

Bold Vision Takes Better Leaders

Work yourself out of a job.” You’ve heard this before, but why is it often so difficult to do?

Work yourself out of a job. What does that really mean?

On several occasions, staff have approached me and asked, “You don’t literally mean, lead so well that I don’t have a job anymore, do you?” My answer is of course not. But I can understand how that might be confusing, especially if a staff member is new to a leadership development culture.

What does the phrase “Work yourself out of a job” mean to you on a practical level? Could you explain it to someone? Is it part of your personal practice?

Let’s unpack this a little.

[A bold vision requires more and better leaders.](#) If the vision is big, it continually requires more leaders to help carry the growing weight and responsibility of leadership. The current size of your church determines whether or not you need one more leader or one hundred more leaders today.

If these new leaders truly are to help advance the mission, they must be empowered. To empower leaders to lead, you have to let go. It’s necessary to give them the keys and let them drive. Empowerment doesn’t mean they do whatever they want. Like driving a car, there are rules of the road and training is required. But you/we must let them make decisions and figure out how to make progress.

Essentially, working yourself out of a job is about making progress and advancing mission so that you are needed to do a new role, and someone else takes part or all your current role.

This transition requires letting go of the old to take hold of the new. It involves trusting someone to do what you did.

Why is it so hard to let go?

1) It’s your baby.

Whether you’ve led a killer big project for two months, directed a team for two years, or lead the whole church for twenty years, you’ve no doubt poured your heart into it. You’ve got blood, sweat, and tears invested. Bottom line. You care! That makes it incredibly hard to let go.

Kevin Myers is the founding pastor at 12Stone. And I’m still impressed how he handed me the keys 16 years ago for half of his job! The church is his baby, but he let go!

2) You’re not convinced they can do it as good as you can.

Don't feel guilty, in fact, join the club. It's natural to think the person you hand the keys to can't or won't do as good a job as you. But here's what I've learned over the years. They often do a better job, **especially if you train and develop them well.**

3) You might feel threatened that you are no longer needed.

Because there is always so much to do at any church, there is more than enough leadership work for everyone! There is a condition. You must *continue* to grow, keep improving and making a real contribution so that you remain a valuable part of the team.

The reason you, (or a team), selected the person to hand part or all of your job to is that they were rising in skill and ability. You have to do the same.

4) Change is difficult.

No matter how long you have led, or how good you are, change is difficult. We all experience the same thing on a feeling level. "What will they do with my baby?"

I remember Patti and me spending thousands of dollars, and investing huge time and energy to have Mexican Saltillo tile placed throughout our home in San Diego. The whitewash and glaze made our new flooring stunningly gorgeous. The new owners jackhammered it all out, filled a huge dumpster with it, and put in carpet! WHAT?!

I've experienced a similar thing in ministry many times. **Change is part of the process and necessary for progress.**

5) You don't feel appreciated.

You may not feel like you received all the honor, attention and appreciation deserved for all you did. Getting honest with yourself about that is OK. But, if you will allow me to be a bit blunt, **you must get over it.** Let it go. Confide with a close friend, talk to God about it, and then let it go. God knows, and that's what counts. If a few others close to you know, you are blessed. That's enough.

Set your eyes upon and focus on the new that is before you. Keep developing new leaders.

> [Read more from Dan.](#)