

Sierra Leadership Network Curriculum: Month 12, Year 3

Participation in the Sierra Leadership Network (SLN) is a process of adult learning. It is the responsibility of the participant to do their assignments and seek out the necessary accountability. It is the responsibility of the participant to schedule time with their mentor, not the other way around. Here is a checklist of this month's exercises and space for comments. All useful generated materials should be placed in your Sierra Leadership Network binder. The mentor will look over the exercises and be given opportunity to add their own comments. Be sure you take your binder to the meetings at Granite Springs Church to also be available to the SLN directors.

Month 12, Year 3

Date Completed

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Generational Ministry

[Estimated time: \_\_\_\_\_]

Mentor Comments:

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Ministry Planning

[Estimated time: \_\_\_\_\_]

Mentor Comments

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Being a Self Starter

[Estimated time: \_\_\_\_\_]

Mentor Comments

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Participant Signature

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Mentor Signature

## Generational Ministry

Gather a group of church planters and you will hear talk about generational ministry: ministry targeting a demographic group as defined by when they were born. Change in our society has resulted and to a certain degree demanded change in church. The church has been changing every since the day of Pentecost. Today the church seems to change very quickly. The familiarity of church leaders with demographic language is itself something to be pondered. The church has gotten into this area through its involvement in both the philosophical world and the marketing world. To one degree or another the church can thank (or curse, depending on your perspective) the seeker movement in the 80s that consciously embraced American marketing thought and practices in order to bring church to the boomer generation. The Post-modern movement sought to respond (or react) to the seeker movement but one thing it did not shed was its use of marketing terms and tools to talk about generational ministry. Here is a paper that is a good example of this: <http://www.postmission.com/articles/millennialswood.pdf>.

On one hand missiologically this kind of study is crucial. Every church leader/planter/pastor must know their flock and in our culture part of what this means are the broad cultural generational trends and how their flock is impacted by them. Labels get thrown around, and debates or conflicts over the veracity of the “observation” of North American humanity is endless, yet it is still true that groups of people behave in semi-predictable ways as a group. Birds of a feather do tend to flock together, and tend to relate to each other in patterns. These patterns are of general importance as long as they are understood to be generalizations and constructs. Every individual will bear some similarities with these generational constructs as well as areas in which the pattern does not hold.

Whereas it is helpful and important to have some understanding of the general societal trends at this point if you as a church leader are reading anything current in North American missiology you are likely getting your snout full of it. The article listed above is a helpful introduction or overview of these realities. At the same time what is probably more important is to really study and understand the people YOU are working with. That is the most important sample you have to work with and the one that you need to know better than anyone else.

There is another element of generational ministry, ministering to people as they pass through different phases of the human lifespan. We have long had specific ministry for children and youth, but increasingly larger churches are programming for other life stages: singles, parents of young children, parents of teens, empty nesters, retirees, etc. Often the demands of these states can be as important to notice as the other demographic relational changes that are simultaneously occurring.

Your assignment:

1. Do a demographic analysis of your church. Include whatever you believe to be important, but here are some suggestions:
  - a. How do the different age groups break down in your church in terms of percentage of the whole? Who is in power? What tend to be their defining traits? What do they value? What do they resist?
  - b. How have larger generational societal trends impacted your “sample”? Do your boomers act like boomers? Do you Xers behave like Xers generally?
  - c. How have these generations and their influence shaped the overall ministry of your church?
  - d. How does the demographic nature of your congregation compare with the community it exerts influence in? Remember, only one aspect of community is geography, it can’t be ignored but it isn’t the only “community” your church influences. What are some of the implications of what you’ve discovered.
2. What do you think the leaders of your church should be paying attention to with respect to generational ministry? Is your church headed for some sort of a ministry cliff? Is it doing well reaching a particular group?

### Ministry Planning

Churches love to function on automatic pilot. Automatic pilot is an important thing for an airplane to have as long as the weather is good, the airspace is clear and the plain has plenty of fuel and elevation. Those factors, however, cannot always be assumed. Churches change because neither their environment nor their people are static entities. The result of this is that churches have to do planning, not just the nuts and bolts kind but the strategic kind.

1. Does your church have a ministry plan? If so, how old is it and is it functioning? Dig it up and take a look at it if you can.
2. Evaluate that ministry plan. Was it implemented? Was it a good plan? Did it yield good results? What happened or is happening?
3. If you were king of your church, what would you do with the plan? Would your write a new one? If so, sketch out what you think a good one for your church would look like?

### III. Being a Self-Starter

One reality of most church work is often little or distant supervision. Don't confuse this with little or distant accountability. Accountability in church work may be spotty, but it can very quickly become very real and very demanding. Most church staff, especially in smaller churches, work with very little close supervision and have tremendous latitude and freedom in how they accomplish their tasks. This freedom can be a wonderful thing, but it can also be a tremendous temptation for the person who has difficulty motivating themselves and having disciplined work habits. This is the "character" section of the curriculum, so it's time to get real with your mentor.

1. Ask your mentor or your boss for a sober assessment of you as a self starter?
  - a. Do you have predictable and steady work habits? Office hours? Etc.?
  - b. Do you accomplish your tasks in a timely way?
  - c. Are you able to take initiative and begin things that your job description broadly requires but no one has specifically mandated?
  - d. Are you able to look into the future and see not only what needs to be done for today but prepare for what is coming down the road? Can you give an example of it?
2. Ask your mentor what they have learned about living with minimal supervision and the tricks that they have mastered to help them succeed when no one is watching.
3. Create for yourself a plan to address your shortcomings or grow to greater excellence in the future and have your mentor hold you accountable to it.