



ANCIENT FUTURE
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COMMUNITY

Five Things That Sidetrack Point Leaders

Russ Robinson

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Russ has held a variety of ministry roles in the past several years. Russ served on staff at Willow Creek Community Church beginning in 1995, first as director of small groups, and then as executive director of ministries and small groups. Prior to his staff role, he also served as an elder for four years. From 2002–2004, he was senior pastor at Meadowbrook Church in North Haledon, N.J. Russ' formal training is as an attorney, and in 2006 he founded a new firm, Robinson Payne LLC, in Hoffman Estates, Ill. Russ holds a B.A. in history from Crown College in Minnesota and a J.D. from the University of North Dakota Law School. He has great passion for the church, small groups, and ministries, and is nationally known as a consultant, speaker, and writer. He is the author of *Building a Church of Small Groups*, *The Seven Deadly Sins of Small Group Ministry*, *Walking the Parenting Tightrope*, and *Walking the Small Group Tightrope* with Bill Donahue. Russ resides in Palatine, Ill. with his wife, Lynn, and sons Phil, Mark, and Tim.

Session Description

Small group point leaders are passionate about helping others find Christ and community, yet it is often hard to move the vision toward reality. Explore five obstacles that all leaders face as they work to achieve their goals for group life, and identify the practical next steps you can take to move beyond them.

Goal

For small group point leaders to achieve their goals for group life

Diversion 1: Letting Your Strategy Trump Your Theology

Recognize the Stakes

- Keep the bar high when compromise sets in.
- Keep your passion high when you need fresh inspiration.
- Keep the plane of communication high when vision is challenged.
- Keep the sense of need high — sell the problem before the solution.

Create Your Framework for Your Theology — “The Case for Community”

- God Dwells in Community — the Theological Case
- We Are Created for Community — the Sociological Case
- The Church Should Be Built on Community — the Organizational Case

Own — in Your Gut — the Key Passages on the Value of Community

- Genesis 1:24-2:25
- Genesis 6, 17
- Exodus 18
- Psalm 133
- Proverbs 15:22
- Proverbs 18:24
- Ecclesiastes 4:9-10
- Mark 3:14
- John 17
- Acts 2: 41-47; 4:32-37
- Romans 12
- 1 Corinthians 12
- Ephesians 2,4
- 1 Peter 5:1-4

Process Time — Testing the Reality of Your Theology

How many sermons/messages have there been in your church in the last twelve months whose primary focus was community?

Is community/small group life ...	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Included in the core strategy of the church?	----	----
Expected for church membership?	----	----
Modeled personally by the majority of staff and key leaders?	----	----
Included by teaching pastor(s) in their message illustrations?	----	----

Diversion 2: Giving Up, Giving In, Giving Back: The Flight to Safety

“Nobody Told Me It Would Be This Hard”

The Reality: We Are Retrofitting a 2,000-Year-Old Church

Priestly Leadership Meets High Demands

A Culture in Decline Reversed By ... Community?

Fighting the Spiritual Battle

Concluding Question

What will make our generation different from every one since Christ modeled his small group strategy?

Diversion 3: Not Making Sober, Self-Aware Self-Assessment

Spiritual Gifts:

Primary:

- Leadership
- Administration (Management)
The ability to create systems and processes to turn vision into reality on a consistent basis.

Secondary:

- Discernment
- Wisdom
- Teaching
- Shepherding

Process Time — Spiritual Gifts of the Point Leader

Using the chart on page 8, consider your spiritual gifting as a point leader. Based on your interaction with and observation of your ministry, where would you place yourself on the strength-weakness continuum? (Remember the encouragement of Ephesians 4:15 to speak to yourself with a balance of truth and love.)

Core Competencies

(Hay/McBer research, <http://www.haygroup.com/TL>)

- Conceptual Thinker — “What?”
- Intellectually Curious — “Why?”
- Strategically Oriented — “How?”
- Others Focused — “Who?”

Process Time — Core Competencies of the Point Leader

Using the chart on page 8, consider your core competencies as a point leader. Based on your interaction with and observation of your ministry, where would you place yourself on each strength-weakness continuum?

Experience Building a Ministry, Organization, Business, etc.

Healthy Spiritual Life

Process Time — Experience and Spiritual Life of the Point Leader

Using the chart on page 8, consider your experience and spiritual life as a point leader. Based on your interaction with and observation of your ministry, where would you place yourself on each strength-weakness continuum?

“In my experience, no church has successfully launched a cell system without averaging three turnovers of leadership. In other words, pastors typically flounder twice with each cell system startup before they discern and train the right person.”
Carl George, Prepare Your Church for the Future

Point Leader Process Tool

Quality	Weakness	Neutral	Strength
Gifts			
Leadership	_____		
Administration	_____		
Discernment	_____		
Wisdom	_____		
Teaching	_____		
Shepherding	_____		
Core Competencies			
Conceptual thinker	_____		
Intellectually curious	_____		
Strategically oriented	_____		
Others focused	_____		
Experienced in building	_____		
Healthy spiritual life	_____		

Where do you as the point person need development or growth in skills? What steps can you take?

In what areas do you need to shore up weaknesses through other staff members or volunteers? What steps can you take?

Diversion 4: Ineffectively Teaming Up with Your Senior Pastor

Four Key Needs:

- Clear Backing
 - Small Group Ministry Objective decision
 - Small Group Model decision
 - Small Group Point Leadership decision

- Clear Positioning
 - Role within multi-staff situation (influence vs. authority)
 - Declarations to staff, leadership, and congregation
 - Service presence
 - Referral of problems and questions

- Clear Expectations
 - Goals — long and short-term
 - Responsibilities
 - Time — the grid
 - Gifts, abilities, and temperament

- Clear Communication
 - Rule #1: no surprises!
 - One-on-One/Weekly — Big picture, strategic issues, and people
 - Vmail/Email/Daily — Routine decisions, information, and tasks

Where do you as the point person need to engage your senior pastor? What steps can you take?

In what areas do you and your senior pastor need to take most immediate action? What actions will make the most difference in the shortest time?

Diversion 5: Providing Too Little Leadership to the Most Important Person You Lead: You¹

“The Art of Self-Leadership”

“The best gift you can give the people you lead ... is a healthy, energized, fully surrendered, and focused self. And no one can make that happen in your life except you. It’s up to you to make the right choices so you can be at your best.”

1. Is my calling sure?

- Acts 20:24 (NIV): “I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given to me.”
- “It is a great privilege and blessing to receive a call from the holy God. Our life becomes focused. We have increased energy and greater confidence. And knowing that we’re on a mission that matters adds purpose and meaning to every day. But we can only enjoy these benefits if we keep our calling sure. ... If you’ve been called to be a leader it’s your responsibility to keep your calling sure. With an open heart, seek God’s affirmation. If you don’t receive it, then pull out the stops to discern what God is trying to tell you. If you do get God’s continued affirmation of your calling, then do whatever you have to do to stay focused in it.”

Reflect:

2. Is my vision clear?

- Psalm 25:4 (NIV): “Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths.”
- “How can I lead people into the future if my picture of the future is fuzzy?”

Reflect:

¹ The quotes, points, and questions are derived from *Courageous Leadership* by Bill Hybels

3. Is my passion hot?

- Romans 12:11 (NIV): “Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.”
- “Whose responsibility is it to keep a leader’s passion fired up? ... It’s your job to keep your passion hot. Do whatever you need to do, read whatever you have to read, go wherever you have to go to stay fired up. And don’t apologize to anybody.”

Reflect:

4. Am I developing my spiritual gifts?

- 1 Corinthians 14:12 (NIV): “Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.”
- “The Bible teaches that all leaders are accountable before God for developing each of their gifts to the zenith of their potential ... Fellow leaders, are you challenging yourself to develop your gifts to the best of your ability?”

Reflect:

5. Is my heart submitted to Christ?

- Psalm 78:72 (NIV): “David shepherded them with integrity of heart...”
- 1 Timothy 3:1 (NIV): “Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach...”
- “Leadership also requires moral authority. Followers will only trust leaders who exhibit the highest levels of integrity ... So, on a regular basis I sing [a song] during my times alone with God: ‘Holy Spirit, take control. Take my body, mind and soul. Put a finger on anything that doesn’t please you, Anything I do that grieves you. Holy Spirit, take control.’”

Reflect:

- In your recent encounters, have you been consistently kind and compassionate?
- Is there any person against whom you are harboring bitterness, resentment, or jealousy?
- Are you irritable, cranky, or impatient, focusing mostly on your own agenda or needs?
- Do you have a complaining spirit, especially when others do not meet your expectations?
- Do you speak unkindly about anyone when they are not present?
- Are you a genuinely joyful person to be around these days?
- Are your conversations often self-serving or self-promotional?
- Are you controlling, often insisting on having your own way?
- Do you have a stubborn, critical, or unteachable spirit?
- Are you quick to genuinely celebrate the success of others, even when they accomplish “more” than you?
- Have you allowed anything to gain mastery over you — alcohol, drugs, internet, work, etc?
- Do you allow impure thoughts about sex to stay in your mind?
- Do you listen to unwholesome radio or music, watch unwholesome television or movies, or indulge in any pornography?
- Are you engaging in any flirtatious activity or feasting on escapist thoughts with anyone who is not your spouse?
- Do you neglect or give little time to personal prayer and reflection on God’s word?
- Have you recently lied, exaggerated, or embellished the truth?
- Have you followed through on your promises — is your word to others completely reliable?
- Do you do your work “with all your heart,” or are you just coasting along on your gifts and reputation?
- Do you have a thankful heart toward God, frequently acknowledging His blessings and goodness?
- Are you honoring God with your time, your gifts, and your finances?
- Is there any area of your life you are hiding from others to protect your image or position?
- Is there anyone you have a conflict with that you have not talked to directly?
- Is your marriage or your relationship with your kids and/or family where God would want it to be?
- Are you as fully devoted to God as you can be?

6. Is my pride subdued?

- 1 Peter 5:5 (NIV): “God opposes the proud but he gives grace to the humble.”
- “Do you want to know the best way to find out if pride is affecting your leadership? Ask ... Ask others, ‘Do you ever sense a prideful spirit in my leadership? Do the words I speak ever convey a spirit of arrogance?’”

Reflect:

7. Am I overcoming fear?

- Psalm 27:1 (NIV): “The LORD is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life — of whom shall I be afraid?”
- “Fear can be immobilizing. Sometimes I ask pastors who are grieved because their churches are dying, ‘Why haven’t you introduced change? ... Why haven’t you taken the next step? ... Why haven’t you taken a public stand?’ Often the response is: ‘Because I am afraid.’”

Reflect:

8. Are wounds or sin undermining my leadership?

- Psalm 139:23-24 (NIV): “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”
- “All of us have experienced wounds, losses, and disappointments in our past. That brokenness has helped to shape — or misshape — us into who we are today. I laugh at people who say, ‘My family of origin issues have not affected me.’ Or, ‘Nothing in my past impacts my life today.’”

Reflect:

9. Is my pace sustainable?

- I Kings 19:3-4 (NIV): “Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day’s journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. ‘I have had enough, LORD,’ he said. ‘Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.’”
- “The pace at which I’m doing the work of God is destroying God’s work in me.”

Reflect:

Books

Walking the Small Group Tightrope
Bill Donahue & Russ Robinson

Building a Church of Small Groups
Bill Donahue & Russ Robinson

The Seven Deadly Sins of Small Group Ministry
Bill Donahue & Russ Robinson

Courageous Leadership
Bill Hybels

Web Site

Willow Creek Group Life
www.willowcreek.com/grouplife