

High-Capacity Leaders

Coaching Influencers for Local & Global Missions

Kirk Lithander came to faith through the Navigators and at different times in the following 10 years was blessed to have five godly men mentor and disciple him. "The reason I've been in ministry for over three decades is because of how they coached me," he says. No wonder mentoring and coaching are large factors in his approach to ministry.

With a varied ministry background including missionary service, Kirk became outreach pastor at Fairhaven Church in Dayton, Ohio, in 2002. Fairhaven is a large church that has seen 16% annual growth over the past couple of years. This rate of expansion could easily have outstripped the church's ability to integrate newcomers into outward-focused ministry. But missions has more than kept pace because Kirk has focused on building a team of high-capacity, influential leaders who coordinate a wide variety of outreaches.

Currently, 50 ministry teams at Fairhaven function in local and global ministry. Besides other initiatives, they participate in nine strategic global partnerships and a quickly expanding Circles Campaign. Circles matches low-income participants with

middle-class volunteers, helping to eradicate poverty one family at a time. Fairhaven's growing impact would be totally impossible if Kirk wasn't recruiting knowledgeable and passionate lay leaders and coaching them successfully.

Kirk admits, "High-capacity ministry leaders are often difficult to recruit and challenging to lead. I've discovered that you must learn to encourage, equip, empower, and release

them." Here are some of the keys he has learned by trial and error.

1 To Create High-Capacity Leaders, Build Service into Your Church's DNA

Fairhaven emphasizes three essentials. Frequent repetition

means that everyone at Fairhaven is constantly being challenged to build them into their lives:

- **WORSHIP.** Glorifying and loving God back through right actions and attitudes will bring our greatest stirring.
- **COMMUNITY.** Loving each other at all costs to

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Kirk Lithander



Watch a 5-minute interview with Kirk and two of his high-capacity leaders: [Coaching High-Capacity Ministry Leaders](#).

Empowering Leaders

Fairhaven has empowered me by: (1) education; (2) providing opportunities, guidance, networking; (3) encouragement through affirmation, acknowledgment, and participation; and (4) prayer. When I shared my experience at a denominational focus group on mobilizing laity, I was amazed that many of the participants were not empowered to serve in their congregations and wanted to come to Fairhaven Church to serve. I came home with a deeper appreciation for Kirk and my pastor's willingness to empower lay leaders.

Jim Kohls, CPA

Fairhaven's Missions Finance and Member Care Teams Champion

prove that we are His disciples will be our greatest strength.

- **SERVING.** Using our time and talents to care for others will be our greatest blessing. (“Serving” can be within the church walls, but the Fairhaven congregation is urged to have an outward focus.)

2 Use the Perspectives Course as a Motivator

Kirk leverages his influence in order to get potential leaders to attend the “Perspectives on the World Christian Movement” course. To the usual excuses like “I’m too busy” and “There’s too much else going on,” Kirk replies, “I know you are busy, but we need you there. Come for the first two weeks and see what you think.”

With the option to bail out after two weeks, people come and get hooked. Brainstorming and debriefing occur after every session. By the end of the course, leaders are saying, “I feel like God wants me to launch or lead a ministry to...” In addition, they have become the cheerlead-



Perspectives Role in Building Leaders

Perspectives was a life-changing class that did, indeed, change my perspective as to the why and how of missions. Now when I lead a medical mission team, give, or send, I know my role and the role of the church is to know Christ and make Him known to all the nations!

Dr. Bill Wilson

Former Chief of Staff of
Miami Valley Hospital and
Champion of Fairhaven’s
Medical Missions

ers who urge other potential leaders to invest the time to take the course.

3 Plan Far in Advance

Kirk respects the fact that his high-capacity leaders are extremely busy. For instance, he has several doctors and surgeons in leadership who schedule patients six to nine months out. To get something on their calendar, Kirk announces key events such as missions conferences, Global Leadership Summit, Local Impact Weekend, and mission trips a year in advance. This amount of lead time allows leaders to prioritize ministry events without rearranging their calendars.

4 Expose Leaders to Powerful Training

Each year, Kirk invites some ministry leaders and potential leaders to attend the Willow

Creek Global Leadership Summit with him. Again, he extends the invitation close to a year in advance. Not only is this high-quality training that leaders appreciate, but it is also provides time for Kirk to build his relationship



with these leaders, signaling the value he places on their leadership potential. Debriefing afterward with them allows Kirk to better understand what makes each person tick. Fairhaven has intensive orientation to local

Delegation Blended with Teamwork

I first met Kirk in 2003 when I presented a plan to mobilize Christian businessmen and women to serve in developing economies. This was the beginning of many informal meetings (often over breakfast or lunch) to share ideas, and to discuss strategy and issues pertaining to this ministry.

It was quickly obvious to me that Kirk was willing and eager to delegate the responsibility of planning, recruiting volunteers, and overseeing this program. I never felt he lacked interest, but he gave me the freedom to mold and lead this work, while at the same time always being willing to help me through difficult decisions when asked.

Having the two of us providing insight and ideas has improved the quality of our decisions without making me feel like he was dictating his desired answers. From the beginning, we realized it was best if we did the strategic planning together, and I could then handle the tactical decisions and keep Kirk informed. As long as I was open with him as to problems and challenges, he was willing to let me oversee the ministry. We not only feel God has blessed this ministry, but He has brought the two of us into a close personal friendship.

Bill Bloebaum
Former CEO

Fairhaven’s Business as Mission Champion

ministry that global leaders are also urged to attend. A bus tour introduces the plight of the poor in the inner city, and a three-hour poverty simulation helps participants feel what it is like to be poor. Bridges Out of Poverty, an eight-hour training, unpacks the hidden rules of the middle class and of those in poverty. While these programs are aimed specifically at preparing leaders for local ministry, they have many applications to global outreach. These shared training events are examples of how local and global ministry can be complementary.

5 Empower Leaders to Lead

High-capacity people who are type A personalities are accustomed to having the freedom to jump to the front and lead. While they may be unfamiliar with important aspects of missions and church policy, they don't respond well to being relegated to a secondary role. Empowering this type of visionary leader involves encouraging, equipping, empowering, and then releasing them to take charge of ministry while supporting them so that they do not make costly mistakes in cross-cultural areas.



Top Quality Training

The Willow Creek Global Leadership Summit has always given me a time to learn and reflect on my personal leadership goals by providing excellent teaching and training by high level leaders in their field. The Summit provides leaders a chance to see how other leaders are meeting their own leadership challenges. The Summit is also a fantastic time of learning, fellowshiping, and team building with our Fairhaven leadership team"

Dr. Andy Campbell
Emergency room doctor and
Fairhaven's Short-Term Mission
Team Champion

6 Meet with Leaders on Their Schedules

One of the keys to coaching high-capacity leaders is to honor them by working around their busy schedules and by demonstrating that you value and love them as co-workers in ministry. For Kirk, this often means scheduling one-on-one meetings as early morning breakfast or lunch sessions at or near the leader's work location. This accommodation also allows Kirk to get a better understanding of the work world of his leaders.

Meetings begin with time spent developing and deepening the personal relationship followed by discussion of the ministry. These sessions lay the foundation for strong teamwork.

Developing a Leader, then Expanding Responsibility

Our family was drawn to attend Fairhaven because of its missions focus, so I was prepared to say yes when Kirk invited me to attend Perspectives. Then he appointed me as the point person, providing training to be the coordinator the following year. Kirk's efforts to coach me along the way were evident in a timely invitation to attend the APMC national conference on the heels of the Perspectives course.

Those key events established a relationship of a shared vision, vocabulary, and purpose. As a missions coach, Kirk sets the agenda based on the broader vision of Fairhaven, and provides resources, guidelines, responsibilities, and a measure of accountability. My mission-education roles have expanded under his leadership to include short-term ministry in SE Asia, developing relationships with international students, and participating in the local outreach of Circles.

Carol Enns
Fairhaven's Mission Education Champion



7 Coach Them, Don't Direct Them

High-capacity people desire to improve their service, but they prefer to figure out their own solutions rather than be given a list of suggestions. Such leaders respond well to a coaching approach where they are presented with questions that help them tease out their own

insights.

See ["What Is Christian Coaching?"](#) for a helpful outline on the topic of coaching.

8 Plan Meetings Strategically—Less Is More

The global and local outreach teams each hold an all-team fall and winter kick-off meeting and a summer celebration picnic. But Fairhaven did away with the monthly missions

team meetings when Kirk arrived on staff. High-impact leaders have very little margin in their schedules, and Fairhaven's philosophy on meetings is "less is more."

Smaller, individual team meetings have proven more effective at getting things done and at the same time they build relationships. Kirk honors the time of busy leaders

by starting and finishing on schedule. Because the ministry leaders share at, and participate in, these gatherings, they have a sense of ownership.



Ron Wende, second from right, with micro-business leaders in Gabon.

Kirk can be contacted at klithander@fairhavenchurch.org. Fairhaven's website is www.fairhavenchurch.org.

"Kirk is always passionate about sharing his many Kingdom contacts and relationships around the world. His networking has been a very important way in which I've been empowered to lead; it has resulted in effective, powerful, international partnerships."

Ron Wende, M.S.

Fairhaven's Micro-Economic Development Co-Champion

After reading the article, watch the five-minute [Coaching High-Capacity Ministry Leaders video](#). Then discuss the following questions with your leadership team or ministry colleagues.

For Church Leaders

For Discussion

1. Early in the video, Bill describes the importance of giving teams on the ground the authority to make decisions. He shares how this delegation of authority to him and his team indicates he is trusted and has the support of Kirk and the overall church leadership. Why is this so crucial in recruiting and retaining high-capacity leaders? What makes you cautious about handing over authority to other, high-capacity leaders?
2. How do Bill and Kirk partner in recruiting additional team members? Why is it important for a high-capacity leader to have this type of practical assistance?
3. How does good communication contribute to your willingness to delegate and "let go" rather than micro-manage? What unusual communication contexts did Kirk mention? How could you keep information flowing with a high-capacity leader?
4. Later in the video, Andy mentions "leaders sharpening leaders" and the importance of church leaders being open to different approaches. "Grade" yourself/your

team on how often you invite others to speak into how you are doing missions. What could you do to encourage more input from high-capacity people who may have strong opinions that differ substantially from your views?

For Action

1. Ask several other leaders at your church who know your congregation to list people they would consider high-capacity potential leaders. Combine your lists. (Do not eliminate any name because you consider the person too busy.) Commit to praying for each person on the list for a period of at least one month, asking God to help you identify those whose gifts He wants to use for cross-cultural impact. Get together and compare what you believe God has been saying to you about inviting some of these high-capacity people to accept a greater leadership role.
2. Choose one practical suggestion in this video or article that you would like to implement soon to recruit, utilize, and retain high-capacity leaders.

For Mission Agency Leaders and Mobilizers

1. The lack of sufficient leaders is one of the most frequently mentioned obstacles to missions growth in churches. What principles in this video and article do you think would be most helpful to congregations you know?
2. Appointees and field missionaries are often hesitant to recruit high-capacity leaders to their advocate or support teams. What misperceptions might they have about such people? How could you encourage them to ask those with significant leadership ability to partner with them?
3. Church missions leaders may fear change and therefore resist delegating responsibility to high-capacity leaders who want to take the reigns and shape outcomes. How could you use these principles or even this article/video to challenge them to recognize the dangers of micro-managing? What personal illustrations could you share that would help to highlight the importance of this leadership principle?
4. Many church staff or GO team coordinators are themselves high-capacity leaders. What do you see in this material that can help you better gain their trust and their ear? What needs to change in your mobilization ministry in order to more effectively connect and communicate with this type of leader?
5. What implications do you see for your own personal relationship to high-capacity leaders? Perhaps you want to ask someone to coach you in developing stronger skills for working with such leaders.

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Catalyst's *Postings* e-newsletter is a monthly publication designed for mission agency personnel and local church leaders involved in collaborative global efforts. The practical articles highlight what churches and agencies are doing to mobilize believers, especially those of younger generations, to expand the Kingdom.

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