

What Else is in Your Bag?

By Damian Gerke (November 11, 2010)

Like a golfer who only uses two clubs over an 18-hole course, leaders often lean heavily on a few competencies — those that have been good to them in the past. For example, ministry leaders tend to be long on interpersonal competencies:

- They generate enthusiasm
- They create environments of trust and acceptance
- They often communicate exceptionally well, both corporately and conversationally
- They are adept at interacting with people.

Everyone expects pastors to exhibit these behaviors, and no doubt they are proven competencies for a ministry leader to utilize in their leadership. As obvious as they are, however, these are not the only leadership competencies that a ministry leader needs. In fact, they may not even be the most important.

The reality is that a multitude of competencies are required to lead with excellence. At The Malphurs Group, we utilize a leadership assessment tool that identifies 131 critical executive behavioral competencies, each of which falls into one of three major categories:

1. **Interpersonal Competencies** — like those listed above
2. **Leadership Competencies** — which speaks to a leader's ability to motivate, inspire and manage change; and finally
3. **Executive Management Competencies** — which describe a leader's ability to staff, delegate, create systems and processes, manage those processes and measure their results

Of the 131 competencies we measure, over 50% fall in the management category. Our experience in working with both churches and for-profit organizations bears this out: The organizations that have executive-level leadership dedicated to driving management issues are the ones that usually experience long-term effectiveness.

The interesting reality is that management competencies, on the whole, are usually relegated to a lower priority in a ministry context.



- We don't recruit good managers for the ministry
- We don't train our young leaders in management
- We have gifted executive managers in our churches that are volunteering in the parking ministry
- We walk past the vast array of management books and resources at the bookstore on our way to get the latest and hippest spiritual life releases

We spend most of our energy improving areas in which we are already reasonably competent — at the exclusion of competencies we lack. I'm not suggesting that lead pastors make every management decision. But they need to lead other people who do, and that requires a level of competency that many pastors simply don't possess. It's a club they're not used to swinging.

The good news is that this shortcoming is fixable — though it requires intentionality. There are a vast array of resources and management-savvy people who can lend objectivity and assistance. The real effort comes in:

- Discerning the highest management priorities; then
- Developing strategies that align with the church's mission, values and vision; and finally,
- Honoring those priorities and strategies by being disciplined enough to stick to the plan when it may not be convenient or expedient.

The first step, which usually is the most difficult, is to validate management as a necessary leadership competency, and — if necessary — to recognize your personal level of competency. That this may reveal some needed development is nothing to fear or be intimidated by. This is simply a normal part of the leadership development process. Let me encourage you: All the leaders we've ever worked with had at least one thing in common, the desire and need to develop beyond their current level of leadership effectiveness.

Borrowing a title from a recent Marshall Goldsmith book, this first critical step is to realize that, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*.

In short, it's time to add another club or two to your game.

