

FILE 1159

DOING AN ASSOCIATIONAL SOCIOGRAM

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Recently, Bob Tremaine, an old-time church planter for HMB turned Texas DOM, shared with me his use of a 1960's sociological tool, a sociogram, to identify the leadership of his associations. It is rather simple. It fits our current interest in networking. It calls for you to do some observing of the pastors and other associational leaders at various meetings and in other settings as well. Who talks with whom? Who supports whose positions? Who does revival for whom? (On the negative side, who will usually oppose the ideas of another leader?)

To do this, write down the names of pastors and other leaders in two columns on a sheet of paper. As you reflect upon events and occasions, draw lines connecting persons who influence or are influenced by another. For example, you may find that Brother Jackson from the New Hope church seems to have great influence upon a set of peers and on certain kinds of young ministers. And Brother Jones seems to be the leader of the pastors in the south end of the association. And Sister Carpenter seems to be the most influential person among the lay folk.

This may mean that when you line up the support of these three folk, you can be sure that things will sail along smoothly in the Executive Committee. You may get their input on nominations to important roles.

Bob indicates that doing this exercise may save one from just running with the folk whom he may feel most comfortable with. And it may also keep all elements of the association involved. Remember that in a voluntary organization, the participants need to believe that they are benefitting in a manner commensurate with their contributions.

SOME BASIC HISTORICAL FUNCTIONS OF BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONS

- Fellowship of the churches
- Celebrative events
- Good Counsel: formal and informal
- Mediation: within and between
- Quality control of doctrine (ordination)
- Collective action (institutions, social concerns, ministry projects)
- Pastoral care
- Vision casting and strategy

Public relations
Communications
Support and care of weak churches
Train church program leaders
Promote denominational emphases
Church extension activities
Camping/youth program
Assist in pastoral search/supply
In Texas, train new pastors in how to play 42
Missions management partnerships
Management of staff and programs
Relations with other Baptist and Christian entities
Volunteers
Networks around technologies
Customization
Collective ministries (often for smaller churches)
Continuing education
Cooperation with other folk

SOME CURRENT ISSUES IMPACTING ASSOCIATIONAL LIFE

Technology
Urban sprawl
Demographic changes
Socioeconomic changes
Post modernism
Generation theory
Promise Keepers
Shifting expectations
Diversity of resources
SBC and state convention expectations
Networking with other associations
Denominational loyalty among believers
Stackpoles for associations
Decoupling work and residence
Theological differences
Church/state relations
Finances
Ecclesiology

CONSIDER THE IMPLICATION OF THESE CURRENT CONCEPTS FOR HOW WE DO ASSOCIATIONS

Mission-driven

Networking
Task forces
Outsourcing
Choices
Quality
Consultation
Mentoring
Modeling
Funding a strategy
Partnering
Diversity
Eco-systems
Mission management
Volunteerism
The New City-States
Affinity groups
Money follows mission
Customer service
Flexibility
Core values

EXERCISES

Identify the core values of an ideal Baptist association
What are the issues in your association?

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