

Sierra Leadership Network Curriculum: Month 12, Year 2

Participation in the Sierra Leadership Network (SLN) is a process of adult learning. It is the responsibility of the participant to do their assignments and seek out the necessary accountability. It is the responsibility of the participant to schedule time with their mentor, not the other way around. Here is a checklist of this month's exercises and space for comments. All useful generated materials should be placed in your Sierra Leadership Network binder. The mentor will look over the exercises and be given opportunity to add their own comments. Be sure you take your binder to the meetings at Granite Springs Church to also be available to the SLN directors.

Month 12, Year 2

Date Completed

____/____/____ Leadership, Systems Thinking [Estimated time: _____]

Mentor Comments:

____/____/____ Vision Casting: [Estimated time: _____]

Mentor Comments

____/____/____ Being a Self-starter: [Estimated time: _____]

Mentor Comments

Participant Signature

Mentor Signature

I. Leadership: Systems Thinking

The church has two vital and important aspects: the organism and the institution. This reality is a very difficult one to balance. Churches that major in organism can be wonderfully warm and free, but sooner or later something will happen that will call for clarification of policy, doctrine, procedure, authority. Churches that are overly institutional can run like machines but sometimes feel cold and inhuman like a machine as well.

It can be interesting to compare Jesus to Paul in the New Testament on this subject. Jesus had a small group with an extended following. He managed everything directly, addressed everything personally, had little to do in terms of setting policy or establishing procedures. One exception to that might be the missionary journeys he sent his disciples out on; in those cases he gave strict instructions on what to do and what not to do. Paul, on the other hand, very clearly had the demanding task of bringing an organic movement into some semblance of order. In Paul's day the structure wasn't yet fully developed but was being explored and made up on an *ad hoc* basis. Paul could sometimes dictate, but often we find him pleading and debating. Many of Paul's Epistles are leadership letters to churches he doesn't directly or fully influence or control; trying to help the church reform, mature and become healthy.

As a church leader you not only navigate the difficult tension between church as organism and institution, but you also work the tension between direct ministry and ministry through proxies. Unless your church is a house church with less than 40 or so people, most church leaders and pastors very quickly learn that it is not only important to do ministry well directly with people, but the church also has to develop structures, programs, policies and a culture that allows ministry to flow to people through structures, groups and volunteers. This requires a whole different group of skill sets and competencies for church leaders. You not only have to know your Bible, understand Reformed doctrine, have a pastor's heart, know how to pray, comfort and admonish, but now you have to chair meetings, establish policy, work with budgets, propose, sell, plan, and implement projects and programs. Beyond this you have the added complication, not always found in business and government that this program and project not only needs to work, but it needs to communicate justice and grace and accomplish things that only God's grace itself can do. It is no wonder that churches can be terribly difficult things to run well. The task is truly impossible.

Assignment:

As you can see, part of what makes church leadership so demanding is the breadth of skills and gifts needed to do your job well. We have spent most of our time dealing with the religious and heart side of your preparation, this month we are going to pay more attention to the business end. Select one of two books from business consultant Patrick Lencioni, either [The Five Temptations of a CEO](#) or [The Five Dysfunctions of a Team](#). You can find both books available used on half.com or new through Amazon.com If you can borrow them from a library or a friend that would also be good because they are overpriced. One focuses on point leadership and what is

truly important in that spot. The other focuses on what it takes to form healthy teams. If you read the first title write a reflective paper critiquing point leadership in your present church or another congregation you've either worked in or know well enough in light of what you learned from the book. If you read the second title write a reflective paper on the health or dysfunction of a team you are currently involved with or a team you have worked on in the past, again in the light of what you learned from the book. In both reflective papers you might do some reflecting on whether you think Patrick Lencioni is espousing Christ like character to a very secular audience. I am not certain Lencioni is a believer, but he has spoken at Willow Creek Leadership Summits in the past. In any case there is much we can learn from these two short "leadership fables".

II. Casting a Vision

Whether you are a youth pastor, an elder, or the senior pastor, vision casting is an important skill that most leaders need. There is much involved in vision casting:

1. The leader must have a specific, biblical, definable vision for a community or to address an issue. This is often most needed in the midst of chaos or failure where something has broken down or been lost. Much of this requires a prophetic gift from God that prayerfully calls the church back to faithfulness to God's kingdom.
2. Many who have wonderful visions fail in helping them go viral because they fail in other areas:
 - a. They fail at articulation: You are not really clear on a vision until you can put words to it that communicate with and excite others. This can take weeks, months or even years of disciplined work and prayer. Reading is often a great ally in this cause, borrowing language from others with similar visions to help you articulate specifically what you want to communicate.
 - b. They fail at politics: Politics is the art of moving complex communities within an economy of competing values and agendas. Often someone will arise, pronounce a vision, but no one is ready to hear it. Leaders persistently move people towards vision. Vision leaks and people resist it. All vision is confronted by a host of other, competing visions and realities. Good vision casting requires wisdom. You need to understand timing. You need to understand seasons and chapters in the life of a congregation. You need to understand and personally know the individual leaders in the congregation who have credibility with the rest of the flock. Vision casting is a continuing process that requires diligence and persistence.
3. Leaders with vision need to either have a plan or have in mind a process to develop a plan that will yield some tangible fruit. Nothing frustrates a congregation more than buying into a vision, accepting a plan, pursuing the plan and gaining nothing. After a few rounds of this, the voice of the vision increasingly loses credibility, decreasing the possibility of being able to cast a compelling vision in the future. Again, all of this calls for wisdom.

Assignment: chose one or the other

- A. Write a plan for casting a vision for a new ministry or some new effort within your church. Include in your plan the following: a good articulation of the vision, the concrete steps you will need to take (you, not someone else!) to cast the vision and sell or develop the plan, the process or the plan itself, and what your intended, preferred future is as result of this vision and the plan. Discuss this with your mentor and/or you senior pastor BEFORE beginning the actual process.
- B. Report on vision casting you have done in the past. Include the following:
 1. A description of the situation that led to the need for a new vision.
 2. How you came up with the vision and what specifically the vision was.
 3. How did you go about casting the vision and selling the plan
 4. What were the results of your effort. How do you evaluate the changes you brought about?

III. Being a Self-Starter

One reality of most church work is often little or distant supervision. Don't confuse this with little or distant accountability. Accountability in church work may be spotty, but it can very quickly become very real and very demanding. Most church staff, especially in smaller churches, work with very little close supervision and have tremendous latitude and freedom in how they accomplish their tasks. This freedom can be a wonderful thing, but it can also be a tremendous temptation for the person who has difficulty motivating themselves and having disciplined work habits. This is the "character" section of the curriculum, so it's time to get real with your mentor.

1. Ask your mentor or your boss for a sober assessment of you as a self starter?
 - a. Do you have predictable and steady work habits? Office hours? Etc.?
 - b. Do you accomplish your tasks in a timely way?
 - c. Are you able to take initiative and begin things that your job description broadly requires but no one has specifically mandated?
 - d. Are you able to look into the future and see not only what needs to be done for today but prepare for what is coming down the road? Can you give an example of it?
2. Ask your mentor what they have learned about living with minimal supervision and the tricks that they have mastered to help them succeed when no one is watching.
3. Create for yourself a plan to address your shortcomings or grow to greater excellence in the future and have your mentor hold you accountable to it.