

Does the Future of the Association Depend Upon the DOM?

There's a lot of discussion taking place today about the value of Baptist associations. Arguments can be made for their benefit and importance as well as against their outdated methodologies and ineffectiveness. Having witnessed both effective and ineffective associations first hand, I am convinced the difference is primarily due to leadership, or the absence of. Effective associations where churches partner together for maximum Kingdom impact don't just happen on their own. There must be someone who serves in a catalytic role, pulling together the churches to initiate, plan and implement strategic partnerships. In Baptist associations, that someone should be the Director of Missions (DOM). I'm hopeful that this blog post will help associations identify the kind of DOM they should be seeking God for. So, what are some of the characteristics of a catalytic DOM?

1. Respected – it takes trust and respect over a period of years in order to pull together influential pastors and leaders in local churches. This doesn't mean the DOM must be old and gray. Young men are capable of earning respect if they're willing to make the investment and prove themselves among the community and churches in the association.
2. Dependent on God – there will always be many things going on within an association that a DOM could worry about. The temptation is to assess the situation and come up with a strategy that maximizes potential for impact, without seeking God. But sometimes those situations that a DOM fears the most might be what God wants to use to make the association rely on Him and not themselves.
3. Act as Role Model – DOMs must boldly and unashamedly model the priorities and values they proclaim. They can't lead from behind. DOMs can't just put an inspiring vision statement on the association and put together ministry teams, expecting others to carry out the mission. They must lead strongly from the front – setting the example.
4. Humble – one of the most important characteristics for a leader, especially a catalytic DOM, is humility. They can't be concerned about building their own influence and power or making a name for themselves. Humble DOMs will be more involved in the long hard work of patiently developing relationships and building leaders than volunteering for highly visible board positions and speaking engagements.
5. Hard Worker – DOMs won't see success in reaching ministry goals just because of their position, charismatic personality or charm. Making a Kingdom impact requires hard work, and sometimes that involves giving up "me" time. A catalytic DOM must allow God to determine the pace since He's the One who has laid out the race for each of us. God's pace will not involve aimless wondering, drifting comfortably toward retirement or laziness.
6. Committed to People – there are few leaders today who are selflessly generous toward and committed to those God has called them to serve. A DOM who is catalytic will not see people as tools to grow his ministry, but ministry as a way to grow the people and churches God has entrusted to his leadership.

If you're a DOM, which of these characteristics best describes you? And which one do you need to work on? If you're a pastor or church leader, how can you help your DOM to be a more effective catalytic leader for the association? The future of Baptist associations is at stake. Those that survive, will do so because they are valued by the churches for their strategic leadership and led by a catalytic DOM.

Written by Eric Allen March, 2015