

# **BUILDING A BIBLICAL BRIDGE**

## **SEVEN PRACTICES OF EFFECTIVE MINISTRY** (by Andy Stanley & Staff)

### **The Dilemma**

Churches are notorious for creating competing systems

Imagine the advantage if every member of the church understood that certain practices were critical to the success of our mission.

We should create simple statements that instantly remind members how and why we do what we do  
(7 Practices)

We need to establish language that our leaders can use to coach future volunteers. (7 Practices)

These are not the same as our mission, but they are strategic in accomplishing our mission.

They are not the same as our values, but they determine how we apply our values.

### **These 7 Practices help to:**

- a. Protect the simplicity of our organization
- b. Keep staff and volunteers moving in the same direction
- c. Create environments that are focused and relevant
- d. Evaluate success
- e. Share our style of ministry with other churches

### **The Roles of the 7 Practices:**

- |                               |   |                                  |
|-------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| I. Clarify the Win            | = | fuels momentum                   |
| II. Think Steps, Not Programs | = | protects our alignment           |
| III. Narrow the Focus         | = | points us toward excellence      |
| IV. Teach Less for More       | = | guarantees that we stay relevant |
| V. Listen to Outsiders        | = | keeps us focused on growth       |
| VI. Replace Yourself          | = | assures us of longevity          |
| VII. Work On It               | = | positions us for discovery       |

### **Practice #1 Clarify the Win**

Question: What is the most important thing?

Application: The best way to fill seats is to win.

1. Keeping score helps everyone involved stay informed about the condition of the organization.
2. Most churches don't have a reliable system for defining and measuring what success looks like at every level of the organization.
3. Too many churches define wins by head count.
4. We will define a win in terms of transformed lives.
5. Clarifying the win simply means communicating to everybody what is really important and what really matters.
6. Nothing hinders moral more than when team members are pulling against one another.
7. Clarifying the win helps your team stay on the same page and you can manage resources more effectively.

Four steps to clarifying the win: (define what is important at every level of the organization)

1. Sum up the win in a simple phrase.
2. Keep the win as specific as possible.
  - a. When you clarify the win, it is like marking a specific destination on a map...its easy to know when you win because you arrive.
3. Restate the win frequently and creatively.
  - a. Good leaders develop the habit of reminding everyone what is really important.
  - b. Communication is the key to winning.
  - c. Whatever we are using as a scoreboard needs to be in constant view of the leaders.
  - d. Strive to say the same thing over and over in different ways.
4. Meet to clarify the win at every level.
  - a. You can't stop at the top of the organization.
  - b. This process must be implemented where practical ministry happens.

## Practice #2 Think steps not programs

A good step is...

1. Easy
2. Obvious
3. Strategic

Application:

1. Before you start anything, make sure it takes you where you need to go.
2. If you don't know where you are going, no strategy can be effective.
3. Think steps, not programs:
  - a. Most churches overload in programming.
  - b. We must choose to fight for simplicity.
  - c. There is a distinction between steps and programs.
  - d. **When you think steps there is a fundamental difference in you perspective. The primary goal is not to meet someone's need, but rather to help someone get they need to go.**

where

1. Step defined: "One of a series of actions, processes, or measures taken to achieve a goal".
2. **When you think programs, you start by asking what is the need. When you think steps, you start by asking where do we want people to be.**
3. We strive to take people from where they are to where they need to go.
4. Once you know where you want people to be, you must figure out how you are going to get them there.

Thinking steps for spiritual growth:

1. Think specifically how to help people move to the next stage of their spiritual growth.
2. Every ministry environment should also help to build relational bridges.
  - a. Discipleship happens most naturally in the context of meaningful relationships.
  - b. Meaningful relationships develop most naturally in the dynamic of active small groups
  - c. Discipleship happens best with a group of friends doing life together.
  - d. **Small group involvement is our goal because it is the best place for individuals to experience ministry, accountability and life change.**

Environmental Resources:

1. Environments of a church can work as steps to move people down the relational path.
2. We began to categorize every environment as either:

### **A Foyer:**

The largest of environments  
An entry point for the unchurched  
Relational goal = make people feel like guests  
Strives to change their minds about the role of the church and Christianity in their life

### **A Living Room:**

Medium size environment  
Focus = people network & meet one another  
Goal = people walk away feeling like they have made friends  
Important for people to see the potential relationships here  
We want priorities to change in favor of moving towards the Lord  
Goal = people consider participating in a small group context

### **A Kitchen Table:**

The most intimate of environments  
Small groups where people should be comfortable enough to have meaningful conversations about their life and faith  
Small group members should begin to feel like family  
This environment is an optimal place for a person's faith to grow & life to be transformed

### How To Create An Effective Step:

1. Every step should be easy
2. Every step has to be obvious
3. Every step must be strategic
  - a. If a step is not strategic, then it is not really a step to somewhere
  - b. Once you have defined the optimal environment where you think people can be disciplined, ***everything you do*** should be positioned to help them get there
  - c. "Sideways energy" results from creating less than strategic steps which actually complete with other more critical steps

### **Practice #3 Narrow the Focus (Do one thing and do it well)**

Do fewer things in order to make a greater impact

1. "Devoting a little of yourself to everything means committing a great deal of yourself to nothing."
2. Your potential to make an impact with your life is directly related to your willingness to narrow your focus.

Application: Churches with A.D.D.

1. Natural tendency to drift towards complexity
2. Ministry becomes diluted when it flows in too many directions
3. It's always dangerous to confuse activity with results
4. Churches are notorious for sacrificing long term growth for short term progress (i.e. the ministry "menu" philosophy)
5. Churches feel constant pressure to provide programs on the basis of needs.
  - a. The need focused approach is an attempt to satisfy insiders
  - b. If we fuel the neediness of the congregation, we will create an inwardly focused church.

## Create Brands:

1. Narrowing our focus means creating environments as distinctive brands
2. We must decide which image we want to become primary in the minds of our target audience
3. Church is a very general concept... most people are not looking for a church. What people are looking for is something relevant to their life situation.
4. Branding environments empowers us to communicate to those needs
5. To make an environment a distinctive brand we must do 2 things:
  - a. Identify a primary target group
  - b. Design each environment to do one thing
6. Doing too much in any environment may confuse people
7. Attach one word or short phrase to every environment to “brand” its distinctiveness (see examples on pg 110)
8. *Important:* don't force an environment to do something it is not designed to do.
9. *Important:* It is critical for everyone to understand the environment's design
10. When you create distinct brands you let everyone know what to expect and help leaders to meet their expectations

## Build a Team of Specialist

1. Develop a team of specialist that may not do everything well, but are experts in the areas assigned to them.
2. Reducing the responsibilities and activities empowers the staff to become individual specialist
3. Experts tend to implement more effective strategies

## Narrow is the Path

1. The more you focus each environment, the greater the relevance
2. The more you focus each environment, the better the connection (i.e. teens will connect, but teenage girls will connect better, but ninth grade girls will connect even better)
3. The more you focus each environment, the higher the quality
4. The more you focus each environment, the stronger the impact (focus is why a river has more force than a swamp)
5. Narrowing the focus is all about deciding to do less in order to be more effective... Creating a “not-to-do” list will help in this matter...

## **Practice #4 Teach Less for More**

### Application:

1. Say only what you need to say to the people who need to hear it
2. A good coach focuses on the fundamentals
3. Less is more:
  - a. You can improve how much people learn if you teach less
  - b. Narrow the scope of what you teach to cover less information
  - c. Limit what is taught to only those things people need to hear...
  - d. You must learn to prioritize information (all knowledge is not equal)
  - e. Good teachers begin by identifying what is most important for their students to know
4. Teach with the end in mind:
  - a. When you have established a vision for each stage of a person's life, you have established a way to measure what you teach

- b. When you teach with the end in mind, you are forced to prioritize what you teach...
  - c. Keys to remember:
    - 1. All Scripture is equally inspired
    - 2. All Scripture is not equally important
    - 3. All Scripture is not equally applicable
  - d. The goal of “teach less for more” is to identify and package a handful of must-know, can’t-be-without, age-appropriate principles for each target group
  - e. Every area of teaching must streamline & prioritize curriculum...  
 Scripture that helps someone understand the following is key:
    - \* Salvation
    - \* Grace
    - \* Faith
    - \* Etc.
  - f. The key is to take the time to decide beforehand what the big issues are for each group
  - g. Every class/teacher should be equipped with a master plan that specifically identifies what they want someone to become as a result of what they teach.
5. Four steps to teach less for more
- a. Decide what you are going to say
  - b. Decide to say one thing at a time (too much info has a canceling affect)
    - \* Focus on just one truth/principle and you enhance the potential of every listener to really “get it”
  - c. Decide how you are going to say it
    - 1. Appeal to a variety of learning styles
    - 2. Use tools to amplify and clarify what is said/taught
    - 3. When an audience gets confused... they disengage.
  - d. Say it over and over again
    - 1. What is worth remembering is worth repeating
    - 2. Repetition is how we learn
    - 3. Presentation (not information) is what engages a student’s imagination.
    - 4. The problem is not in finding new info... but rather, making a better presentation of God’s timeless Truths
6. Why churches teach MORE for less...
- a. It’s easier to just pile information on people...
  - b. If you teach one principle, you have to creatively amplify and explain it until it is thoroughly understood
  - c. Too many churches have been turned into classrooms
  - d. Learning more about one thing requires more study

The 1<sup>st</sup> four (of 7) practices keep the organization in alignment...  
 The last 3 practices require a personal change for the leader.

### **Practice #5 Listen to Outsiders**

Ask questions of outsiders and then listen

- 1. The question to ask is what can be learned from the people we are trying to reach.  
 \*\*\* Secularists would refer to this as (niche) market research.
- 2. We have to admit we don’t have all the answers.

Application:

- 1. Focus on who you’re trying to reach, not on who you’re trying to keep

2. Thinking outside:
  - a. Some of us have been in church for so long, we've forgotten what it's like to never attend
  - b. We don't know how unbelievers think anymore
  - c. Unfortunately, most new churches are still modeling old existing churches
  - d. Most churches today are "insiders reaching out to insiders"
  - e. Outsiders are growing more disinterested with the insider's churches
  - f. Jesus addressed this issue radically with his parable of the one lost sheep
3. We must **find the balance between reaching outsiders and growing insiders**
4. **We cannot make decisions based on who we will keep at the cost of who we will reach.**
5. Listen to insiders who listen to outsiders:
  - a. Build environments that are "safe" for insiders to bring outsiders
  - b. Challenge all insiders to make outsiders the priority
  - c. Every person should be responsible to make a personal investment in someone's life & bring them to an environment
  - d. When insiders invest in outsiders... something changes.
  - e. The heart follows the investment... resulting in an authentic relationship between the insider and the outsider.
  - f. We need insiders to prioritize the needs of outsiders above their own
6. Listen to organizations that are reaching outsiders:
  - a. To effectively listen to outsiders, you must learn their language
  - b. Look to secular experts that KNOW the language/triggers of outsiders

## Practice #6 Replace Yourself

Resist the natural temptation to protect yourself and your position.  
 Great leadership needs to be developed through a system of apprenticeships  
 This practice applies to every leader.  
 This process helps to avoid burnout.

Application:

1. No matter who you are, someday, someone will replace you
2. Don't do things that force the organization to be built around personalities... Rather, work toward replacing yourself
3. Commit to having the organization/ministry driven by a vision!
4. Failing to develop a strategy to replace yourself will:
  - a. Force talented people to remain in the wings
  - b. Cause potential leaders to exit the organization
  - c. Stifle needed insight
  - d. Hinder your ability to recruit volunteers
  - e. Limit the growth of your ministries
5. Applaud those who applaud others!
6. Position your volunteers to recruit
  - a. Our volunteer force is our most critical resource
  - b. Volunteers hold the keys to the fulfillment of our vision
  - c. Volunteer involvement will grow exponentially if we make it the mission of every volunteer to recruit another volunteer.
  - d. People respond to personal invitations (not announced needs)
7. Teach what you know:
  - a. Most effective way to train people = model through apprenticing

- b. You are not responsible for knowing everything about a ministry... BUT, you ARE responsible for handing off what you DO know.
  - c. Don't let what you don't know stop you from apprenticing someone...
  - d. Your responsibility is to teach what you do know!
8. Three steps to handing it off:
- a. Reproducing more leaders to do more of the same things is the only way we can consistently meet the growing demands of more small groups...
  - b. Three steps to making a successful hand-off:
    - 1). Break it down – each step must be broken down into clear, doable steps
    - 2). Hand it off – (don't keep a grip on what should be handed off)
    - 3). Let it go

## **Practice #7 Work on It**

Most leaders see themselves as a part of the system...they work in the system and forget to work on the system. A leader in the system will have a hard time working on the system. You can't manage what you can't measure.

Application:

- 1. Take time to evaluate your work – and to celebrate your wins.
- 2. Even the best need a time of focused training and practice
- 3. We need to be consistently evaluating both our performance & strategies
- 4. No matter how good the system is... evaluation can produce tremendous benefits
- 5. Build margin into the calendar:
  - a. Margin needs to be a key part of your overall strategy
  - b. Schedule consistent times to break away from the battle and assess your plan and performance
  - c. You cannot evaluate something if you stay in the middle of it too long.
- 6. Weekly story time:
  - a. Make evaluation part of the weekly routine...
  - b. Ask all leaders the same question each week: “What did you see, hear, or experience this week that makes you feel we have successfully fulfilled our mission?”
    - \* When the stories stop coming in, you know you're no longer effective
- 7. Confronting the facts:
  - a. There can be no “sacred cows” or sacred programs
  - b. An atmosphere of trust is critical when facts are addressed candidly
  - c. Debate can be healthy where trust and the best assumptions reign
- 8. If you want a behavior repeated then you need to reward it.
- 9. Critical question: “Am I consistently carving out the time to work ON the ministry?”