

Building a Good Staff Team

Myth: A high-functioning church staff will automatically happen if you have competent, spiritually-mature team members. Just turn them loose and get out of the way.

Reality: Building a high-functioning staff team takes a lot of work! You definitely need competent, spiritually-mature team members, but how you lead them is critical. One of the most common hindrances to local church ministry is staff dysfunction. Leadership neglect creates staff dysfunction.

Pastor, your ministry effectiveness will largely be determined by how well your team functions. "Staff" includes full and part-time employees as well as key volunteers who function in a significant ministry leadership role. All churches of all sizes have a group of key leaders - a staff - who must function well together under the pastors leadership if the church is going to be effective in ministry.

Consider these ten building blocks of a high-functioning staff team.

1. *Clear mission and vision that everyone owns.* Are all staff members on the same page? Here's how you can find out. Bring everyone together and ask them to write down how they would complete these two sentences: *The mission of our church is _____? The key objectives of our church right now are _____?* "Mission" is the unchanging reason that your church exists. It expresses the key outcomes you are always pursuing until Jesus comes. "Key objectives" are about the vision you are currently pursuing. They are prioritized goals that flesh out and contribute to the overall mission. Have your team members read their responses about the church's mission and current key objectives. You will immediately know if everyone is on the same page. If not, this is where you start in building a high-functioning team.

2. *Clear assignments.* Does everyone have a clear job description that defines what they are responsible for and how they will be evaluated? Up-to-date job descriptions will aid both the hiring process and ongoing accountability. It is terribly frustrating to not know what your core job is or to have unstated expectations for which you will be held responsible. Clear assignments lower the frustration and help focus team members' energies in the right places.

3. *Alignment of skills and assignments.* Do you have the right people in the right roles? If the assignments are clear, then you need to make sure the people with those assignments have the ability to accomplish them. If not, then you have some coaching and/or staff changes to make.

4. *Clear lines of authority.* Does each staff member know what decisions he or she has authority to make and to whom they report? Make sure your organizational structure and policies are clearly defined.

5. *Active and supportive supervision.* How much emphasis do you give to helping your direct reports learn, grow, and succeed? Supervision is a ministry in and of itself. I'm not talking about micromanaging. I'm talking about sufficient face time with your direct reports for guidance, feedback, accountability, and resourcing. A small portion of your time invested in this will yield big dividends. It

will also help you recognize an alignment problem per 3) above. By the way, if you need a simple process for how to supervise effectively, I have one I'll be glad to share.

6. *Comradery*. Is there a sense of friendship and *esprit de corps* among your team members? If not, consider how you may spark such comradery through shared experiences like a staff retreat, a common project you do together, or simple things like taking time to pray for one another. Make an effort at building community among your staff.

7. *Communication*. Is important information being communicated on a timely basis among your team members? This is a common breakdown on church staffs. Poor communication promotes relational dysfunction and conflict between different ministries. The worship leader and the student minister don't need to know everything the other is doing, but they do need to know about each other's key ministry goals, facilities use, big events, key challenges to overcome, etc. Otherwise they may find themselves working at cross purposes. Does your staff have the communication channels for this?

8. *Cooperation*. Do your team members stay rigidly in their "silos" or do they gladly help one another? "I only do my thing" is a recipe for a low-functioning staff. Obviously each person has core responsibilities and priorities, but an unselfish spirit is a necessary requirement for a high-functioning team. This attitude starts with the pastor who leads by example. A win for any staff member is a win for the team. Celebrate those wins and honor those team members who demonstrate the cooperative spirit.

9. *Shared high standards*. Do your staff members share a commitment to ministry excellence as well as integrity in personal conduct? The best norms are ones the community enforces through mutual accountability. The pastor leads by example, of course, but he also can spark important conversations about what makes for excellence in ministry and appropriate staff conduct. You'll know it's working when you see team members reminding one another, helping one another, and holding one another accountable. Give some thought to what the actual standards are among your team.

10. *Appropriate rest*. Are you wearing out good team members? Do you respect days off and time away from ministry responsibilities? Necessary exceptions should be few. Make sure you give your staff sufficient time and space to refuel. Lead by example in this area, too.

Yes, it's a lot of work to build and lead a high-functioning staff. However, neglecting this work and hoping for the best is not a good plan. Use the above as a checklist. Where do you need to focus in the next few months? Start there, get coaching if needed, put some effort into it, and trust the Lord to use your leadership to strengthen your team. It works if you work it.

*Staffing is such a crucial issue that BBA will hold a special **Senior/Lead Pastors Forum** dealing with all matters related to this subject. The forum is **Thursday, June 6, 10am – 2pm** at the campus of **Calvary Baptist Church in San Marcos**. The presenter / facilitator for the forum is Scott Weatherford, Lead Pastor of FBC Wimberley. There is no cost and lunch is provided. Please **RSVP to Linda Gibson at linda@bluebonnetbaptist.org**. Lead pastors, this forum will help you build a stronger staff team. I encourage you to take advantage of this learning opportunity.*