

Developing a Leadership Team

By Tom Rawls

April 2008

The delivery mechanism ...

In business there is a term called a "delivery mechanism" – what it means is there is a mechanism – a method, an instrument, an apparatus, a technique, a process or a system in which to deliver an item, a product, a result, an outcome or a service. We have a great need in the church to have a delivery mechanism for learning leadership and training leaders.

A church grows not because it has adopted a "plug and play" program, not because it has jumped on the newest bandwagon or embraced the latest jargon or the latest "fad".

Many leaders in their search for "the key" to making their church grow become desperate and become willing to "try" anything and in their desperation they "fall for anything". Their desperation turns to disappointment and their disappointment melts into disillusionment – before long they have become stressed, under pressure and soon burn out becoming cynical and depressed. I have discovered there is no "one key" – but developing a technique or system of ongoing leadership development provides a platform for unmeasured ways to impact the life of your church and see it grow.

What we need to understand about the dynamic of a growing church is it is organic – this means the church is alive, its complexities are similar to a human body, it is made up of people and the church is always breathing. So our first priority should always be, "Is this organic, alive and breathing church healthy?" The reasoning behind this is simple - healthy things always grow. Its only when a body is unhealthy that it gives rise to disability, dysfunction and disease.

One of the prerequisites of a growing church is a leadership structure that is always growing, always developing, always living out a kingdom of God culture and always motivated by the cause of Christ to "seek and save that which is lost". A growing church needs a leadership culture that is always "going to the next level" always learning, always developing capacity, remaining and always emergent. Because a church will only grow to the capacity of its senior leader it becomes imperative to maximize his or her capacity by training others.

It surprises me as a leader of a growing church that in many churches I do not find a systematic, collective of people who are distinguished and set apart as "leaders" in the church. I'm not talking about those who may have a title of "trustee", "board member" "elder or deacon". I'm talking about people who, in concentric circles, fan out in broad 3D around a visionary leader. I'm talking about a group of people who are in relationship with and carry a part of a senior leader's vision. I'm talking about a group of people who have recognized the role of a directional leader and want to help to maximize his capacity by being part of his team being a part of the leadership dynamic of the church.

I'm speaking here of a three dimensional group of people who love the vision of the house so much that they are willing to be connected with the vision and utilize their gifts, talents, skills and abilities to see the vision of the church become reality. These

people are making themselves available to participate in the grand movements of the church and they are enthusiastic about learning how to maximize their input to see the church grow.

Proclaimers Church leadership:

In my church I have various leadership groups. I believe if a job is worth doing it is worth doing together. I believe a team of talented, like hearted people around me can maximize my capacity and as a team we could do so much more and achieve so much more than just me as a "one-man-band". No one knows more than all of us. One violin can sound sweet but when played with an orchestra – the sound is awesome!

- Leadership training becomes a delivery mechanism that provides a process to develop, equip and empower others in service within the church
- Leadership training becomes a delivery mechanism to enlarge, increase and amplify the impact of your leadership and influence
- Leadership training becomes a delivery mechanism that ensures a coherent vision, guarantees a focused approach to our mission and makes certain a level of sharpness, awareness and intentionality in creating kingdom culture

Having said all that, I find so many pastors who have not clearly identified this group, who don't see the advantages of spending time with this group, growing this group and who neglect the formation, separation and expansion of this group.

Their reasons range from;

- I don't have anyone of that caliber.
- I don't see those kinds of people in my church.
- I don't have budget to hire someone like that.
- I don't have anyone I can trust with this kind of leadership.
- We're too small to begin thinking about leadership structures.
- I tried it once and got bitten with people leaving the church and hurting others.
- I can't find anyone who does the job as good as me.
- I'm too busy to think about setting up this process.

The list goes on. Instead of developing a consistent and deliberate team of leaders we cheat by just giving people jobs, or chores to do in the church – we give them certain titles and positions to make them feel important or incorporated in the "work".

We have all sorts of titles for them, we might call them a small group leader, the worship leader, the children's leader – but in fact we are not letting them lead at all – we are not maximizing their leadership ability, we're not really releasing their creativity or encouraging them to take responsibility for growth – in some cases we've empowered monsters, or those who at the least have created alternate worlds within the church – these people have become more like employees than stakeholders and co-owners of the work.

I have various division or groups of leaders in my church. I have one group we call MTV – it stand for "ministry, teaching and vision". This group is made up of 8 people at present with Denise and me as the leaders. Our intention is to enlarge these people, grow their competence, develop their hearts and train them in new skills. MTV is a multi layered and multifaceted approach to overall capacity building. It's relational, interactive, at times consultative, and at other times cutting edge challenging.

The next group I train are what we call department leaders – I have a growing group of about 20 – 25 people in this group. I have another level of people we call ministry team leaders – there about 35 – 40 on this level and finally we have a group we call our volunteers – at the writing of this article about 120 – 130 people in this group. I have another great group of people who are Connect Group leaders – they work with our small groups and are my pastoral team who love and value the people of our church. All my leaders are called upon to be the ones who carry my heart's desire for people, they reflect the culture of our church and they learn how to connect people into the church and the culture of the church – they are my heroes!

But it's not just me training my leaders – my leaders train their teams as well. One of the prerequisites for being on the MTV level is that you are "a leader of teams." I meet with MTV every week – I meet with Department leaders every month, I meet with our volunteers and connect group leaders every two months. But the guys in MTV meet with their teams regularly, the Department leaders meet regularly with the people in their departments and the ministry team leaders meet with their guys regularly as well – by regular I mean about 2 hours every month or 6 weeks.

The process – The why behind the what ...

My goal with each group, to varying degrees, is to give them a chance to hear my heart, touch base with the vision of the house, and ask the culture questions of why we do what we do. I want them to see me, hear me and learn from me. I want to opportunity to unpackage the vision, explain the culture of our church, define the restraints of vision, and work through the difference between personal references and rule of Christ in our church.

I spend time with them and talk, I share personal stories, and I tell them what the Holy Spirit has been saying to me recently, I will also tell stories of past experiences to show how to handle a situation or special kind of person. I emphasis my love of people, God's love of the world and Christ mission to connect with everyone in our city and beyond. I take time to unpackage the culture, to communicate the culture, to connect people with the culture so in turn they can go and connect others with the life transforming culture of the kingdom.

I take time to open the scriptures and systematically apply it to leadership in our church. I explain our priorities for ministry, I challenge their faith, I speak to their character and I monitor their integrity. I ask them to be accountable for their decisions and their leadership development. I let them know its okay to make mistakes but to learn from them so they make the same mistakes again; I encourage them there is mercy, grace and understanding as they grow in leadership.

I encourage them to grow personally, to get organized and learn special management skills to help them achieve more in the 24 hours we have each day. I instruct them on procedures, keep them flexible to structures and to be open to change. At times I bring correction either personally or corporately to get them back on course with where we are going as a church. I correct attitudes, behavior and mind sets. Sometimes we examine a process or procedure in our church and we bring correction to keep it simple, make sure it is reflecting our culture or to facilitate a desired goal or aim.

Rarely, I would bring admonition or rebuke or to bring to bring a course correction. In the majority of cases it is almost always a personal comment to an individual in

reference to character or their integrity. The motivation for admonition is always love and concern for them as an individual never to be vindictive, harsh or hurtful. I never correct in anger and would always make sure it is measured and appropriate for the situation. I never lower myself to the level of an insult, a personal attack or to take advantage of my position to be rude, overly controlling or harsh.

From me as leader my other leaders have learned to move in this same spirit imitating my style in various levels of expertise, maturity and experience. I have discovered that leaders of growing churches know how to lead through others and lead through their teams of leaders. The leaders of growing church know how to lead through their leaders – this develops leaders, maximizes impact and multiplies capacity far beyond the capacity of one or two senior leaders.

Instead of one or two leaders you now have 2 leaders to the power of 10 – this equation is what makes churches grow and impact cities. Working with, training, loving, developing, mentoring and coaching leaders is what contributes to a strong healthy church with a consistent vision, a strong and healthy culture and a clear articulated mission.

To develop leaders and leadership structures like this as a senior leader you must be intentional to the point of deliberately working this process of leadership development and doing so within your calling, gifting and ministry. Being intentional in what you teach and how you decide to train.

To compliment and augment the process it is also important to bring in others who can also train, and build capacity. We have a small number of people we bring in regularly each year to speak into the life and leadership of our church. Men like Scott Wilson have become key, seminal and shaping to our church, our culture and our leadership's quality. Those like Scott are helping us to become one of Europe's cutting edge churches.


Conclusion

Training leaders is not an end in itself ...

Leadership training within the church must be seen as imperative, essential, and crucial if left to chance you will never see a strong and healthy people and you will never see a powerful, influential and significant church. But remember it's not just training leaders for church – leadership training is not an end in it self – we have to think outside the church and decide we will impact mainstream culture. We are not just training and developing leaders – we are developing people who both lead and are influences in their world.

We need these influential people in families, in the market place of politics, education and social reform – we need Christian leaders in the main stream of what we call "today" – these people who influence are involved in coaching other leaders to also impact the world – church leadership is not an end in itself – what we're training people to do is be servants in being excellent in influencing the world around us.

There is a great danger in the church that we simply create a culture that is self serving or expedient and if we don't keep our focus the church becomes "hyper culture" instead of "bringing out the God flavors in the world and the God colors in the world."



Let me finish with a quote from Mal Fletcher to keep us in tune with our mandate and mission; "Within any society the group that has the strongest and most clearly defined culture will become the leading voice." I want to become a leading voice in my day – a voice that makes Jesus famous.