



by Bob Adams

Building by Team: Creating a Working Partnership in Your Church

Excellent leaders create excellent facilities. If your church has a building project in the future, the creation of a building team is one of the first orders of business. This team will have the responsibility of managing the whole building process. With some foundational thoughts from author Kennon Callahan's *Building for Effective Mission*, here is an expanded outline your church can use to organize an effective team.

Team Selection Criteria

In order to plan and deliver a successful church building project, bring together the leaders who will 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.

Within your own congregation you have all the leaders you need as representatives 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 "task forces"—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.

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 maintain stronger ministries and better facilities in less time, costing less money, while raising more funds, and serving your community in multiple ways. The focus is on the whole. You gain the leadership of a core building team that in turn involves many persons in the congregation through 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 with 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.

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.

Task Forces

In order to obtain maximum congregation participation while maintaining effective team working relationships, the creation of multiple task forces is encouraged. Each task force will be guided by your long-range plan, including the key objectives for mission, 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 church's ministry goals.

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 groups
- ▶ Audio/video/lighting
- ▶ Interior design
- ▶ Fellowship, recreation, community center
- ▶ Food service
- ▶ Children
- ▶ Students



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- ▶ Single adult ministries
- ▶ Senior adult ministries
- ▶ Adult ministries
- ▶ Administration and volunteer's work areas
- ▶ And many more!

Task forces consist of eight to 15 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.

First Steps

One of the most important steps for the building team is organizing how it plans to work together on the building project. In order for the team to be a cohesive unit, each person on the team needs a clear description of what they plan to contribute to the team. Listed below are some characteristics in teams that achieve exceptional results. Each characteristic plays a specific and vital role in making the team effective.

- ▶ Compelling Purpose
- ▶ Clear Roles
- ▶ Recognized Leadership
- ▶ Effective Processes
- ▶ Sound Relationships
- ▶ Accurate Communication

It is highly recommended that the building team, when formed, participate in a workshop or training event to integrate these characteristics into the patterns 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.

The way the team **comes** together will be an important indication of its ability to **work** together in the coming months. By following the suggestions above, your church has an excellent framework to not only plan for the building, but to **BUILD** the church (your people) in a consistent and caring way. ❖

Bob Adams, church consultant at J H Batten Inc., is a new "old hand" in church facility design and management. After serving in church administrative and ministry positions for more than 23 years, Adams joined the J H Batten team in 2004 in order to further his passion: helping churches make the most of ministry opportunities through effective use of all their resources. This passion, along with J H Batten's strong construction background, makes a strong team for churches seeking to expand their ministries. For more information, contact Adams at badams@jhbatten.com, call 336.595.8917 or visit the J H Batten Website at www.jhbatten.com.

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