



Coaching Pro Tips

Think about the good coaches you've had in your life. More than likely, they believed in your abilities more than you did. They saw you for who you were and helped you get better. Great coaches help get where you want to be, even if that's not where you originally thought you were heading.

Church planters need good coaches in their life. And Sending Churches take responsibility for their growth by coaching them through some of the most critical elements of planting a church.

Here are 5 principles to help you begin coaching your planter:

1. Focus on listening

Listening is *the* most fundamental role of a coach. If you will listen 80% of the time and only talk 20% of the time, you will be well on your way to coaching your planter well. If you had to focus on one coaching basic, choose listening. All other coaching qualities will flow from this discipline.

2. Employ a plan

It takes time and relationship to draw out the deep waters of a man's heart. An intentional process of going deeper in a one-on-one coaching conversation can help. Ask questions first to connect and celebrate, before you explore what is in his heart and capture goals to work on. Then make a plan of action together. A plan or framework like this will help you stay focused on a conversation that will lead to action.

3. Tune in to the Holy Spirit

God is at work in the life of the leader you are walking alongside. Listen longer than you think is necessary. Let silence do the heavy lifting, as you pray for insight and direction for the next question.

4. Ask open-ended questions

Questions that start with 'what,' 'when' and 'how,' will help the leader open up and expound on his thoughts. A church planter has many voices speaking into his life. A coach that asks open-ended questions will help draw out their next best step.

5. Follow up on progress

One way to measure your success as a coach is by looking at how you end conversations. Coach toward concrete, measurable goals and actions. Help those you coach decide: Who? What? When? Where? How? Then keep your leaders accountable to follow through by following up on what they agreed to do.

Here are 8 tips to help you coach your planter well:

1. Be intentional

Coaching is not just any relationship; it is a relationship with intention. The No. 1 killer of coaching relationships is unmet expectations. Be clear about what you're asking for and what you're promising; nobody thrives on vagueness. Be specific about the goal of the relationship and the frequency of your meetings.

2. Don't skip the small talk

Coaching is a relationship, not an arrangement. People can tell whether you're treating them as a person or a project. If they're not invited into your life, they won't let you speak into theirs. If you have not taken the time to get to know the person you are coaching, make it a priority as you begin.

3. Get permission

Leaders need to understand coaching and agree to it. Let them know, "You can expect me to speak into your life. I can't always guarantee you will like it, but I can guarantee I'm on your team." You may even want to go so far as to have planters formally give permission for feedback. Some coaches draw up a short contract that lays out these expectations.

4. Don't assume

Be a learner. Don't assume you understand what your planter is saying. Don't assume he's heading in the same direction you are. Don't assume you know what he's talking about. Don't assume he can do what you can do.

5. Listen more than talk

Church planters have lots of people telling them what they should do and how they should do it. They need to know you care enough about them to listen and help.

6. Set clear next steps

Sending churches should take the lead role in helping a planter determine an appropriate salary, planting budget and financial accountability processes. Send Network has developed PlantingProjector.com as a free resource to help church planters and Sending churches with this budgeting process.

7. Connect to people and resources

A written agreement will help the Sending Church and the church planter to work through the major issues they will face in years to come. Writing out your expectations and signing an agreement can help make sure everyone is on the same page and underlines the significance of what you're doing. You can find a sample "Church Planting Agreement" at NAMB.net/Resources.

8. Follow up

Trust but verify. Every church plant needs a champion within the Sending Church. You should make a plan to champion your partnership within the church and enlist a member of your staff or church to help lead. Who would be the best leader from your Sending Church to act as the primary advocate among the sending congregation?

Proverbs 20:5 says, "The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out" (ESV). More often than not, it's best to draw out counsel out of your planter than just telling him what to do.