

# Team Leaders Workshop

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## **Workshop Aims**

With particular reference to teams working in cross-cultural situations, this workshop will:

- Explore what a healthy team is, and how it functions
- Equip team leaders to motivate and manage teams to function more effectively
- Consider ways that team leaders can prevent and resolve conflict within teams
- Encourage team leaders to balance the needs of the team, the task, and the individual

## **1. Introduction: Why talk about short term mission teams?**

Although this workshop is focused on short term mission teams, the key concepts discussed are equally relevant for those leading teams in local contexts. But why have I chosen to focus on short term mission teams?

### ***a) Global missions trends***

The huge increase in short term mission teams means that more and more local churches are being impacted by these teams: some estimate that up to 4 million Christians take part in short term mission trips every year.

### ***b) Personal experience***

I have enjoyed wonderful experiences as a participant in short term mission trips. However, in my current role, I have observed that, while some short term mission teams make a positive, lasting impact on the local church, but others are less successful. Teams are often hampered by a lack of understanding of cultural differences, language barriers, inter-personal relational breakdown, and a lack of proper planning and communication. In most cases, these problems could have been avoided by better preparation.

### ***c) The need for partnership between sending and receiving churches***

The focus of this workshop is therefore on this one basic question: how can we make short term mission teams work better? A key part of the answer is that both sending **and** receiving churches need to communicate effectively and cooperate together to ensure a positive outcome from team programmes. Therefore both sending and receiving churches need to understand the issues facing short term mission teams.

### ***d) To encourage wider participation in mission***

If your national Convention does not have a history of sending out mission teams, I want to encourage you to consider whether now is the time to begin? The benefits for your young people will be enormous: their faith will be stretched and challenged as they step outside of their comfort zone and cross a culture for Jesus.

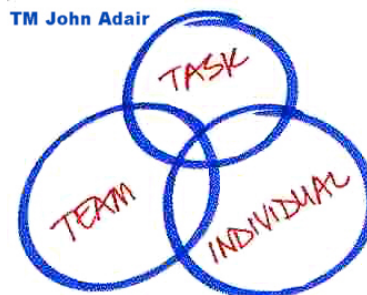
## **2. Leading Teams: the basics**

To be a leader, you must first be a follower. The most effective leaders are those whose lives are modeled on Jesus Christ, the ultimate example of servant leadership. Their lives are marked by humility, prayer, faith, integrity, dependence on God, perseverance, and the fruit of the Spirit produced through their deep personal communion with God. They can say, with Paul, *'Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me: put it into practice.'* (Philippians 4:9) I would encourage all young leaders to prioritise studying biblical examples of godly leadership – Joshua and Nehemiah are particularly useful. We should pray for God's help to apply biblical lessons on leadership to our own lives. Our personal examples of godly living speak

more loudly to our teams than anything we say, and have more impact on our teams than any of our structures or strategies.

That is not to say, however, that we can not improve and develop our leadership skills by studying models of team leadership. The most helpful model that I have seen is the Team-Task-Individual model. Team leadership involves three key elements:

- Managing the Team
- Achieving the Task
- Caring for Individuals



The team leader has to continually hold these three elements in mind. At times, the demands of the Task will loom large, and Team and Individual concerns will receive less attention. At other times, Team needs will take precedence over the Task needs, and so on. It is essential that none of the three elements is ignored altogether, however - because disaster is imminent. If its needs are ignored, the Team may fall apart, the Task may fail, Individuals may experience breakdowns.

### 3. Managing the Team

#### a) What is a Team?

A team is 'a group of people linked in a common purpose.' The Bible teaches clearly that all Christian ministry is a team enterprise – for example, the imagery of the body in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. Teams are therefore *vital* to all of our ministry – yet they are also *vulnerable*. Dr Lianne Reomnke wrote, 'The Achilles heel of mission work is in the area of personal relationships. And the team situation is usually the crucible.'

#### What makes a good team?

The Bible has much to teach us about teams in general, and short term mission teams in particular. The first ever short term mission team is found in Numbers 13. Moses sent a team of 12 men to explore Canaan, and then report back on their findings. Their trip lasted for 40 days – and produced the first ever intra-team conflict too! (Numbers 13:30-31) What can we learn about teams from the following verses?

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|--------------------------|------------------|
| • Ecclesiastes 4:9-10    | • Genesis 2:18   |
| • Proverbs 27:17         | • James 1:19     |
| • 1 Corinthians 12:20-25 | • John 13:34-35  |
| • Ephesians 4:11-12      | • Proverbs 16:28 |
| • Romans 15:5-6          | • Romans 12:3-8  |

#### A good team has a...

- Shared sense of belonging – welcome, trust, respect, support
- Shared vision – common objective, clear goal and strategy
- Shared achievement – complimentary roles and skills
- Shared accountability – honesty and openness, sharing triumphs and failures
- Shared communication – ideas, insights, joys, fun, frustrations
- Shared bible study and prayer – open to the Spirit's teaching

#### Four Stages of Team Development (Bruce Tuckman, 1965)

There are four stages of development that groups pass through on their way to becoming a team. The timing of these stages will vary from team to team, but the four phases are very predictable, and should not surprise us.

- a) *Forming* – ‘honeymoon’ period
- b) *Storming* – confrontation
- c) *Norming* – unity and compromise
- d) *Performing* – effective and independent

### **b) Motivating the Team**

Many factors contribute towards the level of motivation within any team. Preparation for a team-based activity should pay attention to these key motivating factors: (Adapted from Peter Grazier, 1998)

1. *Purpose*: Are all the team members focused on the team’s common purpose?
2. *Challenge*: Not so hard that people give up; but enough to motivate them (Mark 10:27)
3. *Camaraderie*: Teams that have fun serving together are usually highly motivated
4. *Responsibility*: Each team member has an area of particular responsibility
5. *Leadership*: Creating the conditions for numbers 1-4 to exist: not doing it all themselves

### **Purpose: Team Mission Statement**

Spend time together as a team discussing and deciding on your team’s mission statement. This should be as specific as possible, and may be linked with a particular bible verse that is meaningful for the team. This Mission Statement will sustain motivation among team members in times of stress and difficulty.

### **Challenge: Team Selection**

It is crucial that the team faces an appropriate challenge – if too easy, the team will get bored, and if too hard, the team may give up trying. You will either be selecting a team for a specific task, or you will be looking for a suitable task for a pre-selected team to do. Be realistic about the team’s abilities and skills.

### **Camaraderie: Team Building**

Student mission teams from the UK go away together for an outdoor activity weekend, sleeping in the forest and taking part in team building activities. Some team building activities you can try include:

- Count off
- Newspaper towers
- Egg drop
- Human Sculptures
- Points on the ground
- Trust game
- Blindfold minesweep
- Electric fence
- Rope Circle
- Planning an activity

### **Responsibility: Team Roles**

Every team member should have an assigned role, an area of responsibility for the duration of the trip. This helps each member to feel a part of the team, facilitates individual gifts being used to their full potential, and frees the team leader from the pressure of doing everything him/herself. Roles could include finance coordinator, prayer organizer, practicalities coordinator, first aider, worship leader, childrens’ work leader etc

### **Leadership: Team Rules**

The team leader must ensure that the team has a set of clear, pre-agreed guidelines for conduct, especially for younger people. These guidelines will vary according to the age of the team members, and the particular context. Abiding by them, however, should be non-negotiable.

### **c) Dealing with conflict within a Team**

Probably the most common cause in a team context is relatively simple: *misunderstanding*. There may be a number of factors contributing to team members misunderstanding each other, including:

- Poor communication
- Stress, ill health, anxiety
- Gender differences (Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus)
- Generational differences (Boomers, Baby Boomers, Busters)
- Cultural differences
- Personality differences ( Doers, Influencers, Relaters, Thinkers)

### Is the glass half full or half empty?

Different individuals in the team will react differently to conflict.



**Shark:** aggressive, 'attacking' the problem (and frequently, the individuals involved are hurt)

**Fox:** cunning, finding ways to 'solve' the problem, perhaps using dishonest methods

**Owl:** sees all view points, never decides which to support personally

**Teddy:** absorbs all criticism, seems to be happy to do so, never complains

**Tortoise:** hides, avoids all conflict, denies problems

### A Biblical approach to restoring broken relationships

Rick Warren's *Purpose Driven Life* gives 7 biblical principles to restore relationships:

- **Talk to God first (Matthew 11:28)**

Often God will soften your heart or the others, and no conflict will be necessary.

- **Always take the initiative (Matthew 5:23-24)**

It doesn't matter whether you are the offender or the offended: make the first move.

- **Sympathise with others' feelings (Proverbs 19:11)**

Listen to what they have to say, understand their viewpoint before airing your own opinion.

- **Confess your part of the conflict (Matthew 7:5)**

Admit to your own mistakes- confession is a powerful act of reconciliation

- **Attack the problem, not the person (Proverbs 15:1)**

Never argue with words of anger. HOW you say something is as important as what you say

- **Cooperate as much as possible (Romans 12:18)**

Peace always costs something- perhaps your pride or desire to be right

- **Emphasise reconciliation not resolution (Matthew 5:9)**

Reconciliation focuses on the relationship. Resolution focuses on the problem.

## 4. Achieving the Task

### a) Arranging a Task

If the team is to make a positive and lasting impact on the local church, the team should be working very closely together with the local partner church or organization. The team's task should:

- Be *planned* in advance in partnership with the local church (12 months in advance)
- *Build* on the work of an established local partner
- *Reflect* the long-term objectives of the local partner
- Have *shared* ownership between the team and the local partner
- Be appropriately *contextualized* (as should the team's behaviour, dress code etc)
- *Not replicate* or replace existing work
- Take into account the restrictions of *language barriers* – are interpreters needed?

- Have a pre-agreed *budget* (including sources of funding)

Global Connections is a UK-based Christian organization working to facilitate short term mission teams. They have a very helpful planning timetable which will help you in negotiating the complexities of planning a mission team, as well as other resources, available here:

<http://www.globalconnections.co.uk/resources> .

#### **b) Re-evaluating the importance of the Task**

I have seen teams come close to despair because, due to unforeseen delays, they were unable to complete their task. Recognize that the task is not everything. Relationships formed with local partners, personal spiritual growth for team members, encouragement given to local believers, a fresh experience of God's power – these are all positive outcomes, regardless of the status of the task.

### **5. Caring for Individuals**

The third element of the team leader's responsibilities probably bears the greatest potential for seeing positive growth, and yet it is also the most frequently overlooked. This is understandable: in the excitement of the team experience, in the urgency of the task's demands, the individual's needs are easily forgotten. Some key strategies for team leaders to employ in caring for individuals include:

- a) *Be sure that enough rest time is programmed into the team schedule*
- b) *Be intentional about spending time with each individual*
- c) *Be creative in giving encouragement*
- d) *Be aware of particular stress points*
- e) *Be open to emerging leaders*

### **6. Summary**

Team leaders are taking on an awesome responsibility. They have to balance out the (sometimes competing) needs of the Team, the Task, and the Individual. But they also have the privilege of seeing God at work in and through the team, and the individual team members. When the demands of leadership seem overwhelmingly, God is teaching us that we are not up to the job. But, amazingly, through His grace, He provides us with resources and power beyond our imagination – when we lean on Him and depend not on our own understanding or skill, but on His power. 'I can do everything through him who gives me strength' (Philippians 4:13). I pray that this would be your experience as you begin, or continue, in team leadership.

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