

## Three key areas coaching provides a boost to church planters!



"I can go farther and faster with someone coaching me than I can on my own" - Andy Stanley, Next Generation Leader

Church planters are extraordinarily busy! They're developing and casting their vision for the work, fundraising, evangelizing, assembling a team, fundraising, developing marketing strategies, creating weekend service strategies, preparing their team, searching for the right site to plant, fundraising, making connections in the community, talking to city leaders, preparing and preaching messages, fundraising, trying to balance their busy ministry life with their family life, and oh, fundraising!

This is exciting and exhausting at the same time! Where do the planters turn when they have questions or waves of discouragement wash over them? The new team they're trying to raise up? No way! They keep a brave, "we got this" face with them. The people they're reaching out to for funding? Never, they fear that the givers will question whether they should give the gift. Do planters speak to their spouse about their fears? Most often no, because they see the toll this work is taking on their spouse and they don't want to add more to their worries. So, who do they talk to? Often the answer is, No One!

What about God? Many planters start strong, daily in communion with the Lord but as the work mounts and the struggle gets real, some question, "Did I really hear God?" Too often they allow their one-on-one time with the Lord to get eaten up by all the church planting demands. They feel overwhelmed trying to find balance, as both their family and their work cry for more attention. As time with the Lord becomes less "tired" can turn into exhaustion and "concerns" can lead to discouragement! However, this doesn't have to be. Good leadership coaching can help the planter stay on track, moving according to the Holy Spirit's timing and not the demands of the surrounding work.

*“To be the best next generation leader you can be, you must enlist the help of others. Self-evaluation is helpful, but evaluation from someone else is essential. You need a leadership coach.”-Andy Stanley, Next Generational Leader, pg. 105.*

*Proverbs 9:9 says, ‘Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.’*

Coaching empowers the planter in so many ways, but here are three key areas: Developing Vision, Team Building and Personal Growth!

### Developing Vision

Every church planter must answer the question, “What’s the purpose of the ministry the Lord is planting through me?” Church planter Ben Connelly says there are three steps to the vision for the church planter: Crafting, Casting and Modeling. Coaches help leaders craft vision statements that can be easily caught by others. Through powerful questions a leadership coach can draw out the understanding of what the Lord has placed in the planter’s heart and mind. The planter can “try out” on the coach, what’s coming to them in a back and forth manner until they’ve written a vision statement that captures the mission of their new plant and can be easily cast to others.

Connelly says, “Vision-casting is the step where we toss nets widely and pray that God provides a huge catch.” Coaching is a great place to brainstorm and come up with a multitude of ideas for slinging the vision wide. Through the coaching process the planter can think through the steps of attracting not just a team of core leaders, but the “right” team. Together the coach and planter can customize a variety of casting opportunities such as speaking events, websites, social media, prayer meetings, conversations, etc.

The coach also becomes a strategic planning partner to help the planter think through every detail of the plant, such as where and when to meet, what day and time, why the location, what elements they will involve in the service and what is the purpose behind each element.

Finally, the coach and planter can strategize together how to provide the necessary modeling for the church planting team. By modeling, I mean the planter provides opportunities for the team members to see and experience what is in his/her mind. For example, the church plant my husband and I are a part of, labored for over 5 months ‘practicing’ church services in a ‘church school’ format. Team members came together every Tuesday night and set up for church service. Each week the husband and wife planters would share the vision in their mind for how a certain element of the church would run; such as greeters, children’s ministry, worship service, lighting, the preaching of the Word, etc. The team would then get to ‘practice that element’ giving them clarity on what the planter was seeing. The team was encouraged to give honest feedback, make suggestions and participate in all elements, even preaching the Word. By the end of the ‘church school’ they were coming together and running full services from set up to tear down. Some of those who had been enthusiastic about the church plant, changed their minds once they got a clear picture of what it would look like. What remained was a solid committed group of leaders ready to start a new work alongside the planters.

Modeling also can be done to show team members what values the planter wants to build into the church plant, such as; type of culture, how to handle communication, conflict management, staff meetings, leadership style, etc. For example, if the planter values shared leadership over unilateral leadership, the planter and coach can strategize how to model “shared leadership” with the team before the church is launched.

Inevitably, there will be road bumps along the way as the vision is crafted, cast and modeled. Coaching is the perfect place to gain awareness of the roadblocks and plan how to remove or maneuver around them.

*“The best leaders and organizations I know make use of outside sources for coaching and lifelong learning..”*-Dr. Henry Cloud, “Boundaries for Leaders,” pg. 204.

### Team Building

Every church planter needs a group of leaders to be his/her core church planting team. However, finding the right people for the work God has called them to requires wisdom of what’s needed. A leadership coach can help the planter identify the qualities, character traits and top strengths necessary for their core team.

The Gallup Group studied thousands of executive teams over many years and identified four domains of Leadership Strength: Executing, Influencing, Relationship Building and Strategic Thinking. Individuals have strengths in these different domains, but none of us have dominant strengths in all four areas. The good news for leaders is they don’t have to be strong in all four domains. No one leader possesses all the strengths necessary to see a plant come to fruition. Effective leaders surround themselves with others whose strengths complement their own.

*“The most effective leaders surround themselves with the right people and then maximize their team. While the best leaders are not well-rounded, the best teams are.”*-Rath & Conchie, pg. 2.

Good leadership coaches work with planters to bring out the best in their team, allowing members to maximize their gifts to further the Lord’s work. Effective coaches often have excellent teambuilding assessments that allow church planters to see at a glance their team’s strengths and weaknesses. Coaches can help planters develop their team members’ skills so that they grow into a more effective unit.

### Personal Growth

Competent leadership coaches are focused on developing the whole person and not just working on the issue at hand. Good coaching will spur the planter to grow personally in the areas of spiritual, emotional, physical and relational health.

Spiritual - Strong coaching will provide accountability, not allowing the planter’s intimate time with the Lord to be swallowed up by all the demands on the planter’s schedule. A good coach will help the planter stay focused on the Lord, who’s called them and promises to equip and guide them each step of the way. The coach will also challenge the enemy’s lie that the planter doesn’t have enough time for personal devotion.

Emotional – Coaches help planters grow and maintain emotional awareness and health. They do this by providing a safe, confidential environment for the planter to voice doubts, ask tough questions, process concerns, and just think. Church planting is both rewarding and challenging. There may be times when the planter feels stuck, overwhelmed or discouraged. The coach will sit with them in these moments, give them space to process, and help draw out new awareness that leads to growth.

Physical – The busyness of church planting can often lead to poor eating habits; grabbing fast food on the run or skipping meals. The busy schedule often leads to not taking time for exercise or getting adequate sleep. If we don't care for our car, change its oil, add good fuel, it will eventually breakdown. The same is true for our bodies. Too many times church planters hit the wall physically before waking up to this truth. A good coach will hold the planter accountable for taking care of their physical bodies.

Relational – We were created to be in relationship! The most influential leaders have strong relationships in their lives. The coach will hold the planter accountable for nurturing this area of their life. Billy Graham, himself said he regretted not making more time for family and friendships. *“For one thing... I would spend more time with my family... Every day I was absent from my family is gone forever. Although much of that travel was necessary, some of it was not. And “...I would give more attention to fellowship with other Christians, who could teach me and encourage me.”* Coaching allows the planter to realize the importance of caring well for their family and nurturing key relationships in their life. No one was created to be an island.

Many planters will push back on several of the key areas discussed in this article, saying there simply aren't enough hours in the day to accomplish all that's needed AND be healthy. Good coaches will compel planters to create THE effective strategies and systems that allow them to do the work without neglecting their spiritual, emotional, relational or physical health!

Coaching also allows the planter to identify and tackle roadblocks that will arise. It infuses new, fresh inertia into the situation. The accountability built into coaching encourages the safeguarding of character in planters, allowing them to walk in integrity. Coaching cheers the planter as he/she strives to live out the 1 Timothy 3 commands for leaders.

Consider the words of Andy Stanley, *“You will never maximize your potential in any area without coaching. It is impossible. You may be good. You may even be better than everyone else. But without outside input you will never be as good as you could be.”* - “Next Generation Leader,” pg. 103.

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## Resources

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