

What will bring Health and Balance to our Groups in 2004?

Part 2

Small Group Report

This has been a year of exponential growth and organizational challenges for our small group system.

Progress

- Development of the Host Home strategy—The Host concept was a catalyst for tremendous growth during 40 days of Purpose. Hundreds of new hosts stepped forward and opened their homes and facilitated a group for six weeks.
- Grown from 825 to 1450 small groups. While many groups did not continue after 40 days of purpose, our net gain was still more than 600 new groups.
- Development of the group management database tool—This much need tool allows for effective communication and tracking of existing groups. This frees up Division Leaders from doing so much data collection and administrative functions.
- Small Group Curriculum—With the growing need for curriculum, a new video resource team was developed. We have moved Frank Baker to our full time director and are hiring two other part time individuals for editing and graphics. We have also secured quality equipment dedicated primarily to curriculum development. Our goal is to produce 12 curriculums this year.
- Developed a strategy for our monthly Division Leader meetings—Theme for the year is Know, Grow, and Show Your Sheep. Each month we do training and provide tools that can be used in coach's huddles or with hosts.
- Developed a weekly area leader meeting to bring cohesion and common vision to the small group system. Every week we are tackling key issues as well as planning for the future.
- Improved the quality and success of decentralized connections. Using the flow from a weekend "ask", our Division Leaders have managed decentralized connections. One example of this was our Mother's Day push for women to get into groups. We launched approximately 20 new women's groups that are now off to a strong start.

Problems

- The promise during the campaign that we would provide names to hosts in order to fill their group. Because of a technology component that had been developed quickly and was largely untested, a couple of glitches resulted in some sizeable problems. Although in the end everything turned out well, at the beginning of the campaign there was considerable chaos and unfulfilled expectations.
- The coaching layer not really working. Not only here at Saddleback, but around the country, the consensus of those who lead small groups in churches is that the coaching structure just doesn't work. It asks people to manage too many relationships, the relationships are imposed, and there is often no felt need for a coach. It is hard to recruit coaches and keep coaches. On top of that, I don't think we have much of a sense that coaches are doing much discipling, training, or shepherding.
- The role of division leaders. At the senior staff level, there needs to be great clarity about what we want division leaders to do. Also, I think there has been some disparity between what we wanted them to do and what they have had to do. For example, we have wanted them to spend more time with hosts, but they have had to spend a lot of time in administration and collecting information.
- Lack of leadership development for hosts—At Saddleback, we have made it very easy for people to step into a leadership role in a small group. That strategy has allowed the formation of hundreds of groups. However, I believe such a strategy requires a commitment to help new hosts become qualified and trained leaders.
- Learning how to manage groups and value groups among the purpose teams. We are still working to make sure every purpose team has a high value of group life. Also, I think we are still learning how to manage groups on different teams while having a cohesive vision and strategy.

Plans

- Leadership Retreat in September—On Friday night we will meet with our Division Leaders and spouses at the Hatchers for a time of celebrating, honoring, and vision casting. On Saturday and Sunday morning we are hoping for 500 division leaders, coaches, and key hosts. Joseph Stowell is our keynote speaker. This will largely be a time of inspiration and challenge. On Saturday we will also provide breakout training for each affinity and for each centralized groups ministry (WORD, Foundations, Journey, and MOPS)
- Creation of a new studio—We are excited about the construction of a new resource development studio that will allow for great quality and creativity of our curriculum.

- Development of a 2 year curriculum pathway. Now that we are developing a healthy inventory of curriculums, we would like to put together a recommendation for a group suggesting curriculums for the first two years of a group's existence.
- Development of a clear post-campaign strategy. I would like to see us work harder this year at retaining more groups coming out of the campaign. So, if we continue to use the host home strategy, we will create post-campaign strategic plan.
- Total Quality Management initiative—We will dedicate some energy and resources this year to trying to understand the realities of group life at Saddleback. For example, what do hosts need in terms of training, how is the curriculum working in groups, what is the success of the division leader relationship to hosts, etc.
- Re-formatting of LDI—For the past couple of years, LDI night time classes have competed with groups, not complemented groups. So, I would like to propose a seminar format that actually brings in world-class speakers and markets to groups who are interested in a one-night seminar on a topic. We would also put the speaker in the studio and tape curriculum that would be made available for groups who want to go deeper on the topic.
- Development of a new health assessment—while no tool can fully measure spiritual growth, we do believe the health assessment can give us a glimpse. Here are the assumptions we are operating from
 1. The HA can begin a relational process of evaluation of spiritual growth
 2. Discipling tool that measures health against the purposes
 3. If we as leaders don't model it and champion it, it won't get into the watersystem
 4. Needs to have 360 degree feedback and not just be a self-introspection tool
 5. Needs to be electronic and on the web
 6. Need tools to support health plan after taking health assessment
 7. Need an annual platform push to get annual snapshot of health of our church
 8. Need some kind of incentive—immediate benefit and direct feedback
- Host page—The development of this electronic tool will assist our hosts in communicating with their groups and knowing their group better. It will also provide incentive to have accurate and up to date information on groups.
- **NEW Small Group Leadership Infrastructure**—This just came out of our Area Leader retreat a few days ago.
We are proposing that we do away with the coaching level of our infrastructure except for during the campaign. Other than during the campaign, division leaders would work with new hosts to orient them, consult, problem solve, encourage, and generally shepherd. After the first six months, the DL would serve more as a resource and safety net.

As a result of this strategy, we would like to propose the following role description for a Division Leader.

1. Develop health in the groups—through the mentoring of the host, help raise the value of all 5 purposes in group life. Possible measurement would be the number of health assessments taken and annual snapshot of each group, division, and for entire church.
2. Train and develop new hosts—Possible measurement would be the number of hosts who have completed Leadership Training 2.
3. Provide ongoing development and resourcing for leaders—Possible measurement would be number of people going to Leadership University
4. Identify and recruit campaign coaches—Possible measurement would be to achieve desired ratios for span of care.
5. Help connect the unconnected who attend Saddleback—Possible measurement would be number of groups in their division and number of people who have been connected.

We need DL's to

1. Train
2. Problem Solve
3. Shepherd new hosts
4. Recruit campaign coaches
5. Disciple and mentor those who show interest
6. Help with information flow to groups
7. Monitor quality control of group life in their division

- **NEW Leadership Training Pathway**

1. Appoint Erik Rees to work with Lance on coordinating development of leadership resources and training
2. Hire Bonnie Taylor (currently in 301) full time as project manager for leadership projects
3. Re-shape New Host Training to reflect new strategy and work to get new hosts through this training.
4. Develop content for Leader Training 2.
5. Develop plan and schedule for the first Leadership University—This centralized event would be offered once or perhaps twice per year.