



HELPING CHURCH LEADERS TRANSITION FROM THE PRESENT TO THE FUTURE

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ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING VENTURES

The convergence of three shifts in culture has combined to provide a new opportunity for effective organizational and staff development in the 21st century. Over the past three decades, the US culture has moved from one of observation to participation, from involvement to experience. A second shift is from training to learning, from a one-time transfer of information based on a classroom model to a life long process of discovery and learning that is interactive and involves a variety of venues and models. A final shift is from individual learning to collaborative learning or shared learning in the context of a team.

As a result of these shifts, learning adventures are becoming an important approach to ensure the continuing development of people within an organization and an effective tool for team building. Learning adventures introduce new mental maps and paradigms of the way we seek to accomplish our mission, do ministry, and organize our work.

Learning adventures can be scheduled on an annual basis, perhaps in conjunction with a staff retreat, or could be done quarterly, depending on the needs of your congregation or organization. Also be open to learning adventure opportunities that arise spontaneously. Typically, a learning adventure can take from a half day to a full day, and in some cases, multiple days depending on the specifics of the event. Often, they can be done locally without requiring extensive travel. Examples of venues that focus on teams, collaboration and customer service might include newspapers, restaurants, museums, athletic teams, hospitals, grocery stores, educational institutions, local conventions, trade shows, community non-profit organizations and a wide variety of corporate and other business settings. Access to venues can often be obtained through existing relationships in your networks or people within your congregation.

Over the past three years, Leadership Network has organized a number of learning adventures for 21st century church leaders in addition to internal learning adventures for our staff. Some of the key lessons we have learned include the following: (1) designate a point person to handle the logistics and arrangements; (2) establish a learning goal or objective to create a framework for the adventure; (3) involve as many team members as possible or appropriate for the event; (4) engage all the senses in the adventure...what you see, hear, smell, taste and touch are all important; (5) de-brief the experience (as quickly as possible), preferably on site or in an adjacent location; (6) establish mechanisms to capture new insights, share the learnings with others and make the appropriate applications to your role or organization; and (7) find or create memorabilia related to learning event...a T-shirt, button, poster, card, photos, etc. that can serve as a reminder and meaning connector to the event.

For insights on Leadership Network's Disney Learning Adventure and specific applications to churches, see Bill Easum's remarks on our website at www.leadnetinfo.org. For further reading on the growing importance of experience, read *The Experience Economy* by Joseph Pine and James Gilmore (Harvard Business School, 1999) or visit their website at www.customization.com.

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