



Training Church Planters

See Chapter 17 in *Global Church Planting – Biblical Principles and Best Practices* (Ott and Wilson 2011)

The discussion of selection and assessment underlines the fact that church planting is a complex endeavor that requires a set of character and personality traits, spiritual disciplines and practical skills and experiences. Training does not make someone a church planter – God does. He calls, prepares and gifts men and women to begin new kingdom communities. Church planters could be called spiritual entrepreneurs who obey the Great Commission by starting new kingdom communities.

In the western world, when we think of training, we go right to content because training is knowledge driven. However, the starting point should rather be the mission God has given church planters, and qualities that are needed to fulfill that mission. Only when the outcome profile is written, should questions of scope (content) and sequence be addressed. When addressing the profile of a church planter in a given context, character requirement and educational level should not be forgotten. Finally, what delivery system is needed to cover the skills, character issues, attitudes and ideas needed for the mission?

What are the steps to developing a training plan for church planters?

Church Planting Purpose

Define the mission and specific tasks that will be expected of church planters in your context. A house church leader is different than a pastor of a 300-member congregation and an apostolic church planter will need different skills than a pastoral church planter.

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Church Planter Profile

Define the profile of the church planter that is needed. What are the essential qualities and competencies a church planter must have? Consider character traits, social and task related skills, knowledge, and family qualifications. The section on assessment will help you.

Overall Training Design

Pray about the training. Ask God to help you with an integrated Training Design: An integrated design will combine several carefully sequenced learning experiences. There is a natural learning cycle that works like this:



In Appendix C we present several training models that combine cognitive learning with guided experiences. The balanced models for preparing church planters that have been used with success:

- An internship that includes small group learning, within a church that plants churches
- An intensive training followed by a short-term Missions project helping to plant a church in another culture
- Self-study and mentoring by a church planter while working on a church planting team

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- A combination of intensive training (Boot Camp) with personal coaching during the first year of church planting
- An academic program with several classes and practicums.
- Modular classes at a Church Planting Training Center with guided experience

Many things should be considered when designing or selecting an integrated training model, including practical factors like cost, accessibility, facilities. After you read the examples in Appendix B you may want to use one of these models, adapt one, or design a totally new one. The key is being able to say why. These questions may help you:

Consider some effective church planters. How were they trained? What tools were used and who guided the process?

What learning environment is most favorable to their development – an internship, a series of workshops, a class, on-the-job training with an experienced church planter, or a combination of these?

What common errors need to be avoided?

How will principles of indigenous ministry be integrated in the plan?

What can you learn from other movements multiplication is taking place?

How will this training contribute to the multiplication of healthy, interdependent, self-supporting, indigenous churches? How might it hinder that multiplication?

Is the training you are considering reproducible with local resources?

Scope of Training

List key ideas and topics that should be part of a church planter's basic training.

Outline the scope of the training needed. What do you wish you had been told before you first started a church? Eliminate anything that isn't necessary.

Are Biblical foundations included?

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Are the topics practical enough (what a church planter would want and need to know)?

Do the topics correspond to the church planter profile?

Are you concentrating on the basics (much can be learned “on-the-job”)?

How will a balance be achieved between the personal dimensions and strategic dimensions of church planting?

Will church planters do a self-assessment and make a personal growth plan? Will family issues be considered?

How will they be prepared to raise support or be bi-vocational workers?

Select the 12 most important topics that should be covered.

Sequence of Training

Put the topics in order according to the needs of an apprentice church planter. Training should be learner-driven and should provide the needed tools and concepts then they are needed. Consider what needs to take place BEFORE the training event, DURING the event, and AFTER the event.

1.	5.	9.
2.	6.	10.
3.	7.	11.
4.	8.	12.

What should apprentice church planters have experienced before the basic training?

What learning experiences should take place during training?

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What individual or group assignments should be incorporated into the training?

What experiences or assignments should be expected after the training?

Delivery System

List formative experiences that church planter should have. Be specific. Rather than “evangelism” write “building a relationship of trust with someone from another culture and sharing the gospel with them so that they understand.” Plan experiences like that in the training or have trainees discuss experiences they had in preparation for the training.

Who will be the trainers? How will they be prepared?

Will there be breakout sessions (small groups apply ideas to their context)?

When will they develop their Church Planting Plans, during or after the training?

Will coaches be present to help them work through issues and ideas?

How will the problem of information overload be avoided?

Should learning take place incrementally, in successive workshops with time in between to put ideas into practice?

Candidates for Training

The selection of trainees is critical. There are two dangers: 1) Not having selection criteria and inviting anyone and everyone. 2) Having selection criteria that are unrealistically high, culturally inappropriate or too narrow.

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Do the participants receive training at the beginning of their ministry so they are poised to use it right away?

What are the pre-requisites for participating?

Should candidates be sent by their local church?

Should they be evaluated in any way before taking the training?

Who should come to the training - only church planters or the entire team?

Will you train both spouses as a couple if they are married?

Should training be given locally, regionally or nationally?

Ongoing Learning:

What subsequent training is needed?

Will peer groups be formed for later peer-coaching, prayer, and support?

Will an integrative assignment like the writing of a church planting plan be expected?

Will they be coached during, between, and after training events? What will take place during the training to create a bridge to future coaching?

How will the training be evaluated, adapted, and improved each time?

Reflection and Review

Training Development

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1. **Choose a training venue.** The training of cell-leaders is best done in a cell group rather than in a classroom. Often trainees form a leadership cell group and practice the things they are learning. What is the best venue for training church planters?
2. **Gather your equipping tools.** Rather than reinvent the wheel, why not consider training resources already available? If they come from another culture or context they may not be helpful. You may want to interview others who have a good track record of training church planters to see what tools they used.
3. **Train your coaches first.** Before training church planters, you will need a team of trainers and coaches. If you develop the training with other church planters they can teach the areas in which they have been most fruitful and effective. That way they can model the values and teach from experience.
4. **Do a trial run.** It is common for trainers to do a “Beta test” (term from software designing) with a new curriculum. The Alpha test is a simulated test. The Beta test is a real training with church planters who agree to evaluate the training. Usually the trainees are specially selected because of their ability to think critically. After the Beta test training should continually be evaluated and improved but the main elements should be in place.

Other Resources

Gupta, Paul R. and Sherwood G. Lingenfelter. 2006. *Breaking through tradition to accomplish vision. Training leaders for a church-planting movement.* Winona Lake: BMH Books.

Klippenes, George. 2001. *Church Planter Boot Camp.* Minneapolis, MN: Evangelical Free Church of America

Logan, Robert, E. 2006. *Be fruitful and multiply. Embracing God's heart for multiplication.* ChurchSmart Resources.

Smith, Glenn. *How Churches Become More Effective Through Intentional Leadership Development.* www.leadnet.org Accessed September 30, 2008