

Leadership

What is your definition of a leader? What are some of the duties of a leader?

Brant's Six "D's" of Leadership

Discern

"Where there is no vision, the people perish." PROVERBS 29:18

How do we come to know, or discern, God's vision? In prayer. Anyone leading a meeting of any sort needs to know God's vision for the meeting, and that means praying for the meeting beforehand (not just in the few moments at the start of the meeting!). Some of my greatest insights about what can happen in a *meeting* have come in *prayer*. While you're at it, pray for those who will attend; pray for patience, and pray for joy.

Decide

"...some were shouting one thing, some another; for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together." ACTS 19:32

Many meetings flounder on this one thing: nothing is ever decided. If there is no purpose (see Discern) or if no decisions can be made (even if it is only a decision to postpone a decision), people will lose interest. A leader must be specific about the purpose of a meeting. Are there decisions to be made--what are they? Is this a visioning time--toward what end? Is this a complaint and/or problem solving session--who needs to be present? Is this an educational opportunity--what is to be learned? Is this a "regular business meeting"--how can something fresh be done that moves the mission of the church forward?

Related item: send reminders (phone call, post card, e-mail) to all participants beforehand, reminding them of the meeting and stating its purpose(s). Prepare agendas, handouts, and any other materials necessary to *move the meeting* to the point of decision.

Disciple

Paul and Barnabas parted company; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and set out, the believers commending him to the grace of the Lord. ACTS 15:39-40

Despite appearances and behaviors to the contrary, Christianity is not about a bunch of Lone Rangers out building up the kingdom. Instead, the model for our faith is about one person coming alongside another person, and helping them learn what it means to be a Christian. The implications for us as leaders is this: that while it is almost always easier *to do it by ourselves*, it is also almost always wrong. The right way is to find one other person, work alongside them, and thus reproduce another strong Christian who will, in turn, go on and do the same. *The work we do--meetings, agendas, deadlines--is always secondary to the people we do it with.*

Delegate

Moses sat as judge for the people, while the people stood around him from morning until evening. When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, while all the people stand around you from morning until evening? What you are doing is not good. You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Now listen to me. You should also look for able men among all the people, men who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain; set such men over them as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Let them sit as judges for the people at all times; let them bring every important case to you, but decide every minor case themselves. If you do this, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people will go to their home in peace." Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. EXODUS 18:13-24

Delegating relates directly to disciple-making. We build people up by first, inviting them to join us in ministry; second, showing them how ministry is to happen; and third, releasing them to do the ministry themselves. In this regard, consider these words of Max Du Pree, Christian businessman and leader. "One of the easiest mistakes is to tell people that you have a job for them, that you need them to do it, but that the job is not very hard and not much preparation is required to be successful. This is clearly not the way to offer work. We should offer challenging work. We should offer work that's difficult. We should offer work that's risky, because through risky work we grow. We should offer work that's meaningful. We should offer work that matches the gifts of the person. Easy work is as rewarding as steering a parked car." (Leading Without Power, 14)

Defuse

A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. PROVERBS 15:1

Part of being a leader is resolving conflicts when they come about, and be assured, they will come about. My work in the church has convinced me, however, that ninety percent of conflicts result from miscommunication. One of my favorite quotes (can't remember who from) is this, "The greatest danger in communication is believing it has been accomplished."

Being a leader means making sure that people understand and going after people when they misunderstand. It also means having a ready apology. As a leader, I spend a great deal of time apologizing, often for things I did or said, more often for the deeds and words of others. Forgiveness, humility, compassion, and mercy: this is what we are about.

Dance

"A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance" ECCLESIASTES 3:4

After it's all said and done, don't forget to celebrate everything that's been said and done! Too often we trudge through our business (church and otherwise) without celebrating that God's vision is unfolding before us. Celebrate, laugh, give thanks--to God and to those around you--
DANCE!