

What Happened to Relational Skill Modelling?

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Fasten your seatbelt! This might jar you. Some obstacles keep cropping up while mentoring Church Planting Movement workers. Thus, **People Of Yes!** coaches asked highly effective church planters and pastoral trainers in many fields to report what they did, if they had struggled with any of the common snags and overcame them. Forty-three out of fifty-one replied, and the force of their emphasis on *relationships* and *skill modeling* struck me. I expected replies to deal with these two related dynamics, as some of our queries asked about them. What surprised me was how strongly nearly all the practitioners expressed the need to practice skill modeling through stronger relationships. They emphasized this also in response to queries that asked merely what the practitioners see in hindsight that they should have done differently in the past.

Some replies to our queries reflected repentance of merely teaching CPM principles in workshops, books or articles, or working the principles mechanically in the field. Two thirds of all responses urged stronger relationships, skill modeling or both. Evidently, these two related essentials have become deplorably weak in evangelical work.

Why such neglect of what the New Testament repeatedly and strongly requires as vital? Effective CPM workers passionately rue the dearth and call for more intensive skill modeling in a loving, relational, interactive way that yields immediate, practical field results. Let us shout the need to model skills and build stronger relationships! Proclaim it loudly wherever workers receive training, in mission agency offices, publishing houses and field workers' planning sessions! Most seminaries can improve this side of their instruction, work closer with churches.

The following phrases from practitioners' responses, reworded for brevity and clarity, urged deeper *relationships*:

Affirmation and recognition

Sense of belonging

Share what God is doing

Very small church planting teams... more effective

Emphasize relationship, relationship, relationship

Healthy ethos with God and each other as you plan and troubleshoot

Speak to hearts

Covenant relationships

Constant transparency, confession of faults and accountability to a group covenant

Leadership stays in contact through phone and personal visits

Interactive dialogue

Avoid monologue

Relational experience working side-by-side

Work with many persons of peace

Problems... because individuals made a decision about resources privately, not in community

Decisions made in the presence of wise elders... entail interactive communication, transparency

Recorded teaching should consist of dialogue

Firmly value interaction

Much more interaction

What Happened to Relational Skill Modelling?

Instead of “simple church”, “interactive church”
Everyone is to hear from God and share
Teach by asking questions
Inductive Bible study with lots of interaction
Inductive discussion method to apply Bible
Group discovery Bible studies
New believers dialogue in small, new groups
Get it and pass it on
Gifted teachers circulate from church to church; do not have only one teaching all the time
Obey Jesus’ commands out of love, not compulsion
Careful of folk who grasp materials and concepts but don’t apply them in socially relational ways
Avoid spending one’s time talking shop with other church planters, relating little to the unsaved
Find “houses of peace” and work through them to relate to a society
Build strong relationships with new leaders
Occasional regional gatherings of churches
Focus on whom your mentees are mentoring; hold all accountable to mentor others
“Pauls” and “Timothies” stay in contact and model for their 2nd, 3rd and 4th generations, as a grandfather does his child, grandchild, great grandchild
Leave resistant people to work with receptive folk
Be more humble with persecutors, not so resentful
Seek to build each other up rather than building one’s self up in one’s own ministry
Love those you serve
“Love God and others”
Let people feel loved than to find a “person of peace”, to build relationships with families
Have believers write their story (knowing Jesus) and in the next month share it with x number of people while eating or doing something pleasant with them
Get all believers to share their stories
Get on a first-name basis with those you witness to
Do not just follow formulas; avoid too much system
Should have started all training in homes, more focus right away on marriage & family
Train people to reach people and have them reach people, reaching one’s own family first, then one’s friends
Find receptive people and build relationships with them
Engaging children, teenagers and women
Encourage and teach women to be confident to take active roles in the Lord’s work
Have accountability to do what Jesus wants, and pass it on to others
Networking to evangelize, disciple, train leaders let churches help each other, and to coordinate God’s work
Network of relationships is base of operations
Should have recognized new leaders sooner
Leaders must be of the people, live with them
Healing
See church as an active body
All take part in church body life
Run this race together as a body
Role plays, not lecture

Encourage the confidence that “each one” has a song, a hymn, a scripture, a word
Get off the computer and work in the harvest

The following phrases urging *skill modeling* appear in practitioners’ responses:

Do not work alone

Work side-by-side

Take apprentices along while doing the work

Always take apprentices with you

Model as Jesus did

Mentors take apprentices with them as they do fieldtrips or fieldwork

Go travel with your Timothies for blocks of time

Visit new villages together

Go with new workers, find persons of peace, model

Modeling comes easier for workers that have secular jobs (lack time simply to “teach”)

Live out these seven Experiences (commands or Christ) together

Hands-on

Avoid the temptation to give so many workshops

Simply “training” is weak

Teach a little; practice a lot

Avoid abstract doctrinal teaching

When dealing with a truth, go out the same day to practice it

Stop having trainees read whole books until they are practicing the basics

Devote 1/3 to 1/2 of our training time to modeling, going out to minister, practice, etc.

Teach essential skill sets rather than merely defining what church is

Cutting-edge church planting in a movement is not the arena for teachers to emphasize their gift;
let believers with the teaching gift arise from within the new flocks.

Save eloquent teaching for leaders’ meetings

State clear goals in terms of action

Emphasize performance rather than eloquent teaching

Warn against the dangers lurking in all forms of monologue

Do not merely “preach”

Structure training so that modeling happens

Small, informal on-site training

Much less content and much more interaction

More training oral and less of it literate

Focus on modeling disciple making for maturity

More involvement on the personal level

Tell Bible stories in a way that all can easily repeat the stories,

Model and discover skills when doing participatory life-on-life mentoring

Invite only those outsider workers who model reproductive methods

Workers from the outside must bond primarily with the people God has sent them to serve, not
with fellow expatriates

2 Tim 2:2 (“among many witnesses”); focus on churches, avoid one-on-one when possible

Do not let a chain link depend on just one
Do not identify just one person as “the leader”
Review coach-apprentice relations as often as methods
Back up CPM principles with passionate love for the lost, not just love for “results”
Avoid formulated and standardized procedures
Reproduce yourself—if Christ-like, your spiritual sons will be Christ-like
Keep helping each other practice sacrificial, loving, radical, daring discipleship
Principles are helpful but should not entail constraints, controls or restrictions
Instead of merely following “principles”, follow Jesus’ words & example
If our relationship with Jesus does not remain as surrendered abiding, then mechanical effort
takes its place and spiritual power behind the methods and principals is lost
Consultants spend more time with ministry leaders, leaders with church planters, and church
planters with coaches
Tougher accountability with more modeling of skills
Grass-root training
Acting on what learners study, before moving on to another topic
Avoid over emphasizing stock, standardized courses for training by extension
Avoid getting things “right” as opposed to getting things to work
Get involved in the work before getting additional theological training

You can download the original responses to our queries, some of which we shortened or
combined for clarity and brevity: <http://goo.gl/jCFsPU>