



THE ENGINE THAT SUSTAINS MOVEMENTS

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Imagine that you are responsible to insure the training and personal development of a growing number of new pastors each year. This year it is 500, added to 300 from the previous year and 200 from the year before. However, these leaders must remain on the job, not leaving their locations for any extended period of time, since they are in charge of their flocks. Finally, circumstances dictate that they cannot connect consistently to online education due to the lack of connectivity and lack of resources. What will you do?

This is the primary question that faces Church Planting Movements (CPMs) and discipleship multiplication movements. From time to time we see promising church planting that has grown from zero to a couple of hundred churches based on principles we've looked at in previous articles:

1. Finding God-prepared people

2. Reproducing evangelism

3. Reproducing short-term and long-term discipleship

4. Reproducing churches

Yet failure from the beginning to develop a system to train the dozens, then hundreds, of emerging leaders has hamstrung a number of these budding movements. They plateau generally at the capacity of the missionary and initial leaders. Leadership overload, in which these leaders pastor several small churches each without raising up new leaders, stifles the expansion. At this point the missionary and key national leaders work frantically to address the need for more leaders, but it's often too little too late. The expansion grinds to a halt with the majority of the population unreached with the gospel.

To fulfill God's vision of His kingdom coming to every neighborhood, town and village,

CPM practitioners must focus on a fifth principle prior to the beginning of the first church: reproducing leadership development. Leadership development is the engine the Spirit uses to sustain movements. *In fact, sustained Church Planting Movements are by default leadership multiplication movements.*

PAUL'S MOVEMENTS AS A PRECEDENT FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The church planting and discipleship movements in the six Roman provinces of Paul's journeys illustrate the importance of developing and multiplying leaders from the beginning and throughout the life of a movement.

- About one third of Paul's epistles are addressed to leaders he was mentoring (1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon). These were men who grew into leadership out of the harvest of his work. While Paul exhorted churches, he mentored leaders.
- The majority of the individuals Paul names in his letters were leaders who grew out of his harvesting work with over thirty individuals who partnered with Paul in his apostolic team ministry in addition to the leaders of churches. From the beginning, Paul held a value of raising up leaders out of the harvest to guide the movements when he moved on.
- Acts 20:4 illustrates the diversity

of this group of leaders: Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. (Acts 20:4 ESV)

This group accompanied Paul with his gift for the church in Jerusalem. They are an amazing cross-section of the new leaders he developed over his 8-10 years of ministry in three journeys: Gaius and Timothy the harvest of Journey #1 (~8-10 years earlier); Sopater, Aristarchus and Secundus the harvest of Journey #2 (~6-8 years earlier); Tychicus and Trophimus the harvest of Journey #3 (~3-5 years earlier). In even a few years' time, Paul was able to point to men who could guide the movements apart from his constant oversight.

- When pressed to spend time with either leaders or an entire church, Paul chose the former. Four to six years after the movement began in Ephesus and spread throughout the entire Roman province of Asia (Acts 19:10), and Paul had time to return for only a short visit, he chose to meet only with the leaders (Acts 20:16ff). Conscious of his time constraints, he chose to develop them as leaders who would guide the movement in Asia. When pressed, Paul chose to develop leaders who could minister and equip rather than personally engage in the work they could do themselves.
- These illustrations provide an expanded perspective on 2 Timothy 2:2. While this verse certainly applies to discipleship, it clearly illustrates Paul's value to not only develop leaders but to do so in a way that can multiply endlessly. Paul chose to develop an

ever-expanding system of leadership development rather than to center the training around his personal finite mentoring capacity.

PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPING LEADERS IN AN EVER-EXPANDING SYSTEM

We must have a plan for leadership multiplication before our first discipleship groups and churches ever start. It must be a system that allows leaders to mature quickly in the midst of ministry and brings training to new

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tiers of leaders with no limits upon how far it can expand.

Movements grow no further than the bounds of their leadership development systems. If your system has a capacity to train 100 pastors, that is the extent to which it will grow. A number of sustained CPMs around the world implement principles to foster continued expansion and maturation of leaders.

- On-the-job training — Recognizing that it will kill the

movement to pull leaders of churches and CPM networks out of their contexts for months or years at a time, CPM facilitators devise a system to bring training to locales where the leaders can easily travel. This requires more work on our part to decentralize the locations of trainings. It means we live on their schedule and in their worlds rather than ours. This is a sort of Theological Education by Extension on steroids as training reaches further and further into the expanding edges of the movement.

- Just-in-time training – CPM facilitators bring training to leaders as they need it in the context of ministry rather than mandate that leaders only be trained in one extended period of months or years. CPMs reveal that retention and application is much more effective when leaders receive training more frequently for shorter durations. They are able to apply it to their ministries immediately and receive frequent trouble-shooting help along the way.
 - o Numerous applications abound of the two previous principles. In one CPM in which the churches are all within a one to four hour ride away from a training site, leadership training occurs monthly on Friday night and Saturday. In another geographically widespread out CPM, fruitful leaders gather for 4-10 days two, three or four times a year in many different cities. Farmers can sometimes gather for ten days whereas city-dwellers sometimes gather for four-day weekends or on holidays. In a third context, a largely rural CPM in addition to monthly meetings, conducts rainy-season training conferences in which hundreds



of leaders descend upon a location central to their area for three to four weeks.

- Retain the DNA of a movement – CPM practitioners spend a large amount of every training discussing the vision God has given the movement for His kingdom to come to every locale. Many encourage the leaders to develop generational maps to keep track of the expansion of the movement and identify areas that need to be reached or display weaknesses. The CPM leaders are careful to guard the movement from extra-biblical teaching that might dampen the movement.
- o Failure to do this can stall a CPM. A missionary couple were delighted when a movement suddenly erupted through a woman they were discipling. She took the gospel to her home village and that village began evangelizing other villages. The couple was careful to begin training the emerging leaders and encourage the continued expansion. However, when the couple left their country for a couple of months, a traveling teacher got wind of this budding movement. He visited the new churches and chided them for practicing the ordinances of baptism and communion without “properly credentialed” leaders from outside. These young believers

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naively accepted this and the CPM ground to a halt.

- Focus on fruitful leaders – In CPMs, the leaders that need the most attention are those responsible for multiple churches and multiple generations of churches. These fruitful leaders have much larger oversight. Without giving them the encouragement, counsel and equipping they need at each new stage, they will burn out. Effective CPM practitioners structure their training (“mid-level training”) for these leaders that have greater responsibility. Failure to do so means reducing the depth of training and failing to meet their needs.
- o In one CPM the missionary conducted mid-level trainings with such leaders on a monthly basis. His training was quite extensive in personal, pastoral and theological development. Before long members of churches who did not have

the same level of evangelistic fruit or pastoral oversight began to attend, eager for more training. The result was the need to keep going over basic discipleship ideas rather than deeper concepts and the continued expansion of the movement (e.g. 1 Cor. 3:2). The movement began to slow down. When the missionary recognized this situation, he limited this training to only fruitful mid-level trainers while insuring that basic discipleship was carried to the rest of the church members. The engine was restarted and the movement began to expand again.

- Develop a system in which new layers of leadership development can expand without limitations – Effective CPM practitioners have developed systems whereby their top national leaders who have gifts to oversee a whole stream of the movement can reproduce the mid-level training in their stream. CPM practitioners focus on week-by-week mentoring of these top leaders giving special attention to enabling them to become effective mid-level trainers. In time, these top overseers raise up other apostolic leaders with gifts to do the same. The result is a system whereby mid-level trainings can expand endlessly as the movement expands. In one large CPM with



over a million believers, over thirty apostolic leaders oversee large streams of the movement. These men empower mid-level trainings in their streams to the extent that there are dozens of mid-level trainings occurring every month in various places in the region. The movement has no limits on how far it can expand.

- Deal with the whole person—In our zeal to see more people come to Christ, it is easy for us to position mid-level trainings mainly as evangelism and church planting training events and often do so in a sterile classroom environment. When this happens, mid-level leaders burn out. Effective mid-level training addresses the whole. They give time to worship, rest, personal counseling of each participant, feeding them from the Word, interpersonal interactions and generally enabling mid-level leaders to encounter God in a powerful way. They address similar issues to those Paul addressed in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus – the whole counsel of God for all of life. The result is leaders who mature in all areas and are able to continue as Christ-like disciples.
- Give deep spiritual truths in bite-sized pieces—One of my early mistakes in mid-level training was to squeeze my entire seminary education into a four week training. After days of confused stares, I saw the error of my ways and opted to give a few deep truths

in a way that could be understood. Proverbs 15:2 became a principle of my life: “The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable.”

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(NASB). A fruitful CPM trainer, Kevin Greeson, prescribes the Straw Principle of Training: “You can provide all the pastoral training you want as long as you divide it into small pieces that can fit through a straw. By giving it in

digestible pieces, leaders can grow consistently.”

- Maintain contact with multiple levels of leaders – It is not unusual in the harsh environments of persecution and spiritual assault for the top national leader(s) of a movement to be taken out (prison, flight to another context, death, job move, moral failure). CPM practitioners whose only contact with the leaders of a movement is through one top leader (often because of a noble desire to encourage indigenous leaders not to rely on a foreign teacher) will find it difficult to continue leadership development when he is removed from the leadership chain. It is critical from the beginning to maintain contact with multiple generations of leaders knowing that at any time any leader may leave the movement. It is also critical to encourage mid-level leaders to network together so that they create multiple opportunities for interpersonal development. If these things happen, then leadership development continues without significant interruptions.

These are principles and applications that must be thought through before churches begin. If you begin with an expanding leadership system in mind (which will morph along the way!), you will likely equip the movement to grow for decades to come by the power of the Spirit. 