

GROWTH POINTS

With Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D.

Coaching New Recruits

Take a moment and think about the people who've helped you in your career or life or family. When I consider the people whom God has brought into my life, I remember those who pushed me to become better, inspired me to work harder, and challenged me to be the best person possible.

One of those people was my junior varsity basketball coach during my sophomore year of high school. He was also my science teacher, and he didn't let me slide by in either place. His challenge to be better spilled over from the basketball court to the classroom, and vice versa. At the time, it wasn't enjoyable. I couldn't get away from his watchful eye and constant pressure to improve. He mandated progress; he was right to do it. My grades improved, as did my play. As a coach, he pushed me to succeed and create a winning attitude, and he made me believe in myself. He instilled a desire to win—yes, win—not at all costs, but to face life with a winning attitude. Even though I never cracked the starting basketball lineup, the lessons he taught have stayed with me for a lifetime.

What do successful coaches actually do? The most successful focus on three

areas: recruiting, training, and coordinating.

Recruiting

Coaches are always looking for new players—especially “A” players. Such players in church ministry are as rare as they are in sports. Take NBA basketball, for example. There are few Kobes, Jordans, or Birds, but lots of Morrisons, Perdues, and Sichtings. The first group are “A” players, while the second group are “B” players. Yet, the teams represented by all of these players would not have won the NBA championship without the “B” players.

Winning teams tend to have at least one star player, but they have many solid middle players. The backbone of all churches is not the star players but the middle workers who show up and serve week after week. When you wear the coach's hat, stop looking just for the “A” people, and recruit more “B” players.

Are you searching for a leadership coach? Email Dr. Gary L. McIntosh at cgnet@earthlink.net for full details.

Training

Once a person is recruited, he has a right to be trained. All arenas of work or service offer some form of training to their people. Doctors do internships, soldiers go through boot camp, artists apprentice to experts, and athletes are conditioned in training camps.

When Christ recruited his disciples (“Follow me”), he also committed himself to them (“I will make you fishers of men”) (Matthew 4:19). Note, if you expect people to respond positively to your recruitment, you have to commit yourself to train them. See if the following ideas will help. First, teach them. Second, show them. Third, allow them. To train people, you must allow them the chance to make mistakes and learn from their mistakes. No one learns to swim without sinking a few times!

Coordinating

Except in a few rare case, coaches do not play in the game. Their role is to place players where they best fit, where they’ll do the best for the team, and where they’ll give the team the best chance of winning. Placing people in the right positions is an art. Here are some ideas to consider.

First, examine the person’s gifts, talents, or skills. Everyone has a mix of abilities and skills, so narrow down your insights to the primary ones that people bring to the table every day.

Second, determine what contribution a person is making (or will make) to the ministry. Be specific. Ask what would happen if this person wasn’t here? Where would this person be missed the most? Identify what a person brings to the ministry and put him where he can be most fruitful.

Third, separate ability from compatibility. Some people may wow you with their abilities but not fit well on the team. Independent-oriented people are not as helpful as team-oriented people. Place people on a team to foster compatibility.

Fourth, don’t judge people based on what others are doing. The primary issue is what they are contributing to the team. Ask what will make them better. Do they need training, education, or mentoring? Once you know the answers to these questions, do your best to get them the needed assistance.

Fifth, move people around until you find their best fit on the team. However, if a fit cannot be found, it’s time to consider moving them to an entirely separate place of service. They need to be either coached up or coached out of the task.

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