



Staffing for Growth

What leader or pastor hasn't wrestled with the issue of how to hire staff who will help them grow their ministry. In this Leadership Connection, I will address a concept that should prove most helpful when you find yourself in such a situation. The concept involves hiring staff with a high competence ceiling.

What is a Competence Ceiling?

I suspect that the term "competence ceiling" may be a new one for you. The term addresses a problem that all ministries face at some point. So, let me explain. All of us have a competence ceiling. What that means is we can only take a ministry so far before it taxes our level of competence, and we become less effective or even ineffective. The reality is that we no longer have what it takes to grow the ministry to the next level.

An Example

My pastor, Steve Stroope (Lake Pointe Church in Rockwall, Texas) is an interesting example. He became the pastor of Lake Pointe when it was around forty people. Since then, he has led the church to around 6,000 people in size, and, thus far, hasn't hit his competence ceiling. He has been able to change his leadership style to lead competently at each new level of attendance. He was once a small church pastor who has become a mega-church pastor. (I suspect these leaders are rare?)

Why is this Concept Important?

There are several reasons why this concept is so important to a church. First, no one likes to "fire" or let a staff person go. However, that is often the choice that you have when a staff person becomes ineffective-especially if they don't fit anywhere else on the staff. Second, the temptation is to try and find another place for them on the staff when there is no place (to play "Mr. Nice guy"). Third, there always seem to be some people in the church who are dissatisfied with your leadership, and they will use the firing of a staff person against you.

How Can you Know Your Ceiling?

How can you know when you've hit your competence ceiling? There are several signs. One is that the ministry may begin to plateau in size and may even lapse

into decline. Another is that you sense you don't know what to do to get the ministry moving again-you're out of your element. A third is that people (well meaning and not so well meaning) begin to question your ability to lead the congregation.

How Can You Hire Staff with a High Competence Ceiling?

How can you know what a person's level of competence might be when hiring staff? Pray and ask God to help you in this. Here are some questions that might help. Has the person ever led and ministered in a larger church? Are they "wired" to lead a ministry at a higher level? This gets into his or her divine design. Does the person possess an "intuitive feel" that he or she can minister at a higher level. For example, I have a friend who pastors a large church. One day he told me that he always knew intuitively that he would lead best in a large church context. So, have the person spend a little time with current staff people who have demonstrated a high competence level. Ask their opinion of the potential staff person.

New Books

I have recently been involved in the completion of two new books. The first is entitled *Money Matters in Church* (Baker Books, 2007) which I co-authored with my pastor Steve Stroope. It answers just about any question you might have on church finances. A second is *A New Kind of Church* where I wrestle with the question of what future churches will look like in this next century. If you would like a copy, you may order them from the publisher Baker Books, Amazon, or your local book distributor.

A Leadership Challenge

The Malphurs Group will offer training in Christ's "church building" (Mt. 16:18) process this spring, beginning in January. The training covers numerous leadership issues, and is a must for pastors in general, church planters, denominational executives, consultants, and those who lead at an associate, state or international level. Attendees may receive seminary credit toward a masters or doctor of ministries degree. If you would like to know more, contact Aubrey at the Malphurs Group (Aubrey@malphursgroup.com). Also, you can learn more from my Web site (www.malphursgroup.com).

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