STRUCTURING LEADERSHIP TEAMS

The following principles of team structure are being used in the Episcopal Church through various organizing efforts within the dioceses of Minnesota, Massachusetts, and Spokane. For more information contact The Rev. Devon Anderson resident in the Diocese of Minnesota.

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Why does team structure matter?

The most effective leaders have always created teams to work with and lead with them. Take Moses in the story of Exodus, or Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament, or Martin Luther King Jr. in the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

In the church, a great team might lead an effective mission project in the community or a successful giving campaign. If you've ever been part of an excellent team, you know the wonderful feeling of achieving a shared purpose, fostering deeper relationships, learning something new, and having fun with others. Unfortunately, we don't always create effective teams. Our ministries could be more rewarding if we intentionally structured better teams in all areas of church life.

Well-structured teams offer a model for working together that fosters *interdependency*, where individuals can work toward goals together, with each person taking leadership on one part of the team's activity. Structured teams recognize and put to use the unique talents of the individuals on the team.

Team structure also helps create the ability to strategize creatively in ways that produce more vibrant, engaging action than any individual could create alone. In a large organization or campaign structure, there may be multiple layers of teams to engage people at all levels of participation. For example, a diocesan mission team might train and coordinate congregational leadership teams, which in turn may support local mission teams of volunteers. Or a congregation may have a capital campaign leadership team that coordinates the work of other teams for events, spiritual emphasis, advanced gifts, or visibility. These teams may facilitate smaller teams of volunteers responsible for specific events or activities. At every level the people on leadership teams have a clear purpose with clear goals and the ability to strategize creatively together about how to carry out that purpose and meet the goals. This structure creates multiple points of entry for volunteers, and multiple opportunities to learn and to exercise leadership. In smaller organizations there may be fewer teams or only one, but they still exhibit the same essential characteristics of a well-structured team.

Why don't teams always work well together?
We have all been part of volunteer teams that have not worked well. They fall into factions, they alienate each other, or all the work falls on one person. Some aim to keep the pond small so they can feel like big fish. So many of us come to the conclusion: I'll just do it on my own; I hate meetings; just give me stamps to lick. There's just one problem: we can't become effective enough to do what we need to do if we can't even work together toward a shared purpose.

The challenge is to create conditions for our leadership teams that are more likely to generate successful collaboration and strategic action.

The criteria for team effectiveness
A great deal of research has shown that three things help to make a team more effective:

1. **ACTION**: The action work of your team matches the goals you need to meet in order to succeed in your purpose.
2. **CAPACITY:** Over time the team is learning how to work more effectively as a team, and developing more leadership.
3. **LEARNING**: Team work supports individual growth and learning.

In short, the team is meeting the organization's interests by achieving goals, while at the same time meeting each participant's interests by giving them room to learn and grow.

Conditions for Good Teams
The team is stable, with clear boundaries. You can name the people on it and they meet regularly. It's not a different, random group of people every time.

The team is diverse. Good teams have a diversity of identities, experiences, opinions, and gifts ensuring that everyone is bringing the most possible to the table.

The mission points you in an engaging direction. The work you have to do is clear. It's challenging. What you're working on together matters, and you know why.

The team works interdependently. Everyone on the team has a *roughly equal share* of the work, understanding that each part is necessary to adequately reach the ultimate goal. The success or failure of one thus has an effect on all. One way to encourage interdependence is to have *clear roles* based on the work that the team needs to do to succeed. Good teams will coordinate and *help each other*. Good team members will *communicate well* when they need assistance. No one is carrying out activity in a silo that's secretive to others.

The team has clear norms. Your team sets clear expectations for how you will respect and empower each other during your work together. You have agreed upon ways to hold each other accountable and to foster effective group process. (*Every* group has norms, but effective groups are often explicit and transparent about their norms and group processes.)
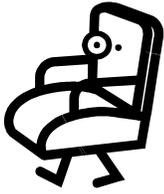
TEAMWORK EXERCISE: Shared Purpose and Talents

GOALS

The purpose of this exercise is to:

(1) Articulate your team's shared purpose.

(2) Review roles for your team and connect those roles with the talents of your team members.

AGENDA

Worksheet: Leadership Team Roles

Time Allotted: [e.g. 30 minutes]

Process:

1. Open in prayer together, asking for discernment and guidance.

2. Spend some time in silence looking over the roles. Are there roles that should be added or reconfigured? Which role(s) match your personal talents? Which sound energizing or interesting at this time in your life?

3. Go around the circle and each person will express what role they feel called to, what strengths and gifts they have to equip them for that role, and what their hopes are for learning in this role. Each person should take no more than [2 minutes].

4. Confirm the list of roles and connect them with specific team members.

5. Give thanks for the talent and commitment of all the new team members! Give thanks to God for this opportunity to serve.

Leadership Team Roles

The roles below are intended for our leadership team between now and [when]. The roles may need to be renegotiated [when and why]. [These are sample descriptions of roles. Write up your own roles and descriptions based on the actual work to be done. Be as specific as possible. This will help you match the role to the individual person.]

Role	Responsibilities	You would be good for this role if you . . .	You would probably not be good for this role if you . . .
Team Coordinator	- Create agendas and facilitate meetings - Serve as the resource coordinator, making sure there are appropriate resources at meetings - Identify team opportunities to coach each other	- Can stay focused on the outcome - Listen attentively to others and summarize well - Have the ability to identify talents in others and help others contribute their greatest talent to the team - Can help the leadership team stay connected to its purpose and norms	- Try to do everything yourself - Try to direct others without listening to their interests - Get distracted easily - Are shy and reluctant to speak up in order to keep discussion moving - Are too equivocal and have difficulty helping the team move through conflict toward a decision when necessary
Event Logistics Coordinator	- Tackle logistics (and be the point person) for event - Identify location for training & secure - Coordinate other team members to take responsibility for food, space, media, recruitment, AV needs, activities, speaking, welcoming, hospitality - Serve as event registrar	- Pay attention to detail - Are experienced with logistics - Like to plan - Are good at sharing power and delegating to others to make an event come together - Experience planning creative and engaging events - Deep sense of hospitality & welcome	- Get frustrated easily - Have a hard time working with others - Have difficulty multi-tasking and keeping track of details - Are disorganized and hate to plan ahead - More interested in site-specific events/concerns, as opposed to the larger purpose of the team
Communicator	- Coordinate all visibility and communications for the project - Work with diocesan, parish, and church-wide communication networks to inform, promote, explain, and create urgency for project - Maintain lists - Oversee creation of logo or visual that represents the project & can be used on materials or at events	- Good storyteller - Speak and write clearly - Understands the larger story of shared purpose and can articulate this story with excitement and clarity - Experience working with media - Tech-savvy - Willing to work with a team	- Shy and uncomfortable talking to folks you don't know - Resistance to technology - Not interested in working with a team - Has no artistic sense
Chaplain	- Lead prayer at the beginning and end of meetings - Assist team members to connect their spiritual lives with participation in this ministry - Assess the emotional needs of the team - Energize the team when needed – keep team bolstered in creative ways - Pay attention to the spiritual life of the group throughout the campaign - Hold your team in prayer regularly - Primary responsibility for prayer/worship at events	- Enjoy leading prayers and readings or helping others do so - Gifted at assessing the emotion/energy of a group and knowing when/how to respond (with silence/singing/prayer) - Trusted by other group members - Values the spiritual grounding of this project - Facilitative leader	- Not good at speaking aloud - Shy and uncomfortable offering prayer - Difficulty assessing group dynamics - A directive leader
[role]			

Record Here Who Will Take What Role:

ROLE   **NAME**
Team Coordinator
Event Logistics Coordinator
Communicator
Chaplain
[role]
[role]
[role]

TEAMWORK EXERCISE: Cultivating Team Norms

GOALS
The purpose of this exercise is to:

☎🗁☾ Set expectations for how your team will behave together, so you can effectively accomplish your work and respect all members of the team.

☎📄☾ Determine how you will hold yourselves accountable when you fall short of your expectations. (It will happen! Better to plan how to deal with it now.)

AGENDA

Worksheet: Team Norms

Time Allotted: [e.g. 1 hour]

Process:

1. Spend some time in silence thinking about the best team you've been a part of. What behaviors and group norms helped make it satisfying? What norms do you want to suggest to this new team? What will help you contribute your best and work well with others?

2. Look at the worksheet about Team Norms and think specifically about behaviors and expectations you'd like for the team in each area (e.g. show up for every meeting, respond to email requests within 24 hours of when they were sent, etc.)

3. Go around the circle and each person will suggest a few expectations and behaviors for the group. Each person should take no more than [2 minutes].

4. Discuss the list and commit to the norms you will practice in this team.

5. Discuss how you will hold yourselves accountable to the norms. (e.g. If you break a norm you will bring food to the next meeting, or contribute money to a common purse that will be given to a mission project.)

6. Write up the norms and corrections for everyone to refer to later.

Team Norms

NORM	ALWAYS DO	NEVER DO	CORRECTION
Meetings			
Decisions			
Communication and Coordination			
Commitment and Follow-up			
Prayer and Care			

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