



HELPING CHURCH LEADERS TRANSITION FROM THE PRESENT TO THE FUTURE

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DEVELOPING LEADERS NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

Last Wednesday-Friday, over 60 leaders from local churches, parachurch ministries, and seminaries gathered in Dallas to address the topic of leadership development. Convened by Leadership Network, the forum focused on the changing context of developing leaders, approaches to leadership development, characteristics of leadership and a wide range of other issues related to churches and leadership development.

Leading off the forum was a presentation by Bill Drath of the Center for Creative Leadership (www.ccl.org) on the "Relational Leader," the focus of his research for the past eight years which represents the "evolution of the leadership principle in the post industrial era." Drath drew distinctions between three leadership models: personal dominance, interpersonal influence, and the relational or sense-making. In the **personal dominance model**, the leader is strong and smart; provides protection and guidance; defines values, importance and reality; controls and limits conflicts; and is what the leader does. In the **interpersonal influence model**, influence is more effective than force; the leader influences followers more than followers influence the leader; influence is exercised through reason and knowledge; the leader must understand the follower's mind; and leadership is a social negotiation. Changes over the last 50-60 years are revealing the limits of these two models, especially given the increasing plurality of competing worldviews. In the **relational sense-making model**, leadership is the process of constructing sense and meaning in relation to shared work and is the result of people's interactions. "Leader" and "follower" represent ways of participating in leadership rather than defining it. While the personal principle prepared the leader for mastery and the interpersonal principle enhanced the leader's self-knowledge and interpersonal skills, the relational principle increases the capacity of the community to make meaning through relationships.

A common theme in subsequent large and small group discussions was the dual nature of leadership development that is both "engineered" through some type of system within the congregation and has an "organic" approach shaped by individual needs and experience. It is also a balance between the relational dimension found in mentoring / teams and content of the process. It is essential that a "culture of leadership" be created that has expectations of developing leaders at all levels and of helping people develop to their highest capacity. Such a culture allows people to experiment in discovering their gifts and talents through multiple entry points and short term service. Several churches use a PDP or "Personal Development Plan" that is customized for individuals to aid in their development as leaders. They agreed that an effective system of leadership development has three phases: identification and recruitment of potential leaders; training, coaching, and affirmation; and assessment or evaluation and celebration.

Participants also discussed a shift in perspective on local church leadership development. While many churches continue to focus on developing leaders to serve within the church, more and more congregations are taking a broader, Kingdom perspective on leadership development that is focused on the community and world beyond the walls of the church. "We are focused on developing leaders who can serve in their homes, their businesses, and out in the community," said one pastor. "We want to transform the world through transformed leaders and to do that, you have to develop leaders with a Kingdom mindset."

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