prepared requires leaders who have made an intentional commitment to building up leaders. Following are ten strategies and specific actions for building and sustaining a ministry culture where leaders are identified, supported, stretched, and developed.

Strategy #1: Commit to developing leaders

Below are core leadership principles that support a culture of leadership development.

- A. What you value is what you will do and you will build the culture you model. You cannot build something you are not living.
- B. The needs of the ministry and the needs of the individual must always be in healthy tension with each other. You are here to help draw out what God has put in the leaders around you.
- C. Leaders go first and pay attention to the direction and needs of those around them.
- D. Leadership is best learned on the job, so we must prepare people to hit the real world of leading by giving them the opportunity to stretch while still being supported.
- E. Be clear about communicating that leadership development requires each of us to become increasingly comfortable with offering grace AND increasingly truthful with one another. If something isn't working, we need to be able to be honest with one another without reactivity.
- F. Developing ministry leaders starts with a leader's connection to the body of Christ and to God's will, and then moves to mission-centered action.

Strategy #2: Identify the Leaders

Identify the leaders around you – their gifts, calling, and what motivates them. Leaders see and engage emerging leaders who have the potential to help the community live out its mission, values and strategies.

- A. Gifts – The things that each leader cannot help but do well
- B. Calling – What God has put on the hearts and actions of a leader
- C. Motivations – What motivates leaders and keeps them moving forward, even when they are at their limits

Strategy #3: Focus the Mission:

Clarify what you are trying to accomplish. You cannot do everything, but you must do something.

- A. Be clear and specific about what it is you are trying to accomplish and why. The hardest work in motivating other leaders to serve is in getting clear about what God has called you to build, given the unique strengths in the leaders around you and the needs in your community.
- B. People are most likely to get engaged if the ministry is clearly focused in their sphere of influence. Do not be shy about identifying a global and big picture mission, but make sure your leaders can see the local impact of their efforts.
- C. People will follow conviction and direction as long as it is humble and editable. Without a path, the leaders with whom you lead will not know where to walk.

Strategy #4: Communicate the Purpose Constantly

When you are building a leadership development culture, you must constantly champion the culture for developing leaders and accomplishing the Kingdom mission.

- A. Make it clear that investing in developing leaders AND achieving the mission is going to be the focus. Potential leaders will be identified, stretched, supported, and sent out to lead.
- B. Lead by example and buy in. You cannot ask anyone to develop their leadership capacity if you are not willing to develop yours.
- C. Make personal development and performance each a part of the conversational fabric of the culture by talking about them together.

Strategy #5: Define Leadership

Being a leader is not an abstract philosophical debate, but a very real position that requires much from a person. Defining leadership well and being specific about how it is different from not leading can help emerging leaders understand that they do not have to call themselves leaders to consider the possibility they may be one.

- A. Leaders go first and bear a burden that others do not have to bear.
- B. Leaders are people who have made an intentional decision to be responsible for the work and development of other people.
- C. Leaders do courageous things in the face of tremendous opposition, get some credit when things go well, and take the blame when they don't.
- D. Leaders are editable and willing to have the backspace key pushed on their actions. Leaders are aware of their strengths and areas that need further refining, are willing to consider personal sacrifices for those in need around them, and are convicted and clear.

Strategy #6: Encourage Real Conversations

The development of a leader is impacted by the extent to which they have safe places to wrestle with the challenges they confront as they step in and begin leading. Refrain from

the temptation to avoid difficult topics with the leaders in whom you are invested. Use the statement below to open up real conversations about the realities of leading with those in whom you are invested.

- A. Leaders can invest deeply in only a few people at a given time.
- B. Leaders must create cultures where their ministry and work is sustainable and doesn't run them into the ground.
- C. Leading others is hard work.
- D. As soon as you begin leading, some people will push back. This push back may come in the form of conflicts and confrontations, or in silence from those you are leading.

Strategy #7: Use Processes and Tools for Feedback and Reflection

Tools like the Bad Bobby suite of tools and assessments provide the developmental scaffolding necessary to create a ministry culture where leaders have the conversations necessary to build up their leadership capacity. Here are some simple steps to implementing these tools and assessments.

- A. Establish a vision for how these leadership development tools will work alongside the mission of the ministry and other initiatives that are going on in your ministry. In best cases, this is a commitment to a holistic development process, and not a one off process.
- B. Select the key staff or volunteer leaders who will take part in the process and use the tools.
- C. Discuss how the tools connect to the mission each leader is called to accomplish.
- D. Establish a timeline for when each leader will take the assessments. Make a commitment to a timeline for when each leader will have a conversation with a coach, peer, or leader regarding their development.
- E. Provide a start, middle, and end time each year for a larger team discussion regarding the learning of the team members and the mission of the ministry.
- F. Leadership development often takes a back seat in times of adversity or pressure on your ministry, and this is when the scaffolding of developmental tools will be most important.

Strategy #8: Leverage Experiential Learning Opportunities

After 30 years of research on the developmental journey of leaders in ministry and other settings, we know that leaders develop on the job, through real life experiences, and at their developmental edge.

- A. Avoid the temptation to compartmentalize leadership development into a classroom setting, training manual, or conference attendance. Leadership development occurs when our training, studying, and rehearsing come face to face with the real challenges of leading.
- B. Identify the initiatives that each leader will lead, and the characteristics of the experience that are likely to teach the greatest lessons to the leader.
- C. Identify the mission-focused tasks that are taking place in your ministry, deploy the leaders into those tasks, and then use tools, support networks, and mentoring to support the learning that is happening in real time.

Strategy #9: Build Relationship Networks

Leadership development happens on the job and through relationships. Strategic networks that include mentors, peers, direct support, and honest feedback make all the difference for a leader or emerging leader. Here are some quick tips for structuring support around your leaders

- A. If you build a mentoring program, establish a peer-mentoring process right from the start. These relationships work best when the mentor and the mentee choose each other, but that isn't always possible. Establish a system of matching mentors and mentees, but maintain flexibility in having each move to other investment relationships if there is a better fit.
- B. Don't get hung up on people having a mentor. Mentors and mentees alike sometimes avoid the title of mentor because it feels heavy. People can learn as much from a brief conversation in the hall as they can from a deeper relationship with the mentor.
- C. Establish an interning process that allows emerging leaders to gain stretch experiences beside a more seasoned leader who can support an apprentice, providing the emerging leader with exposure to a ministry with higher stakes, and without the fear of complete failure.

Strategy #10: Connect Leadership Development to the Mission

Constantly connect the developmental needs of the individual leader to the mission of your ministry. This is a constant tension. Ministry leaders often struggle with the concepts of development and success because they seem self-serving. However, leaders are inspired when they can see the connection between their own contribution and learning and the impact on their ministry. The challenge for leaders is to remind everyone that both are important.