

## Ministry Synergy

By Adam McLane What if I told you that you could work less and accomplish more? What if I told you that you could go home from the office today satisfied, knowing you've accomplished all you could today? What if I could help you create more time for the work you enjoy and less time for administrative work? You'd be in, wouldn't you?

Everyone who enters into a career at some point realizes that it wasn't what they had hoped it would be. Why is that? It's because being a practitioner of a skill and a leader of people practicing that skill are two different jobs. Whether you are a teacher thrust into administration, a sales rep made manager, or a church volunteer moving into vocational ministry, these all represent huge challenges as we convert from "doers" to "overseers."

Recently, I had a conversation with a frustrated youth pastor. He vented about how hard he worked and how his boss didn't seem to appreciate how hard he worked. He shared with me that his volunteers weren't sure if they wanted to continue helping and his attendance was sagging. Furthering his frustration, another youth pastor at a nearby church seemed to effortlessly build great relationships with parents, volunteers, and students. My friend talked in circles as he kept referring to how hard he worked and how little result he realized for his efforts. With this conversation dragging on I thought I'd push things in a new direction.

"Did you ever watch Duck Tales as a kid?" I could imagine seeing his eyebrow raise as he thought I was changing the subject. Moving along, "I watched Duck Tales almost every day after school for years and the one lesson I took away from those hours of programs is 'Work smarter, not harder.' The solution to your ministry frustration doesn't lie in working harder; you've got to create a manageable job for yourself."

The same is true in any organization. Once you have a clearly defined mission, a vision that drives the "how" of your organization, and measurable goals you are ready to start reaping the benefits of a cohesive and powerful organization.

This heavy lifting is more than just busy work to be completed for your annual report or for your board or an academic exercise with no real point. Establishing these things actually sets the agenda for the organization you lead. Without laying the groundwork the next step is impossible and any success you will have will be for reasons you cannot understand, much less replicate. In fact it isn't until everyone from top to bottom owns the mission, vision, and goals of your organization that you will get a waft of the next step.

Synergy is intentional cooperation. In other words, your hard work is noticed because everyone understands both what you are doing and why it is important to the mission. Synergy is an energy source that leads to amazing productivity. Group synergy leads to 4 people accomplishing what 10 could not. Synergy keeps everyone on task as all of the workers see how their individual role compliments the group's goals.

Let's say a working goal of your church is to give first time visitors special attention. This compliments your overall mission and fits within the vision you have laid out for your church. During soft time in the event you notice that a long-time member on her way to talk to the senior pastor... undoubtedly about the fabric choice in the women's bathroom or something else equally unimportant. While Mrs. Johnson is important to the church, she is not going to help your pastor meet the team's working goal of giving special attention to the first time visitor who is now awkwardly standing up, looking at his watch, and nervously sipping coffee. Synergy happens when you recognize that you need to drop what you are doing and intercept Mrs. Johnson. As you head off the distraction and keep Mrs. Johnson busy by asking her about the lovely blue tint in her hair, your pastor is able to help the team accomplish a goal for that event...

connecting with a first time visitor. Synergy is organic, intentional cooperation within your team to accomplish together what you could not accomplish alone.

### More than a Business Buzz Word

Some people are turned off by my use of business terminology. But did you know that synergy is actually a Biblical phrase borrowed for business and not the other way around? Paul recognized the power of intentional cooperation when he wrote to Corinthian believers. He wrote, "The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers (synergy); you are God's field, God's building. 1 Corinthians 3:8-9

### Synergy Creates an Environment That Fosters More Synergy

When you are a part of a synergistic work group you have intense conversations that are on topic. In fact, when you aren't having those focused intense discussions you should recognize that as a sign that you aren't on the same page.

In my church setting our team has the ability to talk about our organizations daily operations using the same language. In those conversations you can see the wheels turning across the board. From the lowest position to the highest ideas flow freely and on topic. We may talk for an hour leaning against the door of a coworkers office and that hour is the best, most strategic time we'll have all week. A benefit of synergy in your organization is that everyone understands and appreciates every else's intensely. It's teamwork on steroids.

### Synergy in your organization has three hallmarks

First, other success driven organizations will take notice and try to learn from you. Even the best, synergistic organizations on the planet, require fresh insight from time to time. That's why it is valuable for your team to go to conferences, read books, and visit other organizations together. Likewise, when your school, non-profit, church, or youth group is productive other organizations will come and pick your brain. If you aren't open to that idea you are not understanding the power that can come in a synergistic environment.

Second, synergy creates wasted ideas that are amazing stand-alone ideas. Direct TV is a by-product of General Motors. As an auto company created ways to communicate with their vehicles they stumbled upon an unrelated by-product of satellite television. Eventually, Direct TV was spun off to its own profitable organization as it didn't help GM reach its mission. PayPal is a by-product of Ebay. When the online auctioneer needed a secure, universal payment solution PayPal was born. But when it didn't fit into the mission, it was spun off. Likewise, when your organization fosters synergy you'll often hear, "That's an awesome idea, but it just doesn't fit." So a predictable by-product of that organization is entrepreneurialism.

Third, synergy in an organization is self-feeding talent magnet. The best ideas and best execution within a synergistic organization is not the result of planning. Instead, it is the result of individuals taking personal responsibility to reach the cooperative goal. If you take the time now to develop your team you will attract the best talent to help your ministry succeed in unbelievable ways.

If frustration is the by-product of a missionless, visionless, goalless work group, synergy is the benefit of an organizations leadership distributing ownership to all levels. When we do the hard work of building our organization from the ground up we reap the benefits of working smarter and not harder. We earn the satisfaction of knowing that our efforts are understood and appreciated. And we see measurable results which allow us to go home satisfied, be more effective in ministry, and experience the success we've always wanted.

The first in this series of articles is Vision, Goals and Mission Statements.