

Understanding your role in growing a ministry.

By Gregory Wiens

One of the hardest parts of leading a growing ministry is changing one's leadership style to meet the challenges of the new paradigm. Another difficult part is shepherding staff through those growth-induced transitions.

For most of us, our own leadership and the leadership of our staff is the next lid that keeps us from healthy and effective growth. Have you thought about leadership lids? What about outgrowing staff? Are these new concepts for you?

The most effective leader style of a small church – or single cell - (below 250 in membership) is a leader of doers. “Doers” are staff – paid and unpaid -- who are *doing* student ministry, children ministries, visitation, worship, etc. In this dynamic, the senior leader must be effective at equipping and releasing others to live out their callings. The pastor must also commit to regular communication with the “doers.” This helps to build a foundation of trust and provides a level of accountability.

However, when a church begins to grow beyond a single cell and becomes a stretched cell (250-500 membership), the leadership skill sets of the lead pastor and staff begin to change. For this church to effectively fulfill its mission, the lead pastor and staff must now begin to lead leaders. The focus is on the training and development of leaders as opposed to overseeing plans for specific ministries. It's all about the **people** leading the ministries, not the ministries.

Leading leaders after leading followers is easier said than done. The lead pastor must release more and more, focusing on helping staff to set outcome goals and not interfering with the inner workings of ministries. Instead of equipping the “doers,” they now equip the staff. Probably one of the most difficult parts of leading leaders is allowing them to stumble, experiencing the consequences of their decisions.

As you can see, in each case – single or stretched cell – specific skill sets are needed by both the lead pastor and the staff. This is why some great staff people of churches below membership of 250 are not called to be in the same staff position as the church grows. They can not lead others as effectively as they can go and “do.” And that's fine. We all have our unique gifts and talents.

It only follows that many lead pastors who are Godly and gifted leaders of “doers” will never be leaders of leaders. To be a leader of leaders, you must be content with indirect success. You must enjoy watching others succeed when you were not part of the process. You must be better at aligning staff through vision and values than activities.

And there's yet another stage to consider. As the church continues to grow beyond a stretched cell to a multiple cell (beyond 500), the staff must become **great leaders of leaders**. Just as I said in the previous paragraph concerning lead pastors, staff may not be able to transcend their leadership style from leading doers to leading leaders. Again, that's okay.

Now you can see why I said initially that our leadership style is often the next lid to effective ministry in a growing church. This is also the reason why great staff can become lids at the next size of church. Helping staff understand their calling and A-game in a way that values them and does not discredit them is one of the most challenging and painful parts of leading a growing ministry. All too often, we think that the bigger the leadership responsibilities, the better. This is a lie from hell.

Jesus clearly teaches us to be impactful with what we are given, but never are we told that the one-talent leader is inferior in any way to the three or five-talent leader. The only inferior part of this person was his refusal to leverage the talent for the growth of the Kingdom.

The older I get, the more comfortable I am with my calling. It's unfortunate that it took me years of pushing and chafing before arriving at this point, but I'm grateful for the understanding. And before you say anything, yes, I'm sure there's even more for me to learn.

Regardless of where you fit in the leadership structure of a church, let me encourage you to take time to understand how God has wired you to serve and the best venue from which to do it. If you doubt the value investing in yourself, consider the ripple effects of any leadership – good and not so good, and lift that lid for the good of the Kingdom!