

Building by Team: Helping Church Clients Form a Working Building Team/Committee

*Your body has many parts – limbs, organs, cells – but no matter how many parts you can name, you're still one body. As it is, we see that God has carefully placed each part of the body right where he wanted it. But I also want you to think about how this keeps your significance from getting blown up into self-importance. For no matter how significant you are, it is only because of what you are a **part** of. The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part.*

1 Corinthians 12:12, 18, 20, 24

Excellent leaders create excellent facilities. In growing your mission, improving present space, and building new facilities, draw together the leaders to serve as your building team using these criteria:

- Look at the whole, not the parts.
- Have a love and yearning for the mission of the church
- Be people of prayer and compassion.
- Look long range, not short term.
- Have the reciprocal trust and respect of the congregation and community.
- Work well together as a team.
- Bring wisdom, judgment, vision, and common sense to the team.

In short, the body has brains, so use them!

When it comes to a building program, you're going to need all the collective grey matter with which your church is blessed. But don't stop there. The very best conceptual, even commonsensical brainwork could be left floating aimlessly in the clouds unless the rest of the "body" shows some life. Hands, feet, eyes, ears and noses mobilize the mentality and activate the intellect, bringing down to earth the task at hand.

The Apostle Paul, in writing to the church at Corinth, also said: *God's various ministries are carried out everywhere; God's various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God himself is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it; everyone benefits* (1 Corinthians 12:4-7).

Within your own congregation you have the leaders you need as representative of the church. Each person chosen has individual talents and knowledge of the ministry into which you can tap. This eventual coalition is called the "building team" – with possible spin-offs into "building sub-teams" – which will consider, investigate, take action on and report all aspects of the building program. The responsibility of this delegation is a heavy one, and plays a crucial role in the success of the project.

With that in mind, here are a few gleanings when forming the building team:

The Building Team

There are many ways to organize a building team, but by far the best model is a small building team with congregational task forces related to the core team. This method allows you to build a stronger mission and better facilities in less time, with less money, have more fun, with more volunteers, raise more money, and serve more people in mission. The focus is on the whole. You gain the leadership of a core building team that in turn involves many persons in the congregation in task forces. The core team provides a clear sense of direction and unity to the whole. The project usually progresses on schedule and within budget.

Most importantly, the group behaves as a team. They pool their best wisdom and energy. It's not a collection of competing interests, nor do the team members behave like a loosely connected gathering of individuals functioning as a committee.

The building team's marching orders are the congregation's mission action plan. Most likely, members of your building team have been involved in helping create your plan, and they count on the facilities to live out the mission objectives of the plan. They don't start over. They don't create an alternative future. They don't become preoccupied with the new building. They are faithful to your congregation's mission action plan.

Team Size

The optimum number for most churches is somewhere around five to seven members. Each core team member represents larger task forces organized around specific ministry needs. If you want your building plans to reflect accurately the congregation's needs, wants, and dreams, it's important that the building team include, through the task forces, a representative from every ministry group within the church. The more representative of the full range of ministries in the church your team is, the more balanced and comprehensive your building plans will be and the easier it will be to build consensus within the congregation.

A suggested team makeup could be the team leader and leaders in the following areas:

- Prayer
- Communications
- Finance
- Growth and Ministry
- Construction
- Furnishings
- Building Operations
-

Obviously, the choices are many. The key is to provide leadership to the project without becoming large and unwieldy. The utilization of task forces (see below) will allow maximum congregation participation while maintaining effective team working relationships.

Qualifications for the Building Team

Bill Couchenour of Cogun, Inc. has developed a great list of qualifications for the makeup of the building team. In David Letterman's Top Ten style, here is a summary of his thoughts:

1. **Knowledge of the Building Industry** — I have intentionally made this the least of the 10 requirements. All too often, church leadership will set up a building team of people that are familiar with the building industry but unfamiliar with where the church is headed. That is disastrous. Knowledge of the building industry is helpful but not a substitute for any of the other qualifications.
2. **Planning Skills** — Skills in analysis and decision making are necessary to move forward in a positive direction. Creativity or thinking outside the box is often necessary to find the right solutions.
3. **Diligent Worker** — Most building team members volunteer their time and talents. They usually have families, careers and other circumstances that will make demands on them. Building team members need to be diligent enough to faithfully fulfill the responsibilities of the team without sacrificing the other important aspects of their life.
4. **Varied Background** — A building team with varied backgrounds will give you well-rounded insight into solutions for the building process. It will also help you gain broader support from the congregation.
5. **Independent Team Player** — I am aware of the apparent oxymoronic quality of this characteristic. What I mean here is the ability to be an independent thinker and not be swayed by someone else's emotional but illogical idea. But team members should also be

able to work as a team so that they support every decision 100 percent when they leave the meeting, regardless of whether or not it was their idea.

6. **Common Sense** — There are a lot of outside forces and agendas that come to bear on a project. Common sense is often the tool that dismantles the outside agendas that can be disruptive to moving forward with the right project.

7. **Respected by the Congregation** — For a building program to progress, let alone succeed, it will need the support of the congregation. The members of the building team must have the integrity that engenders trust. They will be administering a substantial amount of the church's resources.

8. **Emotional Intelligence** — Daniel Goldman describes the four major components of emotional intelligence as: self-awareness, self-managing, social awareness and relationship management. Emotional intelligence is the ability to manage your emotions and the interests of others to accomplish the highest purpose.

9. **Thorough understanding and uncompromising support of the strategic ministry objectives of the church** — For the project to be a success, it must meet the needs of a purposeful ministry strategy. If the building team is unable to understand and articulate the ministry strategy, it is unlikely the resulting facilities will be exactly what the church needs.

10. **Exemplary Christian Life** — Each building team member should conduct his life in a way that garners respect from the members of the church as well as the community. I almost didn't include this because it seems like it would be automatic. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. Sometimes things that go without saying need to be said more often.

The top two qualifications are non-negotiable. They cannot be sacrificed regardless of what else an individual brings to the table. With qualifications one and two alone, you could develop an excellent building team. But for the building team chairperson the top three are non-negotiable. That person will need emotional intelligence to navigate the inevitable challenges and opportunities that accompany a building program.

An excellent building team is not one that is unified in its perspective and insights. It is the variety of these perspectives and insights that gives breadth and depth to the team's work. An excellent team will, however, have a reconciling attitude that enables them to move forward together in the process. Strive for **community** of spirit, not **unity** of perspective. The goal of any project is to develop the facilities that best meet a purposeful ministry strategy and comprehensive financial plan; while keeping the focus on the ministry.

Building Team Progress

Early in the building team's work together, it is important for the team to organize how it plans to work together. Your building team will make excellent progress when, in the beginning, you help each person on the team create a description of what each plans to contribute to the team. Listed below is a short list of characteristics in teams that achieve exceptional results. Each characteristic plays a specific and vital role in making the team effective.

- Common Purpose
- Crystal Clear Roles
- Accepted Leadership
- Effective Processes
- Solid Relationships
- Clear Communication

It is highly recommended that the building team, when formed, participate in a workshop or training event to integrate these characteristics into the pattern and processes that the team will be utilizing throughout their journey. By effectively applying these principles and practices, teams will avoid some of the pitfalls and problems that derail many ministry initiatives.

Task Forces

Each task force will be guided by your long-range plan, including the key objectives for mission, shepherding, worship, groupings, leadership, and staffing. Then each task force pools its best wisdom for its distinctive area of concentration. The nature and number of task forces will vary from one church to the next. A task force develops a realistic, achievable set of objectives for facility needs.

Its job is not to develop a shopping list of wants and wishes. The group will do some visioning and dreaming. Then it will take the important step of deciding what will be genuinely helpful to the mission.

The task force does not behave like a group of children turned loose in a candy store. It develops a responsible, reasonable set of suggestions for its area of work. Just as the building team does not reinvent the church's long-range plan, neither do the task forces. The mission action plan is developed first, precisely to guide the building team and task forces in their work with facilities. Depending on the building project, churches may find these types of task forces helpful:

- Parking, landscaping, exterior lighting, signage
- Worship, sanctuary, chapel
- Music groupings
- Audio/video/lighting
- Interior design
- Fellowship, recreation, community life center
- Food service
- Families with children
- Families with students
- Single adult ministries
- Senior adult ministries
- Adult ministries
- Administration and volunteer's work areas
- And many more!
-

Task forces consist of eight to fifteen people. Those in the group bring wisdom, distinctive competencies, and experience suited to the specific focus of the group. They network with many people in the congregation and community to gather the best solutions possible. A task force works for a short time in a highly intensive way. Then it is on call to the building team for any further assistance it might render. It functions as a streamlined, short-term team, and it discovers the best suggestions for its distinctive area.

Congregational Planning

Frequently the building team may sponsor a congregational planning event to gather the best ideas of a wide range of people. The art is to encourage the involvement of as many people in the congregation as would like to participate. The spirit is to count on excellent ideas and suggestions. Everyone-entire families, children, and students-are encouraged to participate. If your church would like to consider this option, please contact me for details.

Looking to the Long Term

As you contemplate building any new facility, look to the future of your mission. Match the size of the building to the size of the mission. The larger the mission, the larger the building.

Too many congregations underbuild. They focus on the size and cost of the building and lose track of the size of the mission. They focus on the initial cost and not on the long-term mission for years to come –helping persons with their lives and destinies in the name of Christ.

Think of the decisions made there that will shape people's lives and destinies, strengthen the quality of life in the community, and advance the mission across the planet. Think of the prayers that will be lifted there. Build well the mission and the mortar!

Shepherding the Mission

A building project provides a key time to enhance the shepherding that is offered in the church. If you develop a solid shepherding team, people stay with you through the trials and tribulations of a building project. With a building project, everyone—the building team, the task forces, and the congregation as a whole—invests more time and energy. Sometimes we feel stretched thin. The encouraging work of a shepherd helps people through this.

It is precisely during a building project that the shepherding of the pastors and gifted leaders is crucial. When you embark on a building project, pay particular attention to the congregation's needs for care. We shepherd in relation to the building project itself. We don't wait for the anxiety levels to rise or until after key decisions have been made. We shepherd in advance; our care is proactive. We tend to lose our perspective on who we are and whose we are when we allow a building project to overwhelm us. What helps us keep our perspective is the skillful shepherding of a pastor and gifted shepherding leaders.

Bob Adams

Certified Church Consultant, *NACDB*

JH Batten, Inc.

Information Sources

Building for Effective Mission, Kennon Callahan

Proven Concepts of Church Building and Finance, Patrick Clements

Before You Build, Bill Couchenour

When Not To Build, Ray Bowman

Planning & Building Church Facilities, Gwenn McCormick

Church Growth by Design, Roe Messner