



A GATHERING PLACE
FOR SHORT-TERM MISSION ARTICLES,
RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

How to Develop Consistent STM Team Leadership

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The problem of inconsistent leadership.

I have many conversations with STM practitioners about how to improve their mission trips. When we talk about trip training, preparation, and follow-through, one of the first questions I ask is, “what are you currently doing?” Here’s my summation of the most common answer I hear:

Answer: “It Depends on the leader.”

Translation: “The leaders do whatever they choose to do and we’re not really sure what that is.”

The Result: Everyone’s experience is different. It makes it hard to assure quality and to follow through with people for deeper engagement.

The Reality: You are dependent on volunteer leaders and that isn’t and shouldn’t be changing.

The answer to the situation isn’t to lead all the teams yourself—or even to outsource it to unqualified or unmotivated staff because they seem under your control. **The problem is usually not that the team leader is rebellious and a know-it-all but a good-hearted servant who is filling a void created by a lack of clearly stated expectations and/or a lack of necessary support to fulfill the expectations.**

When passionate people end up in leadership and aren’t prepared for it, they generally lean on their strengths and interests or try to recreate past experiences. If they are good at some aspect of leadership or interested in a particular aspect of preparation, they will focus on these and risk neglecting other areas. Or, if they have had a good leader in the past, they will simply try to recreate their past experiences—however, this is often done with less success as they likely don’t have the same skills, experience, or understanding of the “why” behind the “what.”

Don't throw out the baby with the bath water. The answer to your problem is to invest in your leaders! Think multiplication not addition! **Here are some ways to invest in your leaders and address the real problem:**

1. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the volunteer leader
2. Learn how their experiences have shaped their view and ability to lead/prepare a team
3. Identify and clearly communicate expectations to your volunteer team leaders
4. Equip leaders and provide structures that help them meet expectations
5. Assess to affirm the leaders are meeting expectations

While these steps seem simple, they are not easy. To dig deeper into these ideas, register for our webinar on Tuesday, January 23, [How to Develop Consistent STM Team Leadership](#). You can also check out last year's webinar on leadership titled [Developing Short-Term Mission Leaders](#).