

How To Build An Effective Ministry Coalition

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I. Aspects of coalitions -

A. Geographical scope - Regional +County-wide + City-wide + a sector of the city + a single neighborhood

B. Organizational nature

1. Loose, informal network of churches, ministries, groups (community-based, agencies, etc.) coming together for a set time to tackle a specific problem.

2. Formal association - 501-c-3 with Board of Directors, structure, staff, budget, go after funding, etc.

C. Area of Focus - Dealing with one issue only or several.

II. Characteristics of coalition partners - Look for those who share these attitudes and convictions:

A. Attitudes- Unity, harmony, cooperation, selflessness, Kingdom focus (not big ego Lone-Ranger)

B. Actions - Networks, shares ideas, resources, experiences, skills, information, struggles, fellowship, prayer.

III. Why Network ? - The Importance of Faith-Based Coalitions -

A. Illustrates true nature of the Church - & the power of the Gospel - Eph.4; Rom 12

B. Promotes Biblical stewardship -

C. Urban areas, **problems** encountered are **too big & complex** for any one church, denomination or group to tackle alone.

D. There are “**gaps**” in meeting needs in your communities that **you can fill**.

IV. Some Preliminary Principles -

A. **Keep the Gospel central** - Help churches reach their communities with the Good News in Word and deed. (Not just providing services)

B. **Be “issue-driven”** Avoid uniting around pet theological doctrines, politics or personalities

C. **Work through/include existing networks & smaller coalitions** to build synergy.

D. **Celebrate cultural diversity** - Make the effort to listen to, understand and learn from those who are different from you.

V. Issues You Will Have to Wrestle With Early On -

A. **What should our coalition look like?** Informal or formal ?

B. Who is going to “champion” the network? There will need to be one person, called of God, willing to make it a priority.

C. Who should be included in the coalition? Defining membership

D. Will we focus on one or two issues (foster care/juvenile justice/HIV-AIDS) or many ?

E. Counting the Cost: Where will funds personnel, resources come from?

F. Why won’t folks understand/get behind what we’re doing ? Don’t be disappointed or surprised when those you talk to about the what/why/how of your efforts don’t initially “get it”.

G. Hurry up and wait – Wait for God’s timing and provision. 2Chron 32: 7,8

VI. Steps for Getting Started:

A. Know your Community – Do demographics & research to discover what the needs & community assets are.

B. Form a steering committee or task-force representing your city geographically, ethnically, denominationally and socio-economically.

- **IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER:** Assign someone to head up a group to assure consistent, fervent prayer. Spiritual mapping, tearing down strongholds, plugging into local prayer movements.

C. Develop a mission/purpose statement, core values and a preliminary action plan

Must be agreement on these issues. Ownership comes when members see they can meet their goals via collaboration.

1. Mission – Our long-term objective. Answers why we do what we do, who we minister to, what we do, where we do it and the results we expect.

2. Core Values – Those key priorities & principles that shape our calling as a coalition.

3. Strategy – How we get from where we are to where we want to be.

4. Some purposes/goals to consider:

a. Help local congregations to “be the church” in more effectively ministering the Gospel their communities in Word & deed.

b. Strive to become an “honest broker” by bringing the faith community together with others to build trust, cooperation.

c. Help link up/network believers via gatherings, communication, training, etc.

d. Include government agencies, businesses and community-based groups in your coalition.

D. Re- Strategy - Suggestions for What to offer a Local Ministry Coalition:

1. Information/Community-building - A well conceived web site as an information and resource “one-stop” for your city or region.

2. Capacity Building - Informational/equipping workshops, networking venues, friendship, pastoral support, encouragement, prayer, professional services, gifts-in-kind, funding information, resource sharing, special speakers, technical assistance, help with strategy/planning, financial management, Board development, etc.

3. Neighborhood-based ministry centers - To better illustrate the nature / facilitate the effectiveness of your coalition, consider involving members in “neighborhood centers” in different geographical sectors of city.

4. Advocacy - Linked together, the combined voice of churches, ministries and community groups can be used to raise awareness of key issues in order to influence and involve the broader community (as well as public policy makers) to help bring God’s Shalom to your city.

E. Other Points to Consider

1. Communication is Key - Develop, maintain good, open and regular communication, both formal and informal.

2. Be Out and About - Coalition building is hard work but it pays. Initially, you really have to get out and meet folks. Be patient, persistent – it takes time to build relationships & trust.