

9

**COMMON ISSUES
WITH YOUNG
(OR NEW) STAFF
MEMBERS**



ChurchOps
—GROUP—

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9 COMMON ISSUES WITH YOUNG (OR NEW) STAFF MEMBERS

Young leaders don't come tailor-made and ready to go right out of the gate.

Churches don't thrive without discovering, attracting, and developing young leaders into key positions. Every italicized word in that sentence is important. It is a pastor's job to discover, attract, and develop young leaders. They don't come ready. Young pastors and leaders have to be built, and not just for any role...built for key positions. If you're a growing church, you can't afford to shelve your All-Stars for 10 years. Give them opportunity, and help them become champions.

A team of champions sounds great, but there are real barriers to doing it. From my experience, young leaders come with a pretty common set of issues, and can be difficult to lead. Here's how to overcome the 10 most common issues with young staff members.

PROBLEM NO. 1

POOR PRIORITIZATION, TIME MANAGEMENT, AND EXECUTION

This one can be tricky. Most new hires are hard workers, but a few don't know what "hard work" is until it slaps them in the face as they step into their first "real job." I've never had a young leader who didn't want to work hard, but I've had a few who didn't step into it smoothly.

Even the ones who were hard workers struggled mightily in prioritizing their schedules, and executing at a high level. Hopefully, a few of you out there have been able to hire some young leaders that knew how to prioritize, work their schedule, and execute at a high level...but it's not common. Even if you have, the majority of young leaders do not come ready for this, and need to be led.

The Solution

Lead to clarity, give them tools, and teach them to prioritize

The Steps

1. Give clear expectations.

They need a clear job description that accurately prioritizes their responsibilities and communicates where most of their time should be going.

Do they have clear goals that helps them prioritize their responsibilities?

2. Help them grow in self-awareness.

Train them to align their priorities and allocate their time effectively by walking through their weekly and monthly schedule with them. Help them discover answers to questions like: when do they work best? Are mornings or afternoons better for them for meetings? Most of them aren't self-aware yet, so guide them to see what's holding

them back and how best to complete the right work at the right time.

3. Give them tools.

What project management software do you use? If you have one, show them how to manage their tasks and projects inside of that and teach them to time block their schedule and when to work on certain projects. If you don't have one, download a free task management app and use that. Teach this rule of thumb, "If it is listed as a project or task, it should be represented in your calendar so nothing gets missed."

4. Consistently evaluate and get feedback from volunteers in your team member's area.

Typically, if things are consistently getting missed (bad execution) and high priorities aren't getting the attention they need, it will come out in those conversations. Then you can coach them based on the feedback you learn. With young team members, NEVER depend on their feedback alone because lack of self-awareness is a primary issue. While we're on the topic, it would be wise to invest in getting some assessments done on your whole team. I recommend the EQi (emotional intelligence) and Culture Index. Awareness for them and you goes a long way.

PROBLEM NO.2

BEING REACTIVE INSTEAD OF PROACTIVE

The Solution

Set boundaries, goals, and teach them to fill in the gaps without you

The Steps

1. Set clear boundaries through the job description, and priorities.

Young leaders need to know where they are free to run, and then be encouraged to run like crazy. Talk to them about, "We don't fear failure, we just learn to fail forward." It is okay to make mistakes, but own them, learn from them, and apply what you learn. It is much better to set a culture where you guide all the initiative young leaders are taking, rather than try to get them moving. Note: as a leader, you have to respond well when the mistakes do happen. If you get angry or make them feel dumb for not knowing better, you will shut them down.

2. Set clear goals for them.

It is a lot easier for someone to get up and run and take action when clear goals and targets have been established for them. No one passively hits an aggressive, strategic goal. Aggressive, but achievable goals help teach young leaders about appropriate pace and taking initiative.

3. Early on, sit down with them to go through everything that has to get done from beginning to end.

Young leaders don't just know how to fill in the gaps intuitively, and when they don't

know what to tackle they will usually revert to passivity. But, if you walk them through a project beginning to end 2-3 times it starts to come naturally to them. As you walk through the details, give them coaching and tips on how to/best practices to accomplish the different items. This will paint a picture of not just what needs to be done, but the best way to do it so they can lead out in confidence...and kill passivity.

PROBLEM NO.3

SILO MENTALITY

Silo mentality can be tough to break. Most young leaders come in with the mindset that they are there to advocate for their area. They naturally approach it selfishly, even if that isn't their intent. They can be wired to think, "I just need to take care of what is mine" and "If I crush my job it doesn't matter how the other areas are doing.

The Solution

Lead WIGs, 4DX, and expand their involvement across the company

The Steps

1. Establish a WIG (Wildly Important Goal) and start using 4DX (4 Disciplines of Execution) or something similar.

You have to get young leaders outside of their daily grind. The best way to do this is by having "Wildly Important Goals" that are organization-wide. This aligns staff members to fight for a common goal. It helps young leaders learn to not to care only about "their ministry," but to care for the whole. It also shows them how their ministry area feeds into the larger mission.

2. Include them in bigger conversations outside of their ministry area when appropriate.

They have to see start seeing the organization as a whole, and start growing in their total domain awareness. A WIG helps with this, but more can be done. Any time you can bring young leaders into bigger conversations outside of their area, do it. For example, you might have a student minister that is naturally good at social media. When your communications team is having a brainstorming or planning meeting, invite the student minister and let them start having a voice in other areas. This helps them buy in to the success of the church as a whole, not just their area. Keep in mind, this is about growing their understanding and widening their view of the ministry, not adding new areas of responsibility to their job description...so keep an eye on their task load!

3. Share these tools and resources that teach a better way:

Sticky Teams by Larry Osborne

Craig Groeschel's *Institutional Urgency 1* and *Institutional Urgency 2* podcasts

PROBLEM NO.4

POOR (OR NON-EXISTENT) DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

This one caught me off guard and burned me. What I hope you see about all of these, is I learned most of them the hard way. A lot of leaders, especially young ones, never stop and think about their "decision-making process." We all have one, even if

it isn't recognized and established. Here is what I found: most young leaders are not great decision-makers and need to be given a process to consistently make strong decisions. Decisions need to be run through a process to provide guidance, take people out of their emotions, and give freedom to make the good decisions.

The Solution

Clarify organizational priorities, and teach Diagnostic Questions

The Steps

1. Make priorities clear: Jesus > Church > Individual.

When a decision has to be made, you need an order of priorities. In the church, our order is Jesus > Church > Individual. Is what I want to do honoring to Jesus? Yes? great. Is it best for the church as a whole or for one individual? The church as a whole comes first. It is unloving to make a decision that is good for one individual if it does damage to the group as a whole. The easiest decisions are the ones that are great for all three. Most decisions are more difficult, as good news for some may mean bad news for others. Young leaders need to have it clearly established that the whole has to be taken care of over the desires of a single individual. Young leaders get in trouble here when the pressure and emotions of the individual overwhelm them. Tell them, "Do what is good for Jesus, the church as a whole, and honor the individual as much as possible in the process."

2. Give them Diagnostic Questions to help them discern:

- Is it good for now or for the future?
- Is it good for the group or for the individual?
- Is it the easy decision or the right decision?

PROBLEM NO. 5

SHOOTING FROM THE HIP

Here's the deal: no leader is as good as they think they are. With time and maturity most learn this the hard way. Young leaders can walk in with the belief they can overtake the world, but they've never had to put in the tedious work of preparation. This leads them to do what they know: shoot from the hip.

The Solution

Give guidelines on preparation, and help them build margin

The Steps

1. Give them guidelines on what an acceptable amount of preparation looks like (e.x. walking into each meeting with an agenda).

You have to paint a picture of success. For a Student Pastor preaching on Wednesday, make them send you their sermon by Tuesday at 12:00pm.

2. Teach them to build margin in their schedule.

Most young leaders don't prepare because they've never seen what good preparation looks like, and they don't know how to build margin into their schedule to prepare. Here

are a few practical tips to help them build margin in their schedule:

Limit length of appointments. When I first started, I set meeting start times, not end times. The next thing I knew two hours had come and gone. I was spending undisciplined amounts of time with people and it was taking away opportunity to prepare and organize.

Front-load your meeting schedule. Tell them to put an extra 15 minutes in their schedule before meetings, to prepare and make sure their meeting goals can be accomplished.

PROBLEM NO. 6

LACK OF PERCEPTION PRINCIPLE

I became a full-time pastor at 23. All of my ministry team volunteers were one to three decades older than me. Here is what I found: people don't really care about your age, your title, or your experience. The best leaders are both loved and respected, and those things are primarily determined by how we are perceived in short, brief interactions with people.

The Solution

Connect credibility to impact

The Steps

Most young leaders don't see this so you need to teach them:

When interacting with you, people internally ask:

- Is this the type of person I want to follow? (Do they carry themselves in a highly respectable way)
- Is this person organized? (Will they make my life easier or more difficult)
- Is this person excited and passionate about what they're doing? (is this worth getting into)
- Will I have fun working with this person? (Will this feel like work or an exciting adventure)
- Does this person really care about me? (Are they just wanting to use me for a job)

Here is why the Perception Principle matters:

- How you are perceived is the primary way in which you are received. People will relate to you primarily based on how they perceive you as a Christ-follower, a leader, and a pastor.
- How you are perceived either builds or deteriorates your leadership credibility.
- How you are perceived either builds or deteriorates the credibility of the team.
- How you are perceived is a representation of the church.

Every meeting you have, every Sunday morning interaction, every piece of communication you send out, how thoughtfully you respond when people reach out to you, how quickly you respond, how early you show up places, your body language in your interactions, and how you

present yourself...all of these things will either build or deteriorate your leadership credibility with the team and the church on a day-to-day basis. How you are perceived, determines how you are received. How you are received determines your how you are able to lead.

Pitfalls of most young leaders that you can coach them out of:

- Showing up to things late
- Communication that is unorganized, looks bad, or simply has grammatical errors
- Delayed communication
- Appearance being less than it should be for the occasion. Meetings during the week require more than Saturdays at the soccer field: flip flops, shorts, and hats don't belong on Sundays.
- Being unprepared for meetings and events
- Inability to stay calm in chaos
- Lack of urgency and pace

Teach them, if your leadership credibility is strong by having a good Perception Principle:

- More and better leaders will want to follow your leadership
- People will better respond to your requests because they trust you know what you are doing
- People will better buy into your vision because they believe in you
- People will more naturally fill the gap with trust when expectations aren't met because you have a history of high-quality work

The Perception Principle is primarily about self-leadership. And the better you lead yourself in these areas that seem small, but have a large impact, the more effective you will be.

PROBLEM NO.7

DON'T KNOW HOW TO LEAD WITH AND THROUGH OTHERS.

When I was at The Bridge Church we had a value we stole from Highlands Church in Birmingham, AL that simply stated, "You can get fired for doing ministry." Sounds harsh, but it really drove this point home: the staff member's job is not to do all the work alone, but to equip others for the work of the ministry.

You need some kind of cultural value to guide this principle for your entire team, especially new and young staff members.

Note: if you do not have well defined values, a plan to develop them throughout your church, and clarity on how they affect everything about your staff, check out a "Strategic Staffing" process I lead churches through.

You have to decide, do I want doers or leaders? Young leaders need the expectation set early on that they're expected to lead through and with others, not work on their own.

The Solution

Clarify consequences, utilize teachable moments, and lead to mindset

The Steps

1. Seize your moments.

You will get opportunities where your young staff members feel overwhelmed by their workload (despite that not being the case a lot of the time). Usually, when you dig in you will find they are wearing themselves out because they approach it as a hero instead of a leader. You will find them doing as much of the work as they possibly can. This is where you get to teach to work smarter, not harder. To work according to the principle of Ephesians 4, and be an Equipper.

2. “People don’t hate change, they hate how we try to change them.” —Craig Groeschel

Most young leaders think, “I am just supposed to tell people the plan and they are supposed to follow.” As you know, they get nowhere fast. You have to teach them how to create buy-in, bring people in on decision-making processes, and make sure their team feels heard and valued by them. Have them listen to the Perry Noble podcast titled *Coach vs. Critic*.

PROBLEM NO. 8

PROBLEM ORIENTED INSTEAD OF SOLUTION ORIENTED

People have a knack for knowing what is wrong. On the flip side, few come with a natural tendency to come up with solutions for the problems. This is another instance where a cultural value helps, e.x. “Bias towards action.” It helps to have a culture where your team knows they are expected

to take care of things, not just talk about them.

The Solution

Teach them the H3 model, limit your input, and rinse and repeat

The Steps

1. Teach them the H3 Leadership principle of bringing three solutions for every problem.

I love this for multiple reasons. First, it forces staff to never bring a problem without an idea of a solution. Secondly, when they are forced to think through three possible solutions, they bring higher quality ideas.

2. Lead them in conversation, using phrases like: “What do you think we should do about that?” and “I trust you.”

Don’t let young leaders be lazy and passive by bringing you a bunch of problems, and expecting you jump in and bail them as a hero or rescuer. Your time shouldn’t be spent like that and they need to learn to do the hard work of being solution-oriented, and having a bias toward action.

3. Repeat, repeat, repeat.

As the leader, it needs to be well established in your mind: “Anytime someone brings a problem, I ask them for their solution.” Don’t even have a conversation with them until they come with solutions. Again, this is a better use of your time and it instills the right things in your young leaders. Don’t be willing to be an “answer man/woman.” You are not a hero, you are a developer.

PROBLEM NO. 9

LACK OF GRIT, HUSTLE, AND “DO WHATEVER IT TAKES” MENTALITY

The Solution

Set the pace, teach the standard, celebrate to cultivate, and remove excuses

The Steps

1. Set the pace.

We had a value of “pace of the leader, pace of the team.” First, you absolutely have to model what you want to see. Do your young leaders see you going the extra mile? Do they see you hustling when things get ramped up, or do they see you complain? Do they see your grit when it’s crunch time, or unforeseen circumstances take half of your week away? Do they see you approach your work with a “do whatever it takes” mentality? Set the pace clearly, and let them see the standard.

2. Talk about the standard and teach how them to sell out to it.

Many young leaders have grown up thinking about a 40-hour work week. They need to “catch” the standard from you, but it also has to be “taught”...over and over again.

3. “What you celebrate you cultivate.”

Do you want to cultivate grit and hustle in your young leaders? Find examples of it happening and honor it, celebrate it, and remind them this is what selling out to the standard looks like.

4. Don’t let excuses fly.

No one is better at coming up with excuses than young leaders. Most of them are afraid of authority, and they get defensive quickly. They will have 100 reasons they think are valid as to why the project didn’t get done or the deadline wasn’t met. They will have 100 reasons why the goal wasn’t met and none of it was their fault. Don’t let it fly. Be ready for a few really tough conversations. Once you show them how those things could have been accomplished with a higher level of grit and hustle, what you will find is 80% of your young leaders rise up and hit that new level. This only happens when you don’t excuse the lower level behavior.



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ABOUT CHURCHOPS GROUP

Whether plateaued or growing rapidly, every church is a few strategic steps away from reaching the next level. We have partnered with churches of all sizes, shapes, and in different growing seasons and we have never found a church that couldn't experience even healthier and more sustained growth. Every church faces barriers and complexities that hold them back. We exist to identify those and give you the tools to overcome those obstacles and get to the next level.

Our Mission

It is our passion to walk alongside pastors and churches by giving them strategic systems and operational solutions that actually work. Instead of speaking in theories and ideas we drill down into the nuts and bolts of ministry and give you the practical steps to help you succeed.

Testimonials

"Without Matt Svoboda's strategic leadership and systems, we simply would not have been able to scale from 250 people at a single location to over 3,000 at multiple campuses in 7 years. His ability to identify and solve barriers to growth and health is amazing. Probably even more than that, his ability to structure a staff and identify the leaders necessary to facilitate growth and health is the best I've ever seen."

Josh Howerton

***Lead Pastor, Lake Pointe Church, Dallas TX
(13,000 Attendance)***

"ChurchOps has been instrumental to me in helping our church keep up with the season of growth that we find ourselves in. They bring invaluable experience to the table that allows them to help you diagnose the issues you're facing in your church and then chart a path that fits your context. This is not one-size-fits-all tips and tricks. With ChurchOps you get practitioners who know what you're facing and are eager to come alongside you to help you lead your church with maximum effectiveness. Whether you're a church of 100 or 10,000, ChurchOps can help you take the next step."

Stuart R. Owens

Pastor of Discipleship, Christ Community Church, NC (650 Attendance)