



NCD Headlines

Growing Healthy Adventist Churches Through Natural Church Development

What the Minimum Factor Is All About

Christoph Schalk

"I don't believe in the minimum factor!" That is what I heard a Christian leader say to me recently. As we continued our conversation, it became evident that he misunderstood what *Natural Church Development* (NCD) refers to as *minimum factor strategy*. What do we really mean by the *minimum factor strategy*? Imagine you go for your annual health check and your doctor tells you, "Your eyes are well but your heart really is in bad shape. I suggest you forget about your heart and just count on your eyes. After all, your heart won't last very long. Just focus on your strengths and don't worry about the rest."

All eight quality characteristics being assessed through an NCD Survey are vital areas of healthy churches. None of those areas must be neglected — not even if one is committed to focus on the strengths of the church — to meet the biblical standard for a church and build up a community who is leading people to Christ.

The minimum factor strategy does not lend itself to play the strengths of a church against its weaknesses. On the contrary, NCD's suggestion is to use the strengths of a local church to improve the quality in its minimum factor area. Strengths such as the spiritual gifts of its members, structural strong points of the church, or the warm and welcoming atmosphere the church is known for to visitors.

The minimum factor does not mean to stare, mesmerized (and paralysed) like a rabbit in front of a snake, at the weak spots of a church and get frustrated. After all, every church (even the best one in the world) has a minimum factor. One of the eight quality characteristics will always turn out to be the lowest one. Besides, the minimum factor is not necessarily a poor area. It is simply one of eight areas that happens to have the lowest score, possibly though on a high level.

The purpose of the minimum factor instead is to produce more quality in this area. Improvements in this very area promise the greatest positive effect on the church as a whole — its overall quality and growth. In a way the minimum factor is the starting point with the best leverage. Efforts in other areas of the church are not necessarily wrong. They are just less promising in terms of their positive bearing on the development of the church. By concentrating energies and activities on the minimum factor area (and by applying the church's strengths to this area), you can expect to see results and progress come about rather quickly.

As a result, the minimum factor is a cause for joy — finally we know where to focus our energies and how to take advantage of the strengths we have for the benefit of the church! *Reprinted with permission from eNCDine — The NCD Online Magazine*

Coaching Tip: Getting Unstuck When You Seem to be Stuck

A coaching relationship typically may flow along at a good pace, with the coachee accomplishing goals, learning from the experiences and excited about future possibilities. But occasionally, the relationship will hit a time when the coach and/or coachee doesn't know where to go from here. What's next? Or the coach may feel like the coaching isn't going anywhere. Just talking about the same old stuff. Because a coach wants to see their clients become all that God has created them to be and because their time is valuable, a coach may get frustrated and wonder how to get the relationship moving again. Or moving onto something deeper. How do you get unstuck when you seem stuck in a rut?

One way is to evaluate the relationship. (More on that next issue.)

Another way is to ask powerful questions that require the coachee to look deeper. Some examples?

- If all things were possible, what would you be doing with your life?
- If you could accomplish anything without fear of failure, what would you be doing?
- What action that you know you need to take are you currently avoiding?
- How would you define fulfillment (or success)? When do you experience fulfillment in your life? Work? Ministry?
- What is present when you're at your best?
- Where do you limit yourself?

Keep an ongoing list of powerful questions as you come across them. You can find examples in coaching books like "Co-Active Coaching." Powerful questions can help restart a stalled coaching relationship.

Editor's Note

This is our last issue of NCD Headlines.

As you'll read in the article "The Journey" by Runette Litzenberger, NCD in the Adventist church has been a journey. A journey of growing, changing, developing, obstacles and moving forward. This journey began by focusing on helping local churches grow healthier, thus empowering them to grow larger naturally. NCD was the tool to enable this. In the process, coaching was discovered as a key component in helping NCD work effectively. As we've continued on this journey, coaching has become more and more important. It is a means that can help the NCD process, but also be helpful in church planting, leadership development and ministry growth. Coaching is a powerful relationship that can help churches, pastors and leaders accomplish goals and grow into more of who God has called them to be.

Because of this, our newsletter is also changing gears. Beginning in 2005, our focus will be on coaching and providing resources for our coaches across the NAD. We will continue to share articles and resources on NCD and will continue to support and encourage churches as they participate in the NCD process. But we will also include articles on church planting and leadership. We envision seeing coaching be a means for growing healthy churches through NCD, helping church planters in their planting and growing and walking with leaders as they grow in their ministries.

As a result, we need a new name for our newsletter. We are now accepting suggestions for the **new** name to replace *NCD Headlines*. Please submit your suggested name(s), via email, to RunetteNCD@cs.com. Be sure to include your own name. And, if a name you suggest is chosen, you will receive a one-year membership to the CoachNet website absolutely FREE. **All submissions must be received by February 1, 2006.**

We hope that the *NCD Headlines* has been helpful to you; and, we are confident that you will find the future quarterly coaching communications to be even more helpful as you work with God to make your church all that He wants it to be.

So watch for your next issue. It will have a new name, a new focus, and a lot of helpful materials. If you have ideas for articles or resources you'd like us to provide, let me know. We want this to be a resource that helps your ministry—not just another piece of paper to file away or discard.

---Tamyra Horst & Runette Litzenberger

The Journey

“What should we do with our Natural Church Development Survey results?”

In 2003, this question, or some variation of it, repeatedly asked, motivated us to approach Bob Logan (founder of CoachNet, a professional coach, and an expert in church planting and church health) and David Wetzler (founder of ChurchSmart Resources, a professional coach, and the NCD Partner for the U.S.) about what we at NADEI could do to most effectively support our churches in their desire to increase their health and become all God wants them to be.

With the help of Bob and Dave, the new delivery system for introducing local conference church leadership to NCD, and training and apprenticing NCD coaches in those same conferences was created. It was a pioneering effort that later was used by other denominations as well.

Our training personnel originally included five volunteers, along with Lyle and Runette Litzenberger at NADEI, were thoroughly trained as NCD Coach Trainers, to then train and apprentice NCD coaches, as the conferences invited us to come and present the NCD delivery system for them. We, then, added several more coach trainers as needed, keeping a total of 10 working at their maximum level for almost two years.

In the fall of 2003, this new training system was piloted by the Pennsylvania and Mountain View Conferences working together. Since then, NADEI has gone on to train 188 NCD coaches (including 21 Andrews University Seminarians, and two Amazing Facts leaders) in seven local conferences and one union. Between 1997 and October 2005, we at NADEI, have also processed approximately 600 NCD Surveys.

Our churches have benefitted greatly because of having the guidance of trained coaches to help them through the simple, but detailed, NCD process. Churches are increasing their health, as indicated not only by the results of their second, third, and sometimes fourth NCD Surveys, but also by the more positive attitudes of church members, an increase in church attendance, an increase in giving, and a general increase in overall well-being.

Natural Church Development is a slow process. Our churches have not plateaued and/or declined over night; and they will not gain marked increased health and growth over night. But, progress is being made, as indicated by the stories we are hearing. There have been big “wins”, but more often thus far, it is the smaller, positive changes that are beginning to make a difference. Any and all movement toward greater health, and toward *truly* allowing God’s will to be done in our churches, is cause for celebration and praise to God. What a blessing it is for a church congregation to *truly* work *with* God, and witness what He will do in return!

The sad part about all of this is that because of limited budgetary resources at NADEI, instead of NCD trainings continuing to expand, we have had to reduce the number of coach trainers, which will limit the number of training events we can handle.

About a year ago, Bob Logan began piloting an even more effective training system that is already being used with good success by a number of other denominations. The new training program includes a general coach certification, with optional specializations in coaching Natural Church Development or coaching church planters. Any number of other specialization trainings can be added as the need arises.

In the hope that, somehow, God would provide a way that NADEI could continue training coaches and supporting those churches truly interested in becoming all God wants them to be, Lyle and Runette, along with two of the other coach trainers, attended the new training, in order to become trainers for that system.

This training has the potential to produce better trained, better quality coaches who can be used in many areas of ministry within our denomination and churches — all the way from the division level to the local church level. People trained and practicing good coaching skills can serve to increase productivity and personal satisfaction by assisting others through coaching.

Because the new training produces higher quality coaches who are prepared to coach in many settings (not just NCD), we are encouraging conferences to choose this new training, instead of our older delivery system. However, we are still offering the older delivery system if a conference prefers that one.

If you are interested in training coaches for your conference, please contact Lyle or Runette Litzenberger at NADEI for more details about the new Coach Certification training or the NCD Coaches Training – Phase 1 and Phase 2.

— Runette Litzenberger

How is NCD Impacting Seventh-day Adventist Churches?

Following is the list of Seventh-day Adventist churches in the North American Division that have shown the greatest improvement using the NCD Survey/process, also showing the average increase in points and the period of time the score was achieved in:

- Hershey, PA’s score grew 15.1 points in 3 years/3 profiles.
- Paradise Valley, CA’s score grew 16.6 points in 1 year.
- New Hope, Burtonsville, MD’s score grew 17.4 points in 2 years/3 profiles.
- Santa Barbara, CA’s score grew 17.6 in one year.
- Eagle, ID’s score grew 19.1 in one year.

—Petra Cintrala

Books and Resources

“**Fierce Conversations**”
by Susan Scott

In her national best seller, *Fierce Conversations*, author Susan Scott challenges, “When you think of a fierce conversation, think passion, integrity, authenticity, collaboration. Think cultural transformation. Think leadership.” She writes, “Business is fundamentally an extended conversation—with colleagues, customers, partners, and the unknown future emerging around us. Unfortunately, many conversations fail.” She then outlines seven principles of fierce conversations, that when implemented will increase clarity, improve understanding, implement action plans, help achieve goals, successfully resolve attitudinal, performance or behavioral issues by naming and addressing tough challenges, provoke learning and enrich relationships.

While the book is written primarily for business, the principles can be applied in all conversations, enabling us to take our conversations, and the relationships through which we have these conversations, past the surface, to a deeper, more life impacting place. These fierce conversations will enrich our relationships—in our families, churches and communities.

There are assignments throughout the book that will help the reader work through the ideas and principles of each section. The questions and assignments will also provide ideas for coaching questions and relationships, as well as “coach” the reader through some important steps—like identifying core values and purpose.

It’s not a book to sit down and read through. You’ll need time to digest, work on, and think about the principles, questions and assignments, but it is worth the time and effort. The book is available

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