

# SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT

A conversation guide for church leaders

## Team Training Experiences Are Vital

Last month I attended the North Coast Leadership Conference along with the rest of the EFCA West team. The event was held at a North Coast Church in Vista, California, an EFCA church, and had over 800 attendees. It was great.

As I looked at the crowd attending the conference, I was struck by how so many churches had heeded the intent of the conference planners that the lead pastor should not attend alone but should bring some or all of the leadership team, too. After each session, it was fascinating to watch the members of these teams talking among themselves about what they had just experienced and applying it to themselves and their church. I was also fascinated to see how so many people had connected with people from other churches that they met at the conference and had formed truly symbiotic relationships – even if only for the short term – that were bringing visible life and energy to their outward demeanor, lives, and ministries.

Team training experiences are vital because they foster vitality within the team. Good experiences together enhance cohesion and unity.

One of the things I like about this particular conference is that, at least for me, it has a great balance of nuts and bolts training combined with speaking to leaders' hearts. It's not just, "How to..." It is also, "How are you doing" and "Here's how you can take care of your inner selves" both individually and as a team. Perhaps this is one of the reasons I have attended this conference almost every year since joining the team.<sup>1</sup> I like tools and I need to be centered in my soul.

There are other great conferences out there (I can recommend others), but I share this one as it is the most recent and a favorite of mine. This brings me to my question and something I hope you and your team will talk about.

### ***Do we attend such events together as a team? If not, why not?***

Shared experiences, especially experiences that speak to our inner being, are sure-fire ways to build cohesion and unity within a team. Yet, I find that way too many churches skip this vital component to creating and growing healthy leadership teams in their church.

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<sup>1</sup> I was going to write "every year" but didn't want to expend the effort to look at nine years' of calendars to make sure.

Team training is vital in a church and is something to talk about. Here are some conversation starters. Please read to the end rather than giving up along the way.

- Does your church budget for team training such as attending conferences together? If not, why not? Do we think it unimportant? Are we afraid of misery people's potential complaints? Do we legitimately have no way to fund this? If having team unity is a priority (can it not be?) and if funds are tight, what alternatives can we pursue? Is there something available nearby that might not incur steep travel-related costs? Can we at least listen together on-line or by video recording?
- Would individual team members pay their own way to attend a conference together? Does the church have or know a person or another church with financial means to underwrite this through a special or designated gift? It's not always necessary for everyone or even most to attend, so can we figure out a way to send at least some?
- If the lead pastor must attend alone, can he arrange to receive videos from the conference that can be shared with the team? Can he otherwise share what he learned and experienced with the leadership team?
- What are some of the conferences that might be beneficial to your team? EFCA West staff can recommend some to you, but have you done any research on your own to identify some potential conferences to attend?

One thing that helps make a conference successful for building team cohesion and unity is that people are stuck together for the event, travel, meals, and down time. A conference facilitates connections in ways that just attending a class or watching a video together and going home does not.

***“Virtual connections are to in-person connections as shoes and socks are to barefoot on the sand at the beach.”***

I don't know who said that – perhaps it was me...

Can't do one event each year? Consider doing one every other year. But do something rather than maintaining a “no go” status quo.

Here are two conferences in addition to the one previously highlighted that we encourage you to put on your calendar and into your budget.

- [EFCA One](#) – June 20-22, 2023, at Fullerton Free, Fullerton, California.
- EFCA West District Conference – 2024, dates and locations to be announced soon.

When I attend a good conference, I usually come away with one or two good ideas to pursue and having been encouraged to persevere and to attend to my soul's connection with my

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savior. I am refreshed, encouraged, and strengthened. I'm so blessed to share this with my teammates, and that is my desire for you, too.

*Let us know if we can help and how your conversation goes. Contact Bob Osborne by e-mail at [bob.osborne@efca.org](mailto:bob.osborne@efca.org).*

*This is one of a series of articles intended to facilitate and guide church leaders' conversations about significant issues that often are not talked about among pastors, boards, and church leadership teams.*

*Prior articles can be found at <https://efca-west.districts.efca.org/something-to-talk-about-archives>.*