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# MANDATES FOR EFFECTIVE CHURCH LEADERS

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## **LEADERSHIP IS A HIGHLY SPECIALIZED JOB IN CHURCH**

Most pastors live in a panic mode with vague feelings of, “*I’ve got to do something really great, really fast.*” I’m convinced that one reason we pray so fervently for revival or for a great move of God to happen Sunday morning is that we still see ourselves as that high school soccer forward who broke local records for most goals scored in one season. Now as coaches, our frustrations at students’ skill-levels or performance tempt us to substitute ourselves back into the lineup.

Our prayers are desperate rather than considered. Not realizing that our role is to arrange the lineup, the practices, the morale and the whole scheme of our team, we panic, put on cleated shoes and try to salvage the game ourselves.

We forget that it is our God-given assignment to make disciples. We’d rather have God make them in a flash of revival fire. We keep trying for a spiritual *presto*.

## **CHURCH IS A PROCESS**

Church leadership is a never-ending endeavor of adjusting that process. While a volunteer who has been given specific tasks to do has the satisfaction of being done with them, leaders are never done. If we understood that the development of churches, like people, occurs a little at a time, we would not be expecting such dramatic results or such wildly successful events.

God has not called us to every position on the team, playing mid-fielder, goalie and striker by ourselves. We have a unique assignment that stretches all through the week. We are coaches, more than star forwards. If we get too involved on the soccer field, we will lose focus on the game.

### *Leadership is a Highly Specialized Role in an Organization*

Leaders cannot allow themselves to do what others in the organization can do; otherwise, that which only leaders can do will not get done. Perhaps I should add one more mandate for effective leadership to the ones I have listed below: *Do your job.*

## **NINE CRITICAL LEADERSHIP ROLES**

Most leaders do the wrong things right. Their focus too easily is drawn to the immediate and obvious needs of their organization that others could do, but aren't. Effective leadership depends on working hard at only a few things. The roles leaders must play are limited but critical. How well the rest of the team plays depends on how carefully leaders fulfill their unique roles.

### I. Understand Your Mission.

- A. Know God's basic design and purpose for your congregation. Express your vision of success in definite terms.
- B. Summarize in several different ways the primary result you're trying to accomplish.
- C. Decide what you want your church to look like and what you want to be doing in the future.
- D. Have a passion for the outcomes and results defined by your mission.
- E. Incorporate the calling and ministries of others from the congregation in your guiding purpose.

### II. Communicate the Vision Convincingly.

- A. Continuously relate what your church is all about and why. Live your vision—"walk" your "talk"—personally pursuing your dream, and modeling it with your life.
- B. Use visual language, metaphors, stories, examples, etc., to create both the mood and the desired atmosphere of your particular church.
- C. Interpret events, programs, problems, and priorities through the lens of your church's overarching purpose. Facilitate coordinated understanding and action.

- D. Communicate the church vision as the best way for people to realize their own personal vision—this should not be manipulated.

### III. Define and Refine Your Church's Culture.

- A. Culture is not neutral. It will either be your ally or your foe. Without change and development in the culture, organizations will stagnate and die.
- B. Culture cannot be taught; it can only be picked up a bit at a time. And, it can be modified only over time. Celebrate and reinforce the little things that create the culture you desire.
- C. Give expression to the assumptions, manners, customs and ways that govern your philosophy of ministry and theology of the church.
- D. Create an oral tradition of stories and testimonies, which communicate definite messages about what you feel and believe.

### IV. Cultivate and Nurture Credibility.

- A. Lead by degree not decree. Be real, and be yourself!
- B. Followers look for honesty and competence in a leader. Develop competence, or at least compensate for your incompetence. *"Staff your weakness..."*
- C. In a twist that many leaders do not understand, followers can sense whether or not leaders trust people. If you do not trust them, they are not likely to trust you!
- D. When leaders are more open and trusting, followers are more open and responsive. Leaders set the trust level. Trust comes out of meaningful relationship over time.

### V. Inspire People.

- A. Be enthusiastic, energetic, and positive about the future. Inspiration is one of the key traits most wanted by followers in a leader. Be a cheerleader and a coach.
- B. Inspire people by believing in them more than they believe in themselves. Serve them and release them. Develop strong self-regard in others; they will follow you.

- C. Build collaboration and teamwork; recognize and reward people's individuality and accomplishments.
- D. People want stimulating involvement: a chance to be tested and to succeed at something; an opportunity to be part of an adventure; to really do something well and to make a significant difference.

## VI. Empower People.

- A. Leaders release others and empower them to function meaningfully. People tend to perform to the level expected of them. Expect great things.
- B. Make people feel significant to the whole process and vitally involved in "*doing church.*" Help people see their importance, their capabilities. Catch people doing things well.
- C. The easiest way to empower people is to share authority and information with them. Build your organization around information and communication, not around hierarchy. Give people what they need to know.
- D. Disciple and delegate. Promote participation and decision-making involvement. The greater the freedom and authority allowed, the more effective the whole organization becomes.
- E. Assign important tasks to others—giving them authority, autonomy and recognition. An empowering and releasing person to do things (at which they will make mistakes) does more to build your church than doing things yourself (and not making mistakes) does.

## VII. Stay the Course—Don't Give Up.

- A. Think long haul. Resolve and maintain what you are here for, what you do, and how you do what you are here for. Leadership comes from exemplifying and modeling over time.
- B. You will need courage, stamina, and vitality to keep believing—without much immediate and positive reinforcement. Remember to encourage yourself by asking, "*If it works, what will it accomplish?*"

- C. Be flexible and adaptable with plans and objectives, but maintain a single direction. Don't try to convince everyone right away or all the time. Go for little successes.
- D. Encourage dissent and disagreement in order to improve what you are doing. Use inevitable conflicts that arise as an opportunity to clarify your values.
- E. Organizational integrity and identity are formed on the basis of a leader staying the course, being firm and consistent, taking whatever actions are necessary to keep progressing.

#### VIII. Take Risks—Use Your Mistakes.

- A. Effective leaders never think about the possibility of failure. They are high on the success-achievement scale, and low on failure-avoidance. Effective leaders do not use the word “*failure*.” they speak about “*glitches*,” “*mistakes*,” “*false-starts*,” etc.
- B. Create and model a climate of innovation and possibility thinking—focusing on “*what if it works*” rather than “*we can't do that*.”
- C. Remind people that no one ever gained a testimony playing it safe. Maintain optimism and hope; there are always alternatives and other ways around a problem.
- D. Be willing to admit when something doesn't work well. Let imperfections become normative, but learn from them. Embrace errors as resources for future attempts at building a better organization. Celebrate failures as risk-taking.

#### IX. Build a Team Mentality—with Vision and Values.

- A. The vast bulk of what God does on earth happens through the agency of human beings, and not just as a result of sovereign intervention without human participation. Why are we kept alive after our conversion to Christ?
- B. God places immense significance on individuals, and He likes to use us. He considers us in His heart. He has invested lots in us. Like our gift-mix and our experiences, He wants to share His ministry-business with us.
- C. Kingdom leadership is primarily about developing other people into their God-intended places of ministry and significance. The real work of church is in transforming lives and deepening people's relationship with the Lord.

- D. The goal is to put more ministry into the hands of more spiritual people. Our role is to model what others can do and be—to play “*Follow the Leader.*”

## RECONSIDER THE NATURE OF MINISTRY SUCCESS

In addition to the general mandates for leadership listed above, pastors have a higher calling from God. Spiritual leaders are supposed to use their church/ministry as an instrument in the lives of people who attend. Church is a disciple-making enterprise, so all the focus on our outcomes must ultimately be about people’s spiritual development. Here are two final mandates for effective *church* leadership.

- I. Impart Spiritual Significance to Individuals—the Four Goals of Discipleship—by Increasing their:
  - A. Relationship with God—He is knowable, approachable, delightful, merciful and long-suffering.
  - B. Personal Obedience—He wants us to “*pay attention*” to the whispered words of His Spirit.
  - C. Spiritual Understanding—His way of doing things is not like ours; Kingdom principles are counter-intuitive.
  - D. Transformational Involvement with others—The highest goal, next to loving God, loves others (in deed and truth).
- II. Develop Believers from “Acorn to Oak Tree” (Isaiah 61:1-4):
  - A. Involve more laborers—the constant, primary focus for ministry—by giving them training, opportunity and permission (Matthew 9:37-38).
  - B. Give each member an empowered part and role in ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16).
  - C. Make faithful people “*master of more*” in ever-progressing maturity (Matthew 25:21).
  - D. Lead others into their ministry-inheritance, instead of using them to gain or enlarge ours (Joshua 1:1-9).

- E. Build and challenge people—be willing to travel a great distance to reach where they live (Nehemiah 2:1-15).
- F. Use true, godly authority to build people (2 Corinthians 10:1-7).
- G. Labor for and invest in others—become like a worker “*waiting tables*” in a restaurant (Colossians 1:24-29).
- H. Serve people by giving up our rights and positions—taking the form of servant (Philippians 2:1-11).