

FORMING A LEADERSHIP TEAM

What is a leadership team?

A leadership team is a small group (4-6 people, including the pastor) of key leaders that help the pastor advance the vision he has for the parish.

The pastor relies on this team to help him make strategic decisions that will further the vision and ensure implementation of those decisions. This team ultimately shares responsibility for the success of the parish's mission with the pastor.

Why form a leadership team?

A pastor who desires to engage the parish in a process of pastoral conversion for the sake of mission will benefit from this new approach to leadership.

The pastor can't change the culture of the parish as a lone ranger, nor is it wise to make big decisions without healthy and constructive feedback. He needs the collective support, gifts, and investment of a team of key people who share the same vision and passion. Whether he has a paid parish staff or not, a leadership team is crucial to have shared responsibility, ownership, and accountability for the vision and plans for evangelization.

What does a leadership team do?

A leadership team addresses practical, tactical questions related to structures, methods/ ministry models, programming, use of resources, etc. that either further or hinder the realization of the vision.

The team also assists the pastor with implementing decisions that are made. Every meeting should end with clarity about the answers to two questions: 1) What did we decide today? 2) Who needs to know about it?

How do I form a leadership team?

There are **four non-negotiable criteria** for members of a leadership team:

1. *Unanimity of vision:* Must share a fundamental commitment to and passion for the vision of where you want the parish to go.
 - Disagreement should be based on differences in strategy (the best way to get there, or the *how*), not the vision itself (where you want to go).
 - Identify key staff and parishioners who have influence, who can be carriers of the vision to others, and who are capable of having strategic conversations. (The basic definition of leadership is the ability to influence another person.)
2. *Healthy Conflict and Trust:* Trust allows team members the freedom to express different opinions, engage in conflict, and hold one another accountable. It also allows other team members to challenge the pastor without fear and prevents conflict from turning into politics.

3. *Balance of Strengths*: Choose team members who bring natural strengths that balance your weaknesses. Tools like the Clifton Strengths Finder (Gallup) can be helpful for this.
4. *Vulnerability*: Team members must be real and vulnerable with each other about their fears, especially in the face of uncertainty as they begin to navigate uncharted waters.

Other important factors to consider are:

- Time commitment: Team members must be willing to commit to weekly meetings.
- Teachable: Must have a willingness to learn and desire to grow. They may also need to do some study, reading, listen to podcasts, watch videos, etc.
- Team players: Must be able to see their area(s) of responsibility in light of the entire parish.
- Self-Awareness & Maturity (Emotional & Spiritual): These qualities allow team members to engage in healthy conflict and vulnerability to a greater degree.

How does a Leadership Team interact with current structures (i.e., Pastoral Council, staff, etc.)?

General Thoughts:

- Pastors have the freedom within the bounds of Canon Law to arrange structures to better serve their pastoral leadership.
- This is a brand new team; **pastors do not have to disband existing structures** (parish staff, finance/pastoral council, etc.) to create it. Explaining the purpose clearly to anyone affected or concerned is absolutely essential in order to avoid misunderstandings or hurt feelings.
- Initially, as the parish structures begin the gradual shift to the new models, the Leadership Team will likely focus more developing & casting vision, while the Pastoral Council spends some on necessary maintenance & reporting – eventually, the Pastoral Council should be the vision-casters and strategic planners, and the Leadership Team should be the vision-carriers and practical implementers, but do not expect to achieve the ideal situation overnight.
- Perhaps pastoral and finance councils from multiple parishes can meet at the same time and place. This would enable the pastor to connect with all in one meeting by rotating between groups.

Pastoral Councils:

- Generally speaking, pastoral councils will be larger representations of the parish as a whole (anywhere from 8-12 people). Monthly to quarterly meeting should be adequate.
- Their focus is to **offer consultation** on the long-term mission and vision of the parish. They will not be tasked with the day-to-day implementation of the vision.

Leadership Team:

- The focus of this team is **executing the day-to-day implementation** of the vision.
- Your team may include key senior **staff members** or an associate pastor if you have them, but could also include key parishioners who share the vision. However, it is most important that your team members demonstrate the characteristics listed above. Nor does the group necessarily need to reflect general representation of the parish; it needs to be a group of people the pastor can lean on to drive the vision forward.

- **The group needs to be small** – 4 to 6 people total (including the pastor). The larger the group, the more difficult it will be to schedule a consistent time to meet, especially if the team includes people who are not staff members.
- The team must remain **focused on measurable outcomes** and determine ways to evaluate effectiveness and success in light of the vision and mission of the parish.

Recommended reading and resources:

Divine Renovation: Bringing Your Parish from Maintenance to Mission by Fr. James Mallon (in particular, Chapter 7, “Leader of the House,” pp. 233-282).

The *Divine Renovation Guidebook: A Step-by-Step Manual for Transforming Your Parish*

- Chapter 2 (“The Team: The Pastor Can’t Do It Alone”): Characteristics to look for in members of a leadership team, plus practical exercises to create a balanced, cohesive team and an assessment tool to evaluate the health of the team.
- Chapter 3 (“The Prep: Being Strategic about Being Strategic”): Examines the paradigm shift that creating a leadership team entails. Explains its relationship to existing leadership structures (pastoral council, parish staff, etc.).
- Chapter 8 (“The People: Staff and Leadership Culture”): Assists with envisioning and creating a culture of leadership within the parish.

Divine Renovation media resources:

- Divine Renovation Podcast & YouTube Channel
- Watch Fr. Mallon and Ron Huntley talk about their Leadership Team at the 2016 Divine Renovation Conference (starting at 43:40):
<http://livestream.com/SaintBenedictParish/events/5601915/videos/126348910>

Many of the ideas found in the Divine Renovation materials were adopted from Patrick Lencioni and can be found in the book *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business*. While operating principles of the leadership team can be found throughout the book, “Discipline 1: Building a Cohesive Leadership team” (pp. 19-72) is particularly helpful.

Resources from Patrick Lencioni are also available on *The Amazing Parish* website:

<https://amazingparish.org/>. See especially:
<https://amazingparish.org/building-blocks-resources/#1468944328758-e6e9b7a3-01a0>
<https://amazingparish.org/get-started/#team>