

Staffing

One of the most difficult questions I have had to face in my ministry, is when to add staff to the team, either in a part time or full-time capacity. Many pastors recoil at the thought of adding staff and respond often by saying that they would like to but cannot afford it.

When it comes to staffing, very few churches at the time can afford the cost, but this is where faith comes to the fore. I have found that at least half of the new recruit's wage should be available when they are taken on, while the remainder is more than likely to be made up because of faith and obedience, if the vision has been sold to the church.

Timing is important. If we do not staff at the right time, then the local church may go into decline. Iacocca in his autobiography in talking about the car industry deals with the right timing for introducing new model cars and indicates how crucial the right timing to capture the market is. A new staff member needs to be introduced when the climate of the church is right, not when it is declining, but as it moves forward strong in vision.

How do we know when to add a new staff member? Make sure that your motives in adding staff to the church are pure. If it is to gain the reputation of being a *live church* because several are on the staff, then the motive is wrong. For this reason, I think that we sometimes label people too quickly, by calling them a Youth Pastor or Elder before they are ready. It is important to plan for growth where obvious areas of need are apparent, for example, among the young people or in the area of administration or pastoral care. For myself, sometimes there is a growing pressure upon me, that if I do not staff soon to cover that need, then my wider ministry throughout the church will start to deteriorate. It is most useful to employ someone who can complement your own giftings. One on the staff like me is usually enough!

A question sometimes raised in the matter of staffing is, 'is the job to fit the person, or is the person to fit the job?' Neither extreme is ideal. It is better to have the right blend of both views, and it is only as a person settles into the job that right adjustments are made. To have that person work within the area of their main giftings is essential if they are to do their task well, feel fulfilled and have harmonious relationships. Do not put a round peg in a square hole. It does not work for long. On the other hand, we all must adjust to some tasks that we would rather not do.

A trend apparent today is to have home grown staff. That way they know the philosophy of the church and leadership can gauge the effectiveness of their ministry before being appointed to the job. For some this is ideal, but there can be disadvantages that go along with it too such as becoming too insular. Imported people, although it will take longer for them to settle down, can nevertheless add a freshness and breadth of experience to the Local Church.

Often it will take up to six to nine months before an outside staff member really settles down and has a good confident relationship.

The interview

Do not take anything for granted. It is better to discover weakness and to ask awkward questions now than to discover deficiencies later.

Be honest about your own church's strengths and weaknesses. Too often pastors and leaders find out too late as to what they have got themselves into.

Look for the potential in a worker and do not be restricted simply by what you observe. God by His grace has not given up on us and we likewise must not brush people aside too lightly.

A servant attitude is an important attribute in a staff member. Too many people today are after their own rights and are hard to motivate unless it interests them. Jesus gives the example of laying aside His rights and of being a servant to all. Be sensitive to the heart of the person. Referees may help in this area if this quality is unknown.

One senior minister I know insists that he will not employ any person who will not only do the job very well but will also make it their business to train up someone else to take their place when they eventually leave. That is good advice, as far too often when a staff member terminates their employment it leaves a gap which is sometimes very hard to fill.

Ask open ended questions (further on in this chapter) where the candidate is free to express their opinion rather than give the answers you desire. Look out for legalistic, unhealthy attitudes that may arise.

Staff meetings

The success of a team is not so much dependent upon individual gifting, but on relationships. For that reason, I spend considerable time with my leaders, not just in meetings, but in enjoyable social occasions so that when heavy issues arise confrontations are not inevitable.

Weekly staff meetings where spouses are welcome help to create a healthy climate for interaction. It is useful for a staff member to have a turn at bringing a short devotion. All can share coming events, concerns, answers to prayer and have a good time of prayer together. I have found that good aggressive prayer times with and for each other have often been a highlight of the week. Become friends with your staff members and they will support you through thick and thin. Furthermore, express your appreciation to them for all that they do, not only to them directly, but also in front of the church. They will love it.

Staff retreats

These can be special times in the life of the church. It enhances relationships and gives an opportunity to give training where weaknesses may appear. Get staff to help you run these and obtain videos and import guest speakers if necessary. Above all, do make sure you have times to laugh together and enjoy God. These can be wonderful times of refreshment.

Accountability

If secular businesses need accountability for the success of their organisation, then surely the church also needs it as well. After all, one of the gifts of the Spirit is administration. Some people, because of the open-ended nature of their personality find working within a framework at times stressful, while others thrive on it. Those people who find it stressful on the other hand, have strengths in other areas, like in being more flexible and easier going. People who have been their own boss can have problems working within a team unless they are directing it. They may be more prone to being autocratic or working independently of others.

It is useful at least once a year to reassess the person in relation to their job description, so that if matters need to be addressed it can be done so without great tension. I have discovered that what Iacocca says is true; that often staff people themselves will bring up areas of weakness and will be happy to discuss them without it becoming a major confrontation. To be rid of the 'them versus us' mentality and to work together as partners gives strength and cohesiveness to the team. We have job descriptions for every major position within the church whether people are on the payroll or not as this defines, in a non-legalistic way how we should be getting on. An example of a job description for a Youth Pastor is enclosed in this section.

At the beginning of the year every staff member should set measurable goals that can then be reviewed later. As the saying goes, 'if you aim at nothing, then you are bound to hit it.'

Weekly report sheets can also be useful for ascertaining where each person is at. For example, our pastoral worker and I fill in a weekly chart of the people we have visited or had an interview with over the past week, so that people are cared for effectively. It can also be a guide for us, to make sure we are working well.

Salaries

The subject of money is always an emotive one, but although I may give guidelines as to the salary level staff should be placed on, I normally withdraw from all discussion at this level. It is better for leadership outside the staff to decide that.

It is helpful to find some wage scale based on which to fix the salary to avoid endless emotive discussions that sometimes can lead to resentment and bitterness.