

## **“Developing The Bench”**

*“The growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership.”  
Harvey S. Firestone, founder of Firestone Tire and Rubber Company*

**What is your strategy for developing future leaders? How are you “developing your bench?” What is the succession plan for leaders at all levels of your organization?**

- What might happen if *The Summit* made the intentional development of deep people among its highest priorities?
- What if we decided that our greatest responsibility was to lead the effort to produce a continuous flow of deep people?
- How can *The Summit* enlarge its core with deep people who are prepared to take us into tomorrow showing the Christ-following life and inspiring us to fulfill the mission God has given us?
- What if we considered *The Summit* a teaching church in the same way that some hospitals are called teaching hospitals?
- Are we prepared to back off some things we’ve always enjoyed doing to focus on a relatively small group of “growable” people?
- Could there be an environment where we refuse to allow mediocrity, laziness, or spotty participation to be the standard?

***The Summit will only be as good as its  
commitment to training leaders for the future.***

What if you gave your primary energy to help others become fully devoted disciples of Jesus who become spiritual leaders who can help the church do what it’s supposed to do? What would it look like if your priority was investing in future generations?

### **Recommended Resources**

"Going Deep" by Gordon McDonald

Ministry's Sweet Spot - a chapter from "[Building Below The Waterline](#)" By Gordon McDonald

Making Room At The Top – a chapter from "[Sticky Teams](#)" by Larry Osborne

Let Your Leaders Lead - a chapter from "[Fairness Is Overrated: And 51 Other Leadership Principles to Revolutionize Your Workplace](#)" by Stevens, Tim.

"[Next: Pastoral Succession That Works](#)" by William Vanderbloemen & Warren Bird

"[The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken about Pastoral Transitions](#)" by Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree.

"[Reverse Mentoring: How Young Leaders Can Transform the Church and Why We Should Let Them](#)" by Earl Creps

## How do you replicate your leadership? How do you teach others the skills needed to lead in your organization?

### Relentlessly Believe

One of the greatest gifts you can give to the people you lead is belief in them. Too often, we undervalue the people right under our noses. “A prophet is without honor in his own country” is a paraphrase from Scripture that has become an issue that many of us resign ourselves to.

When others don't see our potential, it can be incredibly defeating.

You would think Jesus would have been the hometown hero, yet even he was not acknowledged for his gifts by the people closest to him. In Mark 6:1-6 we read:

*“Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. “Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.” He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.”*

Even Jesus' influence was limited because of the lack of belief others had in him. As a leader, you have the power to make your team members hometown heroes. See the potential they don't yet see in themselves. Be the first to notice them. Create opportunities to stretch them. Identify their gifts and affirm them. See potential before there's proof. Be a part of the unique work that God wants to do in others, and be a catalyst for bringing that to life in them.

*“Outstanding leaders go out of their way to boost the self-esteem of their personnel. If people believe in themselves, it's amazing what they can accomplish.”*  
Sam Walton, the founder of Walmart

### Readily Teach

Great teachers look for every opportunity to make a connection and help their students apply their learning to everyday life. Great leaders do this as well. As you engage with staff and volunteers, look for opportunities to teach them principles of leadership. Assess their strengths. Help them understand where they are strong and where they are weak. Teach them the value of knowing how they are wired. Give them some suggestions for ways they can exercise their weaker dimensions.

And don't forget that one of the best forms of teaching is by example. Share with them your own journey of growth as a leader. Point out times when you've succeeded and also when you've failed to lead well.

### Strategically Hire

While balance in skills, abilities, talents, gifts and personalities are important in individuals, it's also important on teams. In fact, as a team we can achieve balance more quickly than we can as individuals. We are stronger together when we each bring our leadership strengths and value the strengths that others bring.

Most organizations are likely to reflect how the most dominant leader is wired because the point leader is going to naturally value those personality traits, spiritual gifts, sacred pathways, and skills most like them in hiring and recruiting.

We're inclined to hire others who are like us. This is human nature. We gravitate to people who value what we value. When it comes to leading, we're most likely going to be drawn to others who are strong in the same dimensions that we are. If you're a strong visionary leader, you're going to connect well with other visionary leaders. If you're a deeply reflective leader, you'll seek out other mind-full leaders. The same is true for detail-oriented and fun-loving leaders.

This tendency isn't inherently bad, but hiring a disproportionate number of people strong in the same dimension will create imbalance in your team. As you recruit and interview, look for team members who will bring strengths in the dimensions that you are weak in as a team.

### Purposefully Mentor

Mentoring can be a vague concept ... but **development of others is your responsibility as a leader. You must own this.** You must constantly be on the lookout for less experienced leaders who you can support and encourage. Don't miss significant opportunities to help train and develop younger leaders.

Purposefully mentoring others means keeping your eyes open for leaders a step or two behind you who would benefit from your influence. Look for ways to help developing leaders win. Pave the way for them by giving them helpful advice or insight into situations you've faced before.

Mentoring is less about creating a formalized ongoing relationship and more about **making your knowledge available** to those who show genuine interest in learning from your leadership journey.

## Consistently Coach

Every interaction with your team members is an opportunity to coach their leadership skills. When you see good, call it out. When you see growth needs, pull people aside and give kind yet specific feedback. Every day is game day. Every meeting is a play in the game.

Great coaches have the perspective of the whole game, the entire field, and all the players. They have a vantage point that the players in the game do not have. Likewise, as a leader, you have a perspective that your staff and volunteers won't have. Those we lead need real-time feedback that enables them to adjust, improve, and keep playing with all their gifts and strengths maximized and best directed.

## Relentlessly Realign

Developing great leaders means constantly positioning them for their best effort. Always be evaluating your staff and volunteers to look for better alignment of their gifts and strengths with the needs of the organization. Especially in a growing organization, it is not uncommon to reorganize the staff every twelve to eighteen months. That can feel unsettling at first, but when you've created a culture where your employees trust that your realignment efforts are genuinely for their good, they become much less scared or skeptical of organizational change.

Misalignment will discourage your best leaders. Young leaders with great potential won't stay on teams where their gifts are not effectively utilized. This doesn't mean appeasing every desire and whim of a young leader. Young leaders often don't know what is best for their growth in the long run. But when they know you are for them and working to position them within the organization in areas that will utilize their strengths while at the same time stretching their development, they will engage the process and commit to your development plan for them.

## Bravely Break Up

Breakups are inevitable. Despite your best intentions to build a great team, there will be times when you need to part ways with staff members and volunteers. Sometimes they choose to leave. Sometimes you have to let them go. Letting team members go can be some of the most difficult work of your leadership life. It is never easy, especially if you're truly leading with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. When you're leading with your whole self, you can't help but feel the loss, hurt, anxiety, and fear that accompany transition.

The mismatch of the role and the strengths or weaknesses of team members puts a strain on others and creates confusion and frustration. Determine early for the health of the organization not to tolerate this misalignment! Engage, don't hold back out of insecurity and fear.

## Embrace Seasons

*“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose.”  
Ecclesiastes 3:1 (KJV)*

People often treat employment like they treat marriage— with the intention of forever. Loyalty is an important thing, but loyalty doesn’t always mean forever.

For many things in life there are seasons, and our jobs and careers fall into that category. It’s unlikely that we’ll have one job for all of our lives. In fact, a number of studies report that Americans will hold at least a dozen jobs in their lifetime. This is why it’s important to understand the rhythm of seasons.

Some employees will be under your leadership for a short season, and others may actually be with you through several seasons. Recognize that seasons change and that there will be times that employees need to move on whether by your choice or theirs. Additionally, there will be employees or volunteers who you get to coach, develop, and mentor for a long time, but you may actually be preparing them for a season of growth elsewhere. Likewise, you’ll reap the benefit of the time other leaders have invested in the lives of staff members that join your team. Seasons change. Embrace them.

## Never Give Up

Not every young leader you invest in will get it. Some won’t see the value of your leadership investment, yet others will soak up every word. Some will circle back and thank you later.

Our leadership efforts don’t return void. We may not always reap the fruit of them immediately, but God is at work. Some of us plant the seeds, some of us water, some of us cultivate, and some of us harvest. As a leader, you will play different roles for different people. Seize the season you’re in. Own the moment you have, but never give up on what God is doing through your life as a leader.

- What next step do you need to take to develop as a leader who strategically coaches others?
- Who is a young leader whom you should purposefully develop?
- What else do you need to consider as you develop yourself and others to be leaders who empower the next generation?

**Adapted from ... Catron, Jenni (2015-12-01). *The Four Dimensions of Extraordinary Leadership: The Power of Leading from Your Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength*. Thomas Nelson.**