

Building Teams

The Bible describes the church as a Body (Romans 12:5), and in achieving our vision, it is likely that the church will need to operate as a body, or as a team. Whilst in one sense, the whole church will become a team, it is likely that various sub-groups of it will need to work together to carry out the church's mission in a particular area, or to exercise ministry. Teams do not just happen! They need to be carefully built by good team leaders.

During the early stages of a team's formation, the leader may want to introduce some activities or exercises that give opportunity for developing the relationships within the team. Some of these are simply team building, others will have an output of longer term value. A team leader may choose to use a number of the ideas below, or use these as a base for developing ideas of their own.

- ☞ **Allowing the team to develop their Mission / Vision statements together** is an excellent way of building team ownership and responsibility for delivering results.
- ☞ **Work together on a short-term challenge.** This can be completely unrelated to the task, for example undertaking a sponsored walk together, or painting a community building. The process of working together on a task offers chance for the team to talk to each other, and to achieve early success.
- ☞ **Have an early team meeting away from home** - either going away for the day, or even better with an overnight stay. Being away from home base helps to generate team spirit.
- ☞ **Have fun!** A shared social event, party, hike or whatever can be a great way of allowing people to get to know one another without any pressure to get on with the task.
- ☞ **Look together at successful examples of teams,** and understand what they have in common. Broaden the net to consider sporting teams and business teams as well as Christian teams. Think though how their common elements can be reapplied in your team.
- ☞ **Pray together.** Praying together for the success of the team, and for each other is a powerful way of supporting one another. This can either be one as a whole team, or by giving each member of the team two or three other team members to pray for (so each team member gets prayed for by two or three other members of the team.)
- ☞ **Spend a team meeting sharing personal experiences and expectations.** Each person takes between five and ten minutes to outline why they want to be on the team, what they bring that is relevant, and what they are hoping to get out of it. No interruptions whilst they are talking, but questions allowed at the end. (This works best when all members of the group will feel comfortable participating!)
- ☞ **Affirm Each Other.** Each member of the team is given the number of cards as there are team members (less one). Each person then writes the names of another team member on the top of each card, and then briefly writes down one quality, strength or characteristic they particularly appreciate about that person. This is replicated until they have completed one for each other member of the team. All the cards are gathered together and then redistributed to the members concerned. Feedback remains anonymous.
- ☞ **Roles and Tasks.** The team works out the tasks and roles needed to achieve its mission and allocates roles to team members. Then allow an open discussion to develop about what will be done independently and what will be done together.

Given that the church is the body of Christ, we can expect different people to fulfil different functions within it. (Rom 12:5) This is a vital concept if a team is going to combine different giftings, personalities and ministries into a cohesive unit which is able to achieve tasks beyond the individual capabilities of its members.

In order to unlock the power of the diversity within the team, the team leader must first be aware of at least some of that diversity. We need to appreciate and value the different skills and gifts that each person brings to the team. It is very easy to fall into the trap of valuing some gifts more highly than others. In particular, we can often value highly those with skills most similar to ourselves.



Delegation

Delegation is a vital skill for team leaders. Delegation leads to a team owning its success and increasing its capacity for achievement. Yet letting go of control can be hard.

EXERCISE

In *Making a Team Work*, Steve Chalke provides a check list of things to consider delegating :

- Things you are good at
- Things you are bad at
- Work which will provide experience
- Opportunities to reinforce talents
- Routine decisions

Take 10 minutes to think of 5 things you could delegate tomorrow using these categories.

Five Elements of Good Delegation

1. Provide Context

It is essential to be clear about what is required, and why it is important. Setting the delegated work within the broader context energises the recipients of the delegated work. They're clear how it contributes to the overall success of the team.

2. Delegate Authority and Responsibility

Delegating the responsibility to complete a task is relatively easy. Delegating the necessary authority is less so. Delegating authority requires confidence in the individual, since the leader is relinquishing some control over team activities. Yet without the necessary authority and room for decision making, people are not empowered to complete the tasks they have been given. This is particularly vital in a voluntary organisation.

3. Support don't Abdicate

Delegation does not mean complete withdrawal. Particularly in the early stages, people need support and encouragement to take on additional responsibility. They may need skill training, or encouraging feedback as they stretch themselves in previously untested areas. Prayer support is equally important.

4. Only Delegate When Appropriate

Check that the recipients of the delegation have the necessary skills, information, authority and capability to carry out the delegated responsibilities. If not, then not only will the work not get done, but the individual concerned may lose motivation.

5. Look at Team and Sub-team Structure.

Map out what is delegate to the various individuals and sub-teams on your team. Check for consistency and overlaps, and ensure that there is clear communication within the team as to who has responsibility for which areas. This is even more important within a team setting than in a traditional one to one manager : subordinate relationship.

ACTION POINTER :Reflect on your leadership – and try to identify five areas where you could delegate more. Make sure that you delegate both the responsibility for the task and the necessary authority.



Handling Conflict

Conflict is inevitable, natural, and even healthy! What is unhealthy is unresolved conflict allowed to fester and become a sore in the side of an otherwise productive team. In Acts 15 we see conflict both within and outside the team, but in both cases it is resolved productively. Here is a five stage process for handling conflict.

1. **P**ray through the subject of the conflict, alone. Ask God to help you discern the reasons behind it, the needs of those involved and how you may have contributed to it.
2. **E**xplore each others positions thoroughly, listening carefully to each others' views on the subject of the conflict. Bear in mind that the conflict may be about personalities and needs, rather than the subject matter.
3. **A**pproach possible solutions together, bringing to the fore the commonality you have. These may include desire to see God glorified, the team goal, concern for each other's happiness.
4. **C**ollaboration is better than compromise. Praying together can be a powerful way of seeking agreement. *'I will listen to what God, the Lord will say, he promises peace to his people, his saints.'* (Ps85:8)
5. **E**xpel any resentment you still hold. Make peace with them! (Mt 5:24)

ACTION POINTER : Use the approach above to try to resolve any conflict that you are aware of within the team. You may find the list of questions and meditations below helpful

APPROACHING CONFLICT SITUATIONS

Five questions to reflect on and pray through, when in conflict with another person :

1. What does the Lord appreciate about this person? Can I see those qualities in them?
2. Why am I taking my position? Is that true, or is there something behind it?
3. What is important in this situation?
4. What alternative solutions are there? Which of them could I live with?
5. How have I contributed to this situation? Do I need to ask the Lord to help me repent of anything?

Five passages for meditation :

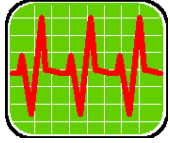
'Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord.' (Leviticus 19:18)

'Do not say, 'I'll pay you back for this wrong!' Wait for the Lord, and He will deliver you.' (Proverbs 20:22)

'Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs.' (Proverbs 10:12)

'My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.' (James 1:19)

'Tell your people to slander no-one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility to all people.' (Titus 3:2)



Team Health Check

Effective teams pause once in a while to review the health of their teamworking. Teams can often be working well enough to do the job, without really unlocking the potential that they have within the team.

Here is a tool which helps teams review their effectiveness. It's a simple three step process. The process requires a facilitator, which can be either a member of the team, or an external person. It is not necessarily a good idea for the team leader to be the facilitator, as this can limit feedback on team leadership and may constrain discussion on how to improve teamworking.

First, each member of the team uses the Effective Teams Health Check (on the reverse of this sheet) to record their own assessment of how the team is currently operating. These are then collated by the team facilitator, who calculates an average score for all members of the team.

The second stage of the process is for the whole team to meet and develop an overall team score for each statement. The facilitator should guide the process, spending relatively little time on those where the team is pretty much agreed on the score, and it is a reasonably positive score. More time will be required where the team has widely divergent views on how it is performing in a particular area, or if the team feels that it is struggling in a certain aspect.

Next the team develops a list of things that it would like to do differently. The process is completed by the writing of an action plan on how it will tackle the most important three or four things on that list. Realistically three or four things will be plenty to focus on. Don't try and work on all twenty areas at once!!

Target - most effective teams should aim to reach a target score of 4 or more in the longer term. A score of between 3 and 4 indicates that the team is performing fairly well, but that there are still some areas to be tackled. A score of less than 3 suggests that the team is either in its infancy, or that there are some particular issues that need to be addressed.

Repeat the exercise after a year to see whether the desired improvements have been met. (This period could be shortened to six months for a team who are meeting and working together frequently.)

Effective Teams Health Check

This health check is designed to help teams review their effectiveness. It is in three parts :

- i) Use the descriptions below to insert the number in the score column that represents your personal assessment of the way that the team is working right now.
- ii) Your individual assessment will be shared with the other team members to come up with an overall team assessment.
- iii) The team will then reflect on the results and develop an action plan.

SCORING

- 5 Strongly Agree** Fully operational and exceeds the description.
- 4 Agree** Operational and meets all or nearly all aspects of the description, but not ideal.
- 3 Slightly Agree** Operational, but incomplete. Partially meets the description.
- 2 Slightly Disagree** Nearly operational, but some way to go. Doesn't yet really meet the description.
- 1 Disagree** We have started on this, but there is a long way to go. The descriptors do not apply.
- 0 Strongly Disagree** Nothing has been done - this does not apply at all to our team

		Your Score	Avge	Team Score	Avge
	Purpose / Direction				
a.	The team has a clear mission/purpose, known by all team members				
b.	The team has a vision and success criteria which are challenging, meaningful and exciting to the team				
c.	The team understand how the work of the team fits into the larger picture				
	Team Leadership				
d.	Balances appropriate direction with support and openness.				
e.	Discusses key issues with the team				
f.	Delegates responsibility and leadership to individuals in their area of expertise.				
	Understanding Differences				
g.	Team members understand what their roles are, and where these overlap with other members.				
h.	Team members are clear about what is expected of them individually by the rest of the team				
i.	Team members are clear about what individual strengths each member of the team brings.				
	Processes				
j.	Team meetings are effective.				
k.	The team has found and implemented better ways of working				
l.	The team has an efficient process to solve problems and take decisions				
m.	The team has sufficient resources (people, money, time) to do its work.				
	Communication				
n.	Everyone feels their ideas and input is listened to by the rest of the team				
o.	Differences and conflicts are resolved openly and constructively.				
p.	Members interaction is open and honest				
	Relationships				
q.	The team's different experiences, skills and gifts are accepted and used.				
r.	There is trust and openness between team members				
s.	New members feel valued and quickly become productive members of the team				
t.	The team takes responsibility for its successes and failures, and avoids blaming other people or groups.				
	AVERAGE SCORE				

The team's greatest strength is _____

One thing the team can improve is _____