Developing a Covenant of Team

Understandings (COTU)

You, in your role as team leader, need to develop a Covenant of Team Understandings (COTU) which will enable potential team members to understand how your team will function. A copy of your COTU should be on file with The Church at Brook Hills since it spells out your relationship with them. Try to keep this brief. It will generally spell out the relationship of your team members to you, to one another, and to The Church at Brook Hills.

Consider the following points as you develop your COTU:

1. People follow someone who leads. The COTU, coupled with the team’s strategy paper will display the vision and the process through which the team will pursue that vision. Both papers together should inspire confidence and vision!
2. Do as much as you can to enable team members to picture what team life will be like. The COTU helps team members understand what is expected of them and how decisions are made.

1. Keep in mind your audience—the prospective team member. They will likely be

looking for two things: (1) direction from the leader and (2) freedom to take initiative. It is not easy to pull these two contrasting things together. Keep this in mind as you develop your COTU, trying to balance leadership with their freedom to serve.

1. Use your COTU to share ideas on why you believe this team is going to get into the community, stay in, grow, make disciples, and plant multiplying churches.

5. If you are in the process of drawing prospective team members onto your team, you should enlist their help in writing the COTU. The more input they have, the more ownership they will have. As part of the COTU, you should **develop a one-page team covenant**, which defines the relational expectations of the team and how conflicts will be resolved. After your team is formed, those added to the team will sign on to an already existing covenant.

You should let potential team leaders know your strengths and weaknesses and how you see them complementing you. Why do you need a team in the first place? People need to be needed.

Specific questions a COTU should address:

1. Summarize briefly (a sentence or two) the team’s vision: What is the end-vision? What is our specific people group? Are there any non-negotiables in strategy? (This will be more thoroughly developed in your Strategy Paper).
2. Who makes life-style decisions? Where to live? Apartment? House? As single families or as a team? What do I have to agree to before I leave Birmingham?
3. How are team decisions made?
4. How is conflict to be resolved? What recourse is there if the conflict is with the team leader? (Put yourself in their shoes!)
5. What if team members determine that they should not be there after arriving? What is the exit procedure? How soon can they leave? If they need to leave the team how much notice is expected?
6. Are team members expected to be fluent in the people’s language? If not fluency, what is minimal expectation and how much time does team members have to learn this amount?
7. What skills am I expected to have before I get to your team? How do I really know that I am ready to go?
8. What about theological issues? Are there any theological non-negotiables such as charismatic leanings, etc? What kind of person would be most comfortable on this team? (Of course, all members from The Church at Brook Hills must be in agreement with the church’s theological views.).
9. What happens if the team leader feels called to another area and leaves behind a remnant of the team?
10. All team members are accountable to Jesus, one another, and to The Church at Brook Hills. The only exception would be that team members who are not members of The Church at Brook Hills have no official accountability to the church. Therefore, what is the team’s policy (if any) for receiving non-Brook Hills’ team members and accountability?

1. Who is responsible for seeing that the work is kept in high profile in the sending church? What kind of coaching or mentoring are we going to get from outside the team?
2. Are there any restrictions on the team for the first year? (Visits home, vacation, training in other places?)
3. How do you envision team life? Will the team meet for worship? Prayer? Training? Socially? How often? Where? Will there be differing roles for men and women? Will you accept single men and women on the team?
4. How often will team meetings occur to discuss and pray about the church planting work in the community? Are all adults expected to be present during these meetings?
5. What if I have problems in my family? Who will I go to? Will there be discipling of younger members by older ones? What if my wife is a member of the team with me, who is responsible to shepherd her? In what areas?
6. What sort of reporting procedure will be provided to The Church at Brook Hills? Who will be responsible for this each month?

\*\* Adapted from Dick Scoggins, *Building Effective Church Planting Teams*