

Two Critical Responsibilities of Leaders

by Malcolm Webber

Every leader knows very well that there are never enough hours in the day to invest personally in all the issues that are competing for his attention. To be effective, he must delegate many responsibilities, as well as, whenever possible, the necessary decision-making authority.

However, there are certain responsibilities that the leader simply cannot delegate to others. Thankfully, the number of such responsibilities is not large. In fact, there are two critical areas that uniquely require the leader's personal attention: vision and leader development.

First, it is the unique responsibility of the leader to attend to the ministry's strategic direction.

- The leader establishes the vision.
While many other people can and should be involved in establishing direction, the top leader is uniquely positioned to obtain and synthesize the many valid and important perspectives that are necessary to shape and, when necessary, revise the overall vision.
- The leader communicates the vision both internally and externally. The leader is in the best position to articulate the vision and how it connects to long-term impact. He has the clearest understanding of the big picture and he usually possesses the broadest credibility to reach others with a coherent strategic message.



- The leader initiates and maintains alignment with the vision. "Alignment" means that constituents both understand the vision and own it. By definition, the leader is the only one with the complete (albeit imperfect) overview of everyone and everything involved, as well as the relationships to potentially help everyone to agree and move ahead with clarity and unity to fulfill the vision.
The second unique responsibility of the leader is leader development. Leader development is not an optional extra; its neglect creates collective ceilings that limit the growth and long-term impact of otherwise highly fruitful ministries.
- The leader should know whether team members collectively have the capacity to achieve the vision. He is in the best position to know the current gaps.
- The leader is also in the best place to know realistically the future demands and what those demands will require of existing and emerging leaders. He will not personally be involved in every

aspect of their development, but he must be involved in shaping its form and content.

- Effective leader development is not merely a collection of training programs, but it is primarily an organizational culture – shared beliefs, values, attitudes and actions (Eph. 4:11-16). The nurturing of this culture must start with, and will usually not rise above, the leader.
- The leader possesses certain strategic and conceptual capacities that he must personally pass on to the next generation of leaders if the ministry is to survive and thrive (2 Tim. 3:10-17). The top leader is, again by definition, the only one who can give sufficient attention to top leadership succession. Research suggests that the majority of leaders are so busy with operational demands that they neglect this.

Many other management tasks flow directly from these two areas, including allocating resources, assigning people to priorities, role definition, project initiatives, evaluation and improvement. Thus, the leader must be very careful to not become so caught up in the daily needs of operating the ministry that he neglects to pay sufficient attention to these two critical responsibilities (Acts 6:1-4).

If there are only two things that you do well, do these!

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Leadership Letters author **Malcolm Webber** was born in Australia and came to Christ in 1980. Malcolm has a Ph.D. in the field of organizational leadership and enjoyed a successful background in the business world. He has worked with Christian leaders

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