

Building a Team



'Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships.'

John Maxwell

Working with a supportive team is valuable, but not all leaders have this advantage. Team dysfunction can result from lack of wisdom, poor motives, or immaturity. A Christian leader once told me, 'Don't have expectations of people and you won't be disappointed.' This reflects the reality of teamwork—disappointments happen, and we must cope. We are also likely to let others and the Lord down, sometimes without realizing it. There are many who have walked away from Christian responsibility because of disappointed expectations in others. Paul himself said, 'You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me' (2 Timothy 1:15). Betrayal can be one of the hardest things to cope with. Release them from your judgment and press on in freedom. Here are some hints for good team building.

Bible Perspective

'As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said (Matthew 4:18,19). He saw Levi....sitting at the tax collector's booth. 'Follow me' Jesus told him (Mark 2:14). The disciples, though diverse and different from Jesus, became his close companions for three and a half years. They all betrayed him, some more severely than others but later, except for Judas, they transformed the world through the Holy Spirit.

Observation

1. Always pray hard when building a team that God will lead you to the right person(s) and when the team is formed do pray often together. Pray before discussion on particularly important issues.
2. Get to know prospective team members before assigning them to a role. Clearly communicate the responsibilities of their position. While it is generally feasible to gradually increase someone's responsibilities over time, reducing them can be challenging and may cause discomfort.
3. Don't appoint 'yes' people, who always agree with you. That will limit your effectiveness.
4. Always provide a good job description and find regular ways for accountability. If you are a highly structured person, accept that your team member may operate with a more relaxed disposition. That's okay.
5. Recognise that testimonials may be biased. Read between the lines in a reference. Connecting with a previous employer is often useful.
6. Select individuals with diverse skills and personalities, rather than choosing those similar to yourself. Choosing people with different strengths may present challenges in team cohesion, but it can lead to effective results and broader perspectives.
7. When considering appointing an Elder or someone to a significant position, it is advisable to consult with others and then invite the individual to work with the

team for approximately three months before making a final decision. This allows time to assess whether their approach and interactions align well with the group. This method has been consistently effective in my ministry.

8. If you are not the leader learn to be a good follower so that if you are in a position of authority in time others will have a good attitude to you. You reap what you sow.
9. If you can't arrive at a decision you are discussing, delay making it until there is team unity. God's timing is important and He doesn't rush things. People will trust you more if they see you are willing to wait and lay down your desires.
10. Empower and release team members for ministry and don't control them. From my experience they will nearly always remain loyal to you when this happens. N. T. Wright liked this definition of leadership 'creating the conditions within which others thrive'.
11. Building strong team relationships underpins effective ministry. Keep meetings positive and focused, maintain a supportive, respectful environment, and always speak well of those you lead. Don't be too intense and have fun together.
12. If you want ethnic or social integration in your work, staff the team for cultural diversity.
13. Be discerning as to what you share with the team. They are not there to carry your burdens. With wisdom however share your vulnerabilities. This models how to walk humbly.
14. Do learn to listen to the team members and please don't do all the talking! Take an interest in them and their families and interests. They too have burdens to carry that you may know nothing about.
15. A team member's spouse may feel powerless and need support. While they should not control their partner or the organization, they can share insights appropriately.
16. Genuinely value and thank the team members in front of others. Love your team. Don't show favouritism and avoid any look of wrong behaviour especially with the opposite sex.
17. True success of your ministry is often evaluated several years after you leave it. Train your team well.

Resources

John Maxwell, *Team Work Makes the Dream Work*

Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable*

Brian Harris, *The Tortoise Usually Wins*