

Working with Teams

Fitness Center-Model versus Fine Dining

In some churches, the members expect that the pastors and staff do all the work of the “ministry” and the member simply needs to show up and be “served.” The staff act as waiters and waitresses, meeting the needs of the members as ordered. This is the “**Fine Dining**” model of ministry.

Another model is one where members are encouraged and expected to exercise their spiritual gifts among the body of believers, and participate in the work of the ministry. They need to be coached, supported, and trained in how to stay spiritual fit and active so they can serve others in their lives. The pastors and staff of a church are the “trainers,” who are there to support and coach the members to develop and exercise their spiritual gifts so they can be strong, vibrant, and active in faith. This is the “**Fitness Center**” model of ministry.

Holy Cross strives to carry out the “Fitness Center” model of ministry.

Teams Bring People Together

One way that we implement the “Fitness Center” model is through teams. Rather than expecting the staff to create, plan, and execute every ministry program, teams of members are formed so that they can share their gifts with the whole body. Teams invite others to experience the fellowship of working together and to share in the joy of serving the Lord.

As coaches, the staff serve as a point person for each team, giving counsel, guidance, and support. They are also the link to the church office, and handle the office and financial support, as well as keep the ministry connected to the entire congregation.

The Right Fit

It doesn't serve people well to have just anyone participate on a team. The goal is to find people for whom the task or project will be a “**right fit.**” When people are in their “sweet spot,” they can exercise and use their gifts, and find joy in serving. When it isn't a right fit for someone, that person suffers, as well as the whole team and the ministry. Part of forming a team is asking what kind of people does the project call for, and who would make a good fit for this team. Who would be a good co-chair or apprentice? Who is passionate about this ministry? Who has a servant's heart? Who is good with details? There needs to be a variety of gifts and personalities, tailored to the needs of the project.

The Benefits of Teams

Working with teams at first can seem like more work for the staff person. Many of us are simply accustomed to doing things ourselves, rolling up our sleeves and just getting it done. To organize a team, meet with them, and work with people who are not full-time church professionals may seem like a lot of wasted effort. However, that is an illusion that can be easily unmasked by considering the following benefits of working with teams.

When working with teams, you...

Accomplish more because “many hands make light work.” When you spend energy on teams and you have the right people in the right spot, you can do the work of 5 or 7 people, which you could never do alone. Ministry gets multiplied when more people are involved.

Get more creative ideas. The people you bring to your team will think of things you never dreamed up. Why limit the creative energy to only one brain? With the experiences and insights of multiple people, you will find a more well-rounded concept that may appeal to a broader group.

Find help when things get tough. If you are working on a project all alone, and something goes wrong (which it inevitably will), you are the only one who can work to solve the problem. It’s an awful feeling when something goes wrong at the last minute and you have to frantically work to salvage your project. If you have a team, however, you can call for help, and your team is there to help bail you out.

Have built in promotion. If you plan an event for families, and you plan it yourself, you have one family that is guaranteed to show up – yours. If you have a planning team of 7 people, including yourself, you know have 8 families to come, which could automatically mean 30 people or more. These people are also your promoters, on the whisper campaign, ready to invite friends with enthusiasm to the event they are helping to plan and organize.

Have more people to celebrate with when your event is over. If you put in all the work, then only one person knows what it really took to pull the event off – you. If you have a team, however, then the whole team can celebrate the accomplishment with you, and can join in the satisfaction of a job well done. There is increased joy.

Set up the event to be repeated. The following year, you automatically have people with experience in planning the event, and people who can give you very good feedback. If you have developed an apprentice for the team, you also potentially have a group of people who could carry out the event with less involvement from you, allowing you to focus on new projects.

Build relationships with whom you serve. Your team becomes a bonding experience with people of your congregation. Just as in a mission trip or service project, the people you serve with become bonded to you through that experience. You get to know people personally and about their personality. Especially in a large church, asking people to serve on a team with you may be the best chance to spend some quality time with that person.

Help people be connected. While every team needs to have a core group of all-stars, there is also the opportunity to have someone who is new to the church or who doesn’t yet have a place to fit in join your team. This allows them to rub shoulders with godly men and women with whom they are serving. You never know what Christian friendships will be formed and how people will be cared for by the people on their planning team. Although you are there to do “work,” it’s also about people.

A Timeline for Teams

First contact someone that could be a co-chair or apprentice, to be your right hand man or woman. Then, with that person’s help, select your team and invite them to an initial meeting. Dream about your event and talk about what it would take. Brainstorm about who else you could involve in the project. Then decide who on your team will oversee which area, and who will contact the others to be involved. At another meeting, invite everyone who is participating to go over the details of the event or to do further planning. After the event, a follow-up meeting or informal debriefing is helpful to reflect, learn, and celebrate.