

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



*10 Leadership
Lessons from Google*
for Your Church

RICH BIRCH



Google is by far one of the most prevailing organizations of all time.

Beyond their amazing technological insights and excellent execution, Google is a leadership engine.

Google has more than 85,000 employees. Stop and think about the sheer size of that operation. Last year alone they added over 5,000 new people to the team. That's 25 new hires for every day of the working year. [ref] Google has also more than doubled the number of team members in the last five years alone and isn't showing any signs of slowing down the grow.

Beyond its size are the amazing lessons Google can teach us about leadership for today and into the future. The organization is forging the way to lead and manage in today's culture. **Google has been engaged in a long term project to study the most successful managers within their organization and has widely shared these learnings through [Project Oxygen](#).** Since 2008, they've been tracking what it takes to be a great manager, and as church leaders, we'd be wise to learn from their findings.

Here are Google's 10 traits of effective managers with some direct applications for us as we serve with our local churches. We'd love to hear your thoughts on these qualities and what areas you think we as church leaders perhaps need to work on more than others!

Is a good coach

The point of great management is that your people win at the end of the day. Rather than seeing yourself as the star of your department or area, recognize that the people on your team are the real heroes. Your role as a leader is to be a great coach that equips your team to achieve the highest possibilities.

Church leaders who go out of the way to recruit, train, equip and release other leaders will always be the most valuable players on any team. We are in the "human development business," so our primary job is to maximize others.

Empowers team and does not micromanage

Can I get an amen?!

Your value as a church leader isn't in leaning over the shoulders of your people to make them to do things a particular way. Set the direction and results you are hoping for and then leave the "how" to your people.

The tough part about empowering people is that at the beginning, your team may do a worse job of it than if you just did it yourself. However, in order to scale up our influence and draw more people into the leadership community, you need to empower your team to take their piece and run with it.

Creates an inclusive team environment, showing concern for success and well-being

Relate before you delegate.

It goes without saying that as church leaders we need to show concern for others, but it's not an immediate conclusion that leaders within the church should also slow down to provide pastoral support for the very people doing the ministry.



Personally, I've had to learn over the years that the process of leading the people God has entrusted to me is a contributing factor to the outcome we're driving towards. The teams that you and I lead need to be a microcosm of what we are looking to happen in the rest of our church. What if your team was the measurement of the depth of care and support people receive from your church?

Is productive and results-oriented

Results matter. A lot.

This is a great tension point to the previous leadership lesson above. What "quantifiable results" is your ministry seeing? How are you measuring (with numbers) what is happening in your area? If you can't measure the changes taking place in your ministry, that could mean there is nothing really happening.

Is your small groups ministry releasing more leaders this year than last year?

Does your worship ministry have more team leaders today than last quarter?

How many first-time guests did your team receive contact information from this week?

What you measure matters.

Is a good communicator — listens and shares information

Leadership comes with a microphone.

Not every leader has to take the stage and give the primary message on the weekend. However, every leader absolutely needs to be engaged in the process of communication. Understand what your people are thinking and clearly communicate with them on a regular basis. This includes not only speaking in front of various sizes of groups but written communication as well.

Most church problems are communication problems. The right people don't have the right information at the right time. Solve that and you will be a leader.

Supports career development and discusses performance

The mission is bigger than your team. Your people are more valuable to the wider church in ways beyond just serving on your team.

When was the last time you asked someone on your team about what they want to do long term with the church? Better yet, when was the last time you articulated a future for your people beyond what they are doing now?



In the church I think we sometimes tend to forget the fact that people are choosing to serve with us when they have the option of serving in other places as well. If we want to keep our best people, we need to clearly define what their next steps are. This forward moving focus is not only for staff members but also for volunteers.

Good people are wondering where they are heading next. We need to show them some possibilities.

Has a clear vision/strategy for the team

How does what you do in your area uniquely contribute to the vision of the church?

Years ago, I remember talking with a member of our facility team about what they did. I was thanking them for doing such a quality job week in and week out. They proceeded to explain to me that it was great honor to ensure that our facilities supported the ministry. They told me their goal was to remove every distraction so that when guests arrive they can have a great experience and focus on what the ministry was saying to them. I love this! Go and do likewise. Getting really clear on the importance of your piece of the puzzle is key to making the vision of the church happen.

Has key technical skills to help advise the team

While 60% of leadership is transferable from one area to another, you still need some baseline skill to lead within your area. If you're leading the creative arts people, then you need some level of creative ability to help your team succeed. The folks coaching small groups need some time in the saddle actually leading a group in order to grant them the credibility to speak clearly to their teams.

Do you need to acquire some new skills and abilities in your area at church? Great! Go get some training!

Collaborates across Google

Play nice with other areas.

Why is it that the kids' ministry people can't seem to get along with the student ministry team? Or why do the communications folks seem to be at odds with the worship people? Why does the finance team seem to not be able to talk with the "creatives" in the church?

Leaders who prevail within the church are bridge builders between teams. They see their role as one that helps their team connect with other teams, and they understand they are one part of the puzzle, not the whole. They are firmly committed to seeing the entire church succeed, no matter what that means for their personal team.



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Is a strong decision maker

Move fast. Break stuff.

The biggest risk in most churches is indecision, not overly aggressive risk taking. By definition, there are times as a leader when you will be looked at to make decisions. While you can gather information and input from your team, you will need to be the one to pull the trigger and deal with the impact. We need more leaders in the local church who are less timid and more willing to make a decision.

Leadership is about moving people from where they are to a more desired future; leadership is about change. That means you will inevitably need to make decisions about what is a better future to pursue and then take action to move your people towards it. In very real way, leadership is about having the guts to make decisions and then deal with them.

What can you learn from Google?

Which of these leadership traits do you think you need to work on? If you had to pick one as an area for growth, which would it be?

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