

TEAM HUDDLE

By Alfred H. Ells

Effective leadership teams make effective ministries. Teams—even the best ones—struggle when workaday minutia, tasks and deadlines take center stage. Without occasional, dedicated times of renewal, revitalization and maintenance, teams will fragment and lose their focus. As the new year approaches, consider hosting a retreat to strengthen the bonds of your team. Read on for some great team-building exercises.



RESTORE VISION

Some may have lost their passion. Some may be new to the ministry and are unaware of its history. As the leader, it is up to you to impart your vision and passion to your team. If you aren't excited about what God is doing, why should they be?

ACTIVITY #1

Create a slideshow depicting your ministry's history. Once your team understands the legacy that God has begun, they will want to be instrumental in helping it continue.

ACTIVITY #2

Set aside a devotional time at the beginning of the retreat and ask your team to reflect on three things: what they wish they could change about the ministry or their own performance, what new things they want to do as a part of the ministry, and what things the ministry is doing currently that they want to continue.

INSTILL OWNERSHIP

For a team to thrive, they must make it personal. A mission statement cannot just be a document; it must be alive in all facets of the ministry. Are there misperceptions about the true purpose of your ministry? Is your mission statement outdated?

ACTIVITY #1

The retreat may be the perfect time to involve your team in the creation of a new mission statement. See <http://leadersthatlast.org/resources> for mission statement formats and examples.

ACTIVITY #2

If your mission statement still embodies your purpose as a group, then have team members share specific examples of how it lives in the ministry.

BUILD TRUST

In *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, Patrick Lencioni says, “trust lies at the heart of a functioning, cohesive team. Without it, teamwork is all but impossible.” Your team must believe in the goodness of each other’s intentions, and believe that if they are vulnerable, it will not be used against them later.

ACTIVITY #1

Hold an open forum and discuss the positive attributes of trust: admitting weakness, confessing mistakes, asking for help, accepting criticism, giving the benefit of the doubt, etc.

ACTIVITY #2

Encourage each member to model trust by sharing a personal fear or weakness. After each member shares, ask for a volunteer to pray for that person. Continue until all have shared, and then go to prayer for each other.

RESOLVE CONFLICT

Conflict is normal, but should not be tolerated or ignored. Studies indicate that few of us resolve conflict well. You may want to spend part or all of a retreat talking about conflict, styles of conflict resolution and steps to resolving conflict.

ACTIVITY #1

In preparation, visit <http://leadersthatlast.org/resouces> for related articles and resources on conflict resolution.

ACTIVITY #2

Develop a commonly shared statement of how your team will resolve conflict with one another in a Biblical fashion. Specifying the actual steps to be taken when a conflict arises can be very helpful.

HONOR DIFFERENCES

Recognizing and honoring differences within your team helps eliminate judgment and highlights the various strengths each member brings to the table.

ACTIVITY #1

An easy-to-administer strengths test, such as the *Lead From Your Strengths assessment*, may be a beneficial learning experience for your team. You can find the *LYFS* test at a discount price at <http://leadersthatlast.org/resources>.

ACTIVITY #2

After administering the *LFYS* test, give team members discussion time to gain insight into each other's strengths and complementary abilities.

DEFINE SUCCESS

How will your team know if they have accomplished a goal if it hasn't been defined for them? Setting definitive benchmarks for your team helps them self-evaluate and set their own stretch goals as they go about their work.

ACTIVITY

Have each team member specify what success looks like for them as an individual, and how that contributes to the success of the team. Then open a time of discussion with everyone.

LOOK AHEAD

By the end of the retreat, you will have bonded significantly with your team. Put those good feelings to use. With everyone's input, develop a plan for your team to use when they return to the workplace. The execution of that plan will truly determine the success of your retreat.

ACTIVITY

Have your team look back at their devotions from the first day of the retreat. Open up a time of sharing, making sure that you take notes. They may share things that make you angry, sad, uncomfortable or inspired. Be careful not to react from your gut. Explain to the team that you will pray about the things that were shared, and develop a plan for the future with their input. The higher the standard of excellence, the more satisfied your team will be with their accomplishments.

HAVE FUN

Some experts say, "The team that plays together works better together." Constructive play is a great tool for team building. Having fun breaks down the barriers of the workplace and encourages acceptance.

ACTIVITY

Games can foster cooperation and build trust. Consider classics like Capture the Flag, Two-Hand-Touch Football, or Kickball. Ropes courses and initiative- and trust-building games also create bonding experiences in a fun environment.

UNPLUG

Choose a spot for your retreat that is conducive to the work of the Holy Spirit. You want team members to encounter God and each other, so make it secluded. An ideal location is a serene place like the Living Water Retreat Center, 90 minutes north of Phoenix.

ACTIVITY

Consider banning cell phones, watches, and secular reading material during the retreat. This will force your team to be “in the moment” with each other, focusing on what God wants to teach them.