

SmallTown.Church | *Navigating Speed Bumps*

SmallTown.Church Conference - Hal Hardy

I believe many speed bumps in ministry are caused by leaders, specifically senior pastors, who aren't clear with expectations on the front side of a working relationship.

- could be specific job description
- the new hire understands that there are times when all of us will do things that aren't necessarily on the top of our "Strength-finders" gift set

Here's a good way to be proactive in changing seats on the bus with volunteers as well as paid staff: Feel free to use this phrase, "I am committed to you as a brother (or sister) in Christ, not just because of what specific role you play here in this organization."

If and when you need to move someone to a different seat on the bus, they must understand it's not necessarily a demotion, it's just a "seat change."

Today, I want to address what a healthy transition looks like. The things I'm about to share DO NOT apply to you firing or "dismissing" (politically correct terminology now) an individual.

Rule #1—Sow seeds of HONOR

I've never had honor bite me in the butt, but dishonor has come back to haunt me.

The best transitions are those when both parties show honor throughout the process.

Rule #2—The more visible the role of the person transitioning out, the more **public** the recognition should be.

I've had church leaders challenge me on this one. I've transitioned like corporate mega church leaders taught me, but I've learned that in small town America you can't treat people like that. I'm not saying to throw them a party on a Sunday morning, but there needs to be a public display of honor if the other party was in a highly visible role.

Obviously, we don't call attention to a greeter or usher who is moving and taking a job in another state and stop a Sunday morning worship service to inform people. Our church exists for the people who are not yet with us. We're not here to coddle Christians but to reach the lost.

Ask yourself this question: If I'm a first or second timer, how does the make me feel?

Rule #3—Write out a clear timeline for transition

People will think the worst if you don't make it clear.

2 questions to answer for the person transitioning out and the congregation:

1. What now?

2. What next?

1) What now? (calendar timeline)

Ex: Details of last day, who will be informed and in what order

This is the timeline we used for our most recent transition of a high visibility staff member.

1. Employee informed me of his desire to go
2. I emailed a Plan of Transition to my Overseers, Trustees and 2 Non-staff leaders
3. Employee and I went over the timeline at 10am on Monday
4. Informed my staff of employee's transition at 12:00 on Monday
5. Employee, myself, 2 Trustees and 2 church leaders (non-staff) met. It's a type of "exit interview" where the others can ask the person transitioning out if there is any reason other than the one stated why they are leaving.

Side note: One great question that was asked was "What would you tell your successor?"

The reason we added this exit interview was we wanted everyone to be on the same page, saying the same thing and showing honor during the transition.

Awhile back, we had one person say one thing to me and even his team, but weeks later changed his story. Even though there was another person in the room with us at that time, the transitioning party still stated another reason other than the one told us. Then it was "he said, she said". And I thought, next time I'm going to bring in more influencers in the process.

6. Inform leaders at the All Leaders Monthly meeting (7pm that night)
7. Inform the employee's direct team of transition that Sunday
8. At every meeting inform teams that at our United Night Worship service (every other month worship and communion service) we will be announcing transition and publicly praying for he and his wife on stage thanking them for their investment in Highlands Church.
9. After Highlands United Night people may post on social media blessings and encouraging words for both the transitioning party and the church and senior leaders of the church

Honor up, honor down and honor all around.

2) What next?

Ex: Who is filling that role, what is vision for that department and how does it tie in to the overall vision of the church

During times of transition and/or crisis, *over* communication is of utmost importance.