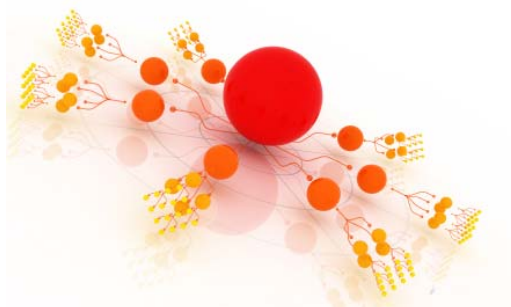


## Establish reproducing communities

by Robert E. Logan

CoachNet® International Ministries



Main goal: Describe how you will start and multiply groups.

### Articulate your philosophy of group life

For healthy growth, your church needs a holistic small group system in place. If small groups are "add-ons," you'll find yourself restarting groups every year. What you do in small groups needs to be:

- thought through carefully
- consistent with values and vision
- designed to multiply

To articulate a philosophy, start by defining your core values. Examples of core values in small group ministry might include:

- prayer
- community, relational, people-based
- innovation, creativity
- evangelism, discipleship
- growth oriented
- decentralization of ministry
- empowering laity and leadership
- mobilizing and equipping laity
- multiplication of groups and leaders
- leadership development

If your philosophy of ministry includes training leaders, mobilizing the laity and reaching the harvest, your small group system must be structured to include them.

### Questions for consideration:

- What types of groups do you plan to have in your church (i.e. disciple-making, recovery, prayer, accountability, topical, etc.)?
- How will you structure your small group ministry?
- By God's grace, what will your group life look like in five years?

## **Determine the ministry flow**

Like the human body, there are whole systems that need to be considered for a healthy, functional church. A general ministry flowchart helps you clarify your model of ministry and visualize how people will enter into and become a part of your church.

The ministry flowchart is not designed to show the leadership structure of the church or the flow of oversight and authority. Rather, it can help you see how each facet of your church links together into an integrated ministry. Determine the pathways to guide people through assimilation.

### **Questions for consideration:**

- What are the pathways and processes for people to become fully devoted followers of Christ?
- What are the ministries your church will offer?
- What relationships facilitate people taking the next step?
- What communication is necessary for all of the ministry systems to function?
- Draw your ministry flowchart, based on all of the ministry teams and group life.

## **Birth a prototype group**

### **Why a prototype group:**

A church is birthed when the first group emerges with people who have been invited through contact with an initial leadership team. Like a baby, this group has a lot of growing and changing to do. What it does might not exactly look like what an "adult" church will look like, but it will share the basic DNA of the church.

When the prototype group is functioning properly, you can replicate this to multiply your church.

### **Who to ask:**

Identify and train potential leaders from the pool of people you've gathered. The best potential leaders are not necessarily the ones who talk the most or who have been Christians the longest. Rather, look for those who are most faithful.

### **Look for people who:**

- Have influence with their oikos and who are not hesitant to share with their friends.
- Have grasped the vision of the church, who are beginning to demonstrate the values of the church in their lives, and who are active in sharing their faith.

### **Invite participants:**

When you invite people to the group, share with them what you have seen in their lives that has motivated you to ask them to join the group.

Be clear that being a part of the group does not mean they will be leaders immediately or that they have to be leaders. Rather, they are being invited to explore what being in a group is all about with the opportunity to serve using the gifts and abilities God has given them.

### **Train and build relationships:**

How you train your first leaders is as important as what you train them. If you want to train them to lead interactive groups, train them in an interactive small group.

The prototype cell is both a leadership training group, and a harvest group. The most difficult aspect to accomplish in a short period of time is developing a sense of community.

As the community aspect of the group strengthens, the tendency is to invest more heavily in forming good relationships with each other, rather than to see the Lord win others. Continually help the people in your prototype group to network with unsaved friends and invite others.

### **Questions for consideration:**

- Who can you ask to help you birth a prototype group?
- What is your strategy for inviting participants to your small group?
- In what ways do you plan to build relationships in your group?
- What is your plan for training leaders?

### **Replicate groups organically**

Before replicating the prototype group, ensure that the proper DNA is in place. You'll want to decide to what extent you want to see certain essentials functioning in other groups. Some essentials might include:

- Evangelism
- Interdependent community
- Care/integration of children
- Spiritual growth
- Mobilizing gifts
- Raising leaders
- Pastoral care

Through apprenticing, coaching and in-service training, you'll develop a group of leaders who can go on to replicate other groups. Here are some options for multiplying groups:

- In a large group, the leader and the apprentice each take members to start new groups.
- The leader leaves to pioneer new group.
- Apprentice leaves to pioneer new group.
- A new group starts to reach a different people group.
- A new group starts to reach a different neighborhood.
- Multiply using geographical considerations.
- The mother cell continues to meet as individuals start their own cell at different times and locations.

When these characteristics define your group, it is about time to multiply:

- More than 12 people attending regularly
- The house is starting to feel too crowded
- Scheduling is becoming a problem
- Two different ideas are emerging about group direction
- Some groups members are driving too far to attend and participate fully in cell life
- People are beginning to attend sporadically
- Apprentice leaders are trained and functioning
- Members hesitate to bring anyone new due to size
- Leaders are feeling burned out

It is crucial to take your group through a clear, reproducible process:

- Have leaders share their sense of urgency for multiplication with the cell group and ask the group to be in prayer.
- Give time for members to voice reservations and excitement about the prospect of multiplication.
- For several weeks, following a joint worship time, divide into two groups for discussion/sharing/prayer with the apprentice leader giving direction to one group.

**Questions for consideration:**

- How can you develop a healthy process for groups to multiply organically?
- What are some ways that you can transition your groups during times of reproduction?
- What are the ways that you plan to train leaders to multiply their own groups?

**Resource leaders appropriately**

Provide support and encouragement. A good coach guides people in the direction of effective resources that will be the most useful for reaching goals. Some avenues for resourcing include:

- Coaching
- Leadership communities
- E-mails
- Training events
- CoachNet

**Questions for consideration:**

- How do you resource, as a leader?
- What are the ways that you encourage your leaders through resourcing?