

MCN

Multiplying Church Network
Facilitator Manual

Unit 7

Building a Powerful Ministry Team—Part 2

“The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone.”

—Exodus 18:18, NIV

Unit synopsis

High performance ministry teams have very similar and consistent characteristics: common purpose, clear roles, accepted leadership, effective processes, solid relationships, and excellent communication. Pat MacMillan discusses these six characteristics in his book, *The Performance Factor*. This book was published through Team Resources, Inc.—a Christian leadership and team development consulting company. Team Resources has partnered with the Next Level Leadership Network at the North American Mission Board (NAMB) to offer *Building a Powerful Ministry Team* as a development workshop. This two-part lesson will present the six characteristics of high performance ministry teams.

Learning expectations

- Become familiar with the six characteristics of high performance ministry teams.
- Evaluate the current group performance based on the six characteristics presented.
- Identify an area of weakness for improvement.
- Share one area that a fellow team member is skilled and effective in.
- Apply the characteristics to the local area.

Lesson

In unit six, you were introduced to three of the six characteristics of high performance teams—*common purpose*, *clear roles*, and *accepted leadership*. The final three characteristics of high performance teams are *effective processes*, *solid relationships*, and *excellent communication*.

Effective processes—the method of cooperation

Every ministry team should have clearly defined processes for how they will plan and implement ministry objectives together. Team processes should always serve the common purpose. However, they should never become the purpose.

Most teams focus on the implementation processes—such as for worship services, outreach events, etc.—but seldom address the thinking processes—how to reach decisions, how to take advantage of the collective I.Q., etc. This is where the team synergy is.

The thinking process of a high performance team has five components.

1. **General direction**—The starting point.
2. **Divergence**—Explore the issue and define the problem or decision.
3. **Conflict**—Different viewpoints should not be delivered or received at a personal level. All team members should remember that the team purpose is the priority, not any individual's opinion.
4. **Convergence**—Sharing, understanding, and agreeing on a solution.
5. **Shared direction**—The team is aligned, with a shared direction that everyone had an opportunity to contribute to.

Powerful ministry teams are continually attempting to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of their thinking and implementation processes. There are four steps to the continual improvement of the team process.

1. Identify the key ministry team processes.
2. Map or design the processes.
3. Implement and evaluate the processes.
4. Improve the processes.

Solid relationships—the climate for cooperation

Synergy is born out of the ability to divide tasks. That ability, in turn, is a product of different gifts, experiences, skills, interests, and personalities. Variety is a key ingredient in the success of the ministry team. As a matter of fact, the more diverse a team is, the smarter it can be. However, diversity also provides plenty of opportunities for discord, conflict, and communication breakdowns.

To offset these challenges, team members must establish and grow solid relationships through trust, acceptance, respect, courtesy, and Christ-like understanding. God's Word is filled with principles and practices to build and mature relationships within diverse teams.

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The principle is stated in John 13:34-35 (NIV), “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

The practice of this principle is demonstrated in Philippians 2:2-4 (NIV), “Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

All ministry teams should have five to seven principles for how they will treat each other. Some examples are: We honor our commitments. We maintain confidences. Silence is agreement.

Reflection question:

What other principles should teams consider?

Excellent communication—the means of cooperation

Ministry teams cannot move faster than they communicate. Fast, clear, accurate, and timely communication is the hallmark of a growing, healthy ministry team. God is the model of communication—He spoke the world into being (see Gen. 1). In fact, God is always speaking and communicating with His people through His prophets, His Spirit, His Son, and His Word. “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever” (Isa. 40:8, NIV).

Teams must work constantly to communicate their purpose, and never assume communication is clear or has taken place. They must never grow weary in the communication of the greatest message ever given, and the greatest task ever undertaken.

Conclusion

These six characteristics—common purpose, clear roles, accepted leadership, effective processes, solid relationships, and excellent communication—are critical factors that can move a ministry team or church to accomplish exceptional ministry results. The task is to do ministry so that people’s lives are changed through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Great teams understand their mission, and even though tasks can vary greatly, they always result in lives being changed. Jethro was right, “The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone” (Ex. 18:18, NIV).

“The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone.”

—Exodus 18:18, NIV

Learning area	Expectations
Knowledge and understanding	Become familiar with the six characteristics of high performance ministry teams.
Thinking and inquiry	Evaluate the current group performance based on the six characteristics presented.
Feeling and appreciation	Identify an area of weakness for improvement.
Communication	Share one area that a fellow team member is skilled and effective in.
Application	Apply the characteristics to the local area.

1. List the final three characteristics of high performance teams presented in this unit.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

2. In light of the characteristics of high performance teams, what are the implications of Jethro’s statement to Moses, “The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone” (Ex. 18:18, NIV)?

