

# Top 10 People Skills for Church Leaders

Church ministry is *people* ministry, and those of us who seek to sharpen our skills in this area will reap the rewards of greater support and unity among our people—and greater ministry effectiveness! I have a long way to go in this area; here are 10 skills I am working to improve.

## Expressing praise and thanks

Sincere compliments and expressions of praise are *huge* in church ministry. Most of our volunteers put in long hours and serve selflessly, not expecting recognition or reward. But leaders who notice and appropriately say thanks are wise.

## Learning names

Some people have an uncanny knack for remembering names. Not me. I must make a concerted effort to keep someone's name in my thinking when I first meet that person. I concentrate on the name and repeat it silently to myself right away. Afterward, I write it down for future reference. Remember this: addressing people by name is a powerful tool for connecting with people.

## "Pushing the envelope"

Never underestimate the power of a handwritten note. Although I value electronic communications and take advantage of social networking, I believe there's still a place for written communication. A personal touch through a card or note on a special occasion or simply to express thanks goes a long way in affirming colleagues in ministry.

## Admitting wrongs

Authenticity in leadership matters—especially when it comes to acknowledging our weaknesses and mistakes. When we do, our people can relate to us (after all, they make mistakes too). Of course, wisdom and a sense of appropriateness are needed here. But, generally speaking, our willingness to be open about our leadership decisions, acknowledging when we make mistakes, keeps others on board with us. They know we aren't perfect. Humility and teachableness are leadership strengths.

## Being courteous and considerate

Sadly, all of us can be insensitive at times. Without realizing it or intending to, we offend others through unkind comments and actions. Few things do more to undermine our leadership

than rudeness. Considerate actions (and words) bring healing and help to others and empower our leadership.

## Overlooking little hurts

Leading in a church setting has its unique challenges and often comes with more than a fair share of critics and complainers. It's hard to please everyone! And it takes a special skill to not take unkind words personally. But when we let love "cover a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8), we model forbearance and bring God's blessing on our ministries. (See 1 Peter 2:19 and 20.)

## Talking less, listening more

As leaders, we're used to doing the talking while others listen. But at times we need to stop talking and start listening. Good leaders value the opinions of others and work hard at developing their listening ability. Directing our full attention to others as they express themselves, without interrupting, is a powerful skill in influencing others.

## Extending a warm, friendly greeting

I've noticed that effective church leaders are not unsociable and reclusive. Rather, they take the lead in modeling friendliness, and focus on being outgoing and approachable. They have learned not to wait for others to speak first, but to warmly greet people by name, along with a firm handshake and a smile.

## Letting others take the spotlight and the credit

Here's a challenging one for some of us: in humility allow others to receive recognition and praise for their efforts, even when we may have had a part in their success. Effective leadership is about training and mentoring others to do the work of ministry, turning over responsibility and authority to them, and, finally, rejoicing with them when they succeed. Such leaders give honor to those to whom honor is due and are willing to share the spotlight.

## Never losing one's cool

Allowing angry words or actions to take control in dealing with critics or in conflict—no matter how wrongly we may feel we are being treated—always results in diminished leadership effectiveness. And this reminder while I'm on the subject: never send an e-mail when you're angry. I've done so and still regret it! Self-control is a mark of godly character and is foundational to good people skills.