

Stage 4: Recruiting a Team, by John Brett

Gathering a team

In some ways, gathering a team the single biggest task in the Church Planting Loop. If you can gather a good team around you, all you have to do afterwards is lead that team. Gathering a team is the first stage make-or-break moment of the church planting loop. One definition of a leader is that people follow them. In this case, the question is will people accept your leadership and vision? When you're planting a church this will be a moment of truth! Partly for that reason, this will probably be a big topic that we'll come back to.

Don't panic if this might seem a big ask. Don't panic if we tell you that a lot of church plants shrink after launching before they grow. Don't panic if we tell you to ask people for commitment in an age of low commitment. If you know that God has called you into this and you're doing with a Greatest Command and Great Commission motives (see Page 2*), you'll be fine.

What are we talking about?

We are talking about gathering a group of 6-10 people who will be the core of your church plant. There are two kinds of people who may form part of your team. One is the kind of people who are heart and soul committed to what you are doing. This is the team that we are mainly talking about here.

Helpers

There is another group. These are not committed to you as a church but are helping you. At first, this may seem like a bizarre idea: why would anyone come to a church that isn't theirs, and why would you encourage anyone to do that, given the disruption to the community? The answer is that visitors bring a temporary buzz to the church. They might bring some resources or open up some connections that you otherwise wouldn't have. As long as you're clear about where someone stands with your team, 'borrowed' people can bring useful skills and energy in the short term.

However, don't confuse these two. It can be easy to become distracted by people who are only helping out. So make sure you know where people stand.

If you load too much responsibility onto people who aren't committed to your church, you're not growing the gifts of those who are. People who aren't committed can give valuable insights into what you're doing, but too much commentary without commitment can also become discouraging or confusing.

"Un-recruiting" a team

You are going to lose members of your team after you launch. You read it here first. You will lose people. I've seen people saying the attrition rate of any church plant team is 50% whatever you do. In my experience it's not that high. But what's definitely true is that you have to be ready for people to turn back and you have to be ready not to take it personally. Let people go with grace and bless them as they go.

How Jesus recruited his team.

Jesus called his team to himself. Come, follow me. When the disciples began following Jesus they had very little idea of where it would end up. The message of this is not to ask people to follow you without telling them where it will end! It's that the call into a church plant has to be a call to Jesus. It has to be a way of your team getting to know Jesus better.

The Great Commands* and the Great Commission:

Jesus recruited his team to draw them to himself – to love Jesus was to love God - to love the world, to love each other, and to make disciples. All of those things are happening when we invite someone into a church planting team. The purpose has a community and the community has a purpose. Or that reason we'll be listing some church planting virtues – it is here that there is pressure not just on your know-how but on your personal and spiritual integrity.

Jesus didn't recruit apostles. He recruited disciples. That is, he didn't walk past Peter and Andrew's boat and say 'do you want to be the Pope?'. He knew Peter before he called him from his boat – you can see this in John. And he didn't appoint the apostles until later. That is an important principle – you don't give power over the team too soon. Wait – see how people develop and then work out where you think they could serve.

How Jesus didn't recruit his team

Jesus didn't add people to his discipleship WhatsApp group. But this is a really good idea. Right now, it seems to me that if your team has a WhatsApp group it probably exists, and if it doesn't, it probably doesn't. That group is a reminder that you're on a journey together and there is some degree of commitment asked for, even if people haven't yet got round to making that call.

You know that moment when someone leaves your WhatsApp group unexpectedly. There's a weird moment while everyone wonders why they did that. That shows that it means leaving a community of some kind. So the decision of whether to add someone to a group, or not is a useful moment for thinking about and discussing with them whether and how they are interested being part of your team.

Power dynamics in church planting teams

One significant reason that people join church planting teams is that they want to grow in service. There is, however, a fine line between this and joining a team because you want power over a congregation. Those who commit to a church are, in some ways going to have more responsibility. This means that you, when you recruit a team will have to listen carefully to potential team members. What do they want? Do they have realistic expectations of how the church will evolve? Are they asking for power – or are they offering to serve. As we saw in the 'identifying the leader' section the leader of an Antioch has a power of decision-making, even judgement. Of course, we ask them to exercise this power with the utmost humility and discretion, but the leader has to be careful of handing this power over to others, and most particularly when someone wants that power. Someone who wants power in a church is very probably not qualified to exercise it.

Diversity in Church Planting Teams

Diversity in your team matters. There are many kinds of diversity, some apparent, some real. I (John) was once a regional director for a Norwegian aid organisation. My peers were from Sri Lanka, Peru, and Uganda. There were two women and two men. We found it very easy to agree on policies, because we all agreed we should have less interference from the Norwegian head office! It wasn't real diversity – because we all had the same interest. Later, I went to work in another country, this time working partly for the East Africa office. Someone who had been my peer became my boss. Our relationship became different and more difficult – now I wanted less interference from her!

True diversity in the body of Christ is a diversity of gifts, characteristics, and experiences. In modern Manchester there is very obvious diversity in race, class, nationality, age, and language. It can be difficult to build strong teams across culture and language barriers. It takes special patience and determination. It's more difficult to build trust, and we have to listen more carefully. You may need specialist coaching to do this.

But the biggest divide in British society is not mainly race – it's class. Language is power. It can be tempting to build your team on people who are gifted in the world's eyes – they have the organisational skills, they can express their thoughts in well structured abstract sentences, they even have the money to support your church. But the goal of Antioch is to see a movement of churches among the ordinary people of Greater Manchester – and depending on your culture, you may have to do some extra work to bring people from diverse backgrounds, gifts and ways of thinking into your team. You should be praying specifically for people with different gifts and viewpoints to come into your team.

As a very crude example, one of our biggest problems in Rusholme is finding women to help lead. The whole environment can feel male, aggressive and even sleazy. It's not the problem that many Church of England churches face, but we are overly male, and younger. So we have to pray and look for female members of our team.

How would you recruit team members?

- Practically, how do you go about recruiting team members. Here are a few tips:
- It's very important for the leader to lead on this. No leader can afford to be passive about how they gather their team. The leader will always be the one who articulates the vision of the team and the church better than anyone else.
- That said, we as network leaders will always do our very best to put you in touch with potential team members and those who can be allies. Obviously the kind of church will make a big difference here. Engineered church plants, where the network initiates the plant by bringing someone in from the outside will be more challenging than organic plants, where the leader is already in touch with potential leaders.
- I have a 100% failure rate in recruiting church plant leaders through other church leaders. It doesn't matter how sympathetic they are to Antioch, how much they care about the vision. Church leaders don't look around their congregation and say 'that person has the maturity and the vision to thrive better in another church'. It's very hard to blame them –

I'd struggle to do that. You could always try if you know that a sympathetic church has a highly dispersed congregation, but usually a church has to completely own the idea of a church plant before they will begin steering people into a church plant team.

- Keep your ear to the ground. People move all the time. So if your church has the virtue of existing, and someone moves into the area, they might be interested.
- Missionaries: Antioch churches have a strong bias towards the Great Commission, and that makes them natural partners for mission agencies, depending on the emphasis of the mission. The network leaders maintain contacts with various agencies but church plant leaders could do the same. That said, our goal is to invest first and foremost in 'natives': people who just live in the area we're trying to reach.
- Never alienate more people than you have to. This is a life hack, but it has a particular application to forming church plant teams.
 - There are people in the church of God with whom we might disagree, and whose teaching is fundamentally wrong, maybe even harmful.
 - But treat them, as far as possible with respect (see Jude 9!).
 - It doesn't mean you happily welcome bad teaching into your congregation
 - But even people who disagree with you may see the point of what you're doing and do what they can to help you.

To put some flesh on the bones we'll look at how the church plant teams were formed in some of our teams.

Hope Community Church Longsight	Good News Community Church Rochdale
Upper Room Church Cheetham Hill	E247 Church Rusholme

The Animate of the Equipping in gathering a team

The REAP has, at its centre equipping and 'animating' leaders. That is, we aim to speak to the head and the heart. This time we'll provide a session on the heart of a leader as they gather their team. It's a step in the loop which involves both the head and the heart to an unusual degree.

Virtues in Forming a Team

The virtue of love

Love really does cover a multitude of sins. Everything we do makes sense when we love others. Even if people hate us telling them the gospel, if we do it out of love, God will use that and accept it. So when we invite people to join us, we have to do it out of love for them. We have to be able to see how joining the church plant will build them up in Christ, not just help us.

Part of that is that is seeing how challenge grows people. We are often inviting people to experience loss by stepping away from existing churches. If we believe that keeping people from pain is to truly love them, we can't do that. We have to see how people can be loved through challenge, and difficulty.

We will bring risk and sacrifice into people's lives. They are leaving what they know to go to what they don't know. Again, you have to be able to see how that sacrifice will be worth it. You have to believe that their faith will grow.

The flip side of this, however, is a belief that anyone who is emotionally hurt or has suffered from poor mental health should not join a church planting team. This isn't true. Both the community and purpose elements of a church plant team can help people grow and thrive. It all depends on the person.

Lastly, a word here about your own heart. You are calling people into a Great Commission community, and you are calling them to Jesus. To some extent, though as you gather your team, you rely on the Lord to put people under your care. He will send you his people if you with grow his people – which is one reason why we guard our hearts as leaders.

The virtue of clarity

It's surprisingly easy to be unclear about what you are asking someone to do. The main reasons are that we're not entirely clear ourselves and that we're afraid that people will say no. Those will both come back to bite you.

Here are some things that you need to be clear about with potential team mates.

- What you are trying to do, which is plant a church.
 - You should also be able to say what the church will be trying to do.
 - I have people who I'm pretty sure were church planters who told me 'we're just here to see what the Lord will do'.
- Explain why you're doing it – the fundamental reason for planting the church.
- Where you hope it will be going
- What commitment to the church would mean
 - Do you expect people to move into the area, for example?
- Are you clear about what you believe?
 - If you recruit people who don't have the same fundamental beliefs as you, pain will follow.

- A couple joined us who I thought were perfectly well aware that women would speak from the front in church.
 - It came as a shock, and they later left the church.
- Are you clear about what a team member might contribute.
 - It's obviously important to listen carefully to potential team members.
 - Have you understood properly what their hopes and ambitions are?
- Are you clear about what you can and cannot be to people?
 - They might want a very involved pastor to help them in a new smaller church.
 - That's not a great way to start your team.
- Are you clear with other church leaders if you want to talk to any of their church members about joining your team.
 - It's vital that you show integrity in dealing with other church leaders.
- If someone is coming along to help you launch, but will primarily stay with another church, again, it's important to be clear with them, and with your church team, so that people don't get hurt when their job is done and they say goodbye

The virtue of faith

Church planting will test your faith. Very, very few planters will face Gideon's challenge of sending most of your team back. But you will rely constantly on God to give you the people you need. Most planters are action people, who see the great value of our work. We can easily become frustrated or annoyed when people don't see our project in the same way and say 'no thank you.' Faith says that in all things God is working for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose. You have to trust that God will give you the people that you need.

You have to pray, even desperately, but without worrying. Your heavenly Father will give you what you need. You are not praying, ultimately, for your project, but his kingdom, and his righteousness.

Part of faith is seeing past loss and disappointment – still trusting that the Father will give you what you need when things in the visible don't seem to be going your way.

Faith will help you understand too, when it's not right for someone to be on the team. If there is a naturally poor fit between you and a potential team member, panic over whether you will have enough people can make you take short cuts. If you don't think the relationship will be fruitful, trust God that he has something better.

The virtue of humility

Humility is understanding where you stand in relationship to God, and thus to other people. Our attitude is modelled on Jesus' attitude (Philippians 2:6-10)

Some of the things that could make you stop and think are as follows:

- If you find yourself criticising other churches.
 - Obviously, not all churches teach the Bible, and not all churches make disciples.

- But criticism of other churches is rarely productive, and can give us a sense of pride.
- That applies to potential team members.
 - Mature Christians tend to leave churches unwillingly, and have a positive reason for doing so.
 - While significant issues with teaching or vision do occur, even with Christians, think carefully about over-committing to people who are critical of a number of previous churches.
- Few churches have genuinely new visions and models of church.
 - We in Antioch are not brilliant innovators, with a brand new model.
 - Our 'success' or the fruit of our work comes from God's favour – just as it does for any other church.

The virtue of service

The final virtue we'll look at is service. Church plants rely heavily on people who have an attitude of willing service, who are happy to do more than they are asked, who are enthusiastic about the task, and who respond positively when asked to do stuff. Of course, that doesn't mean that they are workaholics, people pleasers or have no boundaries. We can model that attitude for our team.

If your team needs you to work in any area of weakness – perhaps reading emails and responding on time, or planning things in advance, then stepping into that is a way of actively encouraging and reaching out to team members. We rightly put time and effort into identifying people's gifting, but when we work outside our own gifting when we need to, we're showing an attractive trait to potential team members.

I think there are a number of areas where we can serve effectively in a way that will influence our team: one is evangelism. Walking with people in evangelism, going to the streets, encountering non Christians, has a big effect on potential team members. Potential team members know that every church has to make disciples. They want to be a part of that process, and sharing with people in that task can often communicate more than anything you say.

Another is hospitality. It's a fundamental of Antioch churches – and serving in hospitality communicates something of Christ's on welcome for us. We'll come on to some of the others when we discuss how we establish the evangelistic approach of the team and how the patterns of prayer, worship and Bible study are laid down in some subsequent steps.

Further Reading:

www.antiochnetwork.org.uk/resources/Stage_4_-_Notes_on_building_a_diverse_team.pdf.pagespeed.ce.WXs55d4G35.pdf