

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

2 More Roles a Senior Pastor Can't Delegate - Episode 310

Sharpening Your Executive Leadership Skills (Part 4)

Great leaders don't try to do everything themselves. They understand their own strengths and weaknesses, and recognize the value of leveraging the strengths of others. But in order to delegate well, you have to start by identifying the things that only you can do.

In this episode, we finish up our series on sharpening your executive leadership skills with a conversation on the final two roles a senior pastor can't delegate.

Role #3: Leader of leaders.

No matter the size of your church or staff team, senior pastors have to be the primary leaders in the organization. This includes:

1. **Leading up:** providing leadership for the board, elders, etc.
2. **Leading around:** providing leadership for the staff leaders who report to them.

There are four steps in the **leadership pathway**—also known as the four stages of influence:

1. **Leading by example.** This is leading by modeling for others how the church does things.
2. **Leading other people through delegation.** Eventually, senior pastors learn to give responsibility to others in order to broaden the amount of ministry they can accomplish.
3. **Leading other people through empowerment.** These leaders have the responsibility to shape who they are, who their teams are, and the direction of their ministries.
4. **Leading through vision.** While the leaders below you make tactical ministry decisions, you motivate staff and congregants by clearly articulating where you think God is leading your church into the future.

Advice for senior pastors of churches at each size:

- Pastors of **small** churches tend to get stuck because they only lead by example and try to do all of the ministry by themselves. If that's you, it's time to start giving away ministry tasks and responsibilities to qualified leaders.

- Pastors of **midsize** churches tend to be good at delegating, but haven't made the leap to empowering other leaders. If that's you, it's time to move to empowerment.
- Pastors of **large** churches have usually made the leap to empowerment, but often fail to develop a team of leaders who also empower others. Their senior leadership teams only know how to tell other people what to do, so the SLT becomes the ministry bottleneck.

Key Point: If your church is growing, you can't lead like you used to lead when your church was smaller. And if you want your church to grow, start taking steps on the leadership pathway.

Role #4: Culture champion.

Culture is a set of behaviors that define what the team does, how it behaves, and what it values—and it starts at the top of an organization. It's the senior pastor's responsibility to set the tone for the team and lead the church by example:

1. **Define what's distinctive about your team.** We like to frame up culture as a set of behaviors that define what the team does, how they behave and what they value. Those behaviors—good or bad—are your culture: "People like us do things like this."
2. **Model it.** When you model culture, you shape culture. And you must also ensure key leaders reflect those behaviors, because if they don't, the rest of the team won't either.
3. **Teach it.** You need to talk about, preach about, and regularly share culture with the team.
4. **Coach it.** "What gets noticed, gets repeated." When you celebrate someone living out your values, it communicates alignment and encourages everyone to embrace those values. On the flip side, culture is equally defined by the behaviors we *don't* tolerate.

Payoffs of an authentic culture:

1. Everyone pulls in the same direction. When your staff has a clear shared identity, things get done. Increased unity leads to increased productivity.
2. There is increased clarity about who fits on the team and who doesn't. When your entire team has embraced and lives out those cultural behaviors, people can tell whether a candidate is a good fit for the church.

Key Points:

1. Culture isn't static—you can't just set it and forget it. One of your crucial responsibilities as your church's culture champion is to periodically evaluate the state of your culture.
2. Your church's culture influences your effectiveness as a leader, the quality and efficiency of the work performed by your staff, and the effectiveness and growth potential of your church. So don't let cultural issues slide—there's too much at stake.

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