

Understanding the relationship of NCD & Consultations

Most assessment instruments are great for what they were created for. NCD was created to measure church health. It is good for that. It was not created as an intervention instrument to be used in congregational transformation. It is like using a thermometer to measure a person's health. It is a great index of health. However, it doesn't necessarily tell you what is wrong and how to fix it.

NCD can be used with coaching to improve health. If a congregation has a healthy community transformational construal, then NCD can be used to "tweak" its systems and challenge practices that may be keeping the church from maximal impact. One of the consultations we are doing is on a new plant that is 2 years old and around 350 people. The pastor and I have talked and we are going to use NCD because they do need some "tweaking". It is critical that they continue to monitor their health and look at their areas of weakness. NCD is great for that purpose and we use it for such. SO we haven't thrown the proverbial baby out with the bath water. NCD is a great instrument for what it assesses.

However, most of our congregations need a whole lot more than simply to know their temperature, they need CPR! That is why we use our consultations (read interventions). They are much more invasive, comprehensive and multifaceted than NCD. The congregation gives us their complete history as well as the history of the community. They also give us a complete analysis of where they presently are. Then we have them meet by themselves and fill out assessment surveys (some similar to NCD) but we also collect information from interviews with the entire staff, senior pastor and family, leadership and focus group of people from the church.

In research we call this triangulation. That is, we are collecting data from a multitude of perspectives. It allows you to "hear" the story and situation in stereo rather than mono. Collecting the information from many sources allows our team (at least 3 but often 6) coaches to listen, pray and respond onsite. We then make much more informed recommendations to the church. In most cases, our recommendations are much more systemic than could/would be made from NCD. We deal with the real underlying issues that are keeping the church from being a healthy transformational community that is multiplying converts, disciples, leaders and congregations. There may be a family controlling the congregation (formally or informally), there may be a cultural mismatch, they may be hundreds of systemic reasons for the lack of health.

Our coaching relationship remains the same as NCD on if they accept our work out plan and sign a covenant. But, we are given much more authority in the coaching relationship as you know in these cases. The pastors are also in learning clusters, which provide peer accountability and group coaching. This is where the genius of SHAPE has added to our ministry tremendously.

In my experience in the administering of 58 NCD assessments and the coaching relationships I followed up with (many of them), I found there was a lack of willingness

to deal with the real issues. But unfortunately we didn't get to this point until months or in some cases years into the coaching. They wanted to get healthy on their terms.

So I have found the consultations are much more effective (considering time and Kingdom impact) for those churches who are plateaued or declining. If a church is growing and needs tweaking, take NCD, for the rest we are using the modified Borden consultation with learning clusters.