



How to Revive a Small Group by Involving Members

Here are **six** keys to group health that your members deserve to know about.
by **Rick Howerton** | posted 1/05/2009

Group members will be much more apt to continue with the group over the long haul if they feel a meaningful level of ownership and responsibility in the group. In order for group members to sense ownership, there are six things they deserve.

1. **They deserve to see the vision.** It's the responsibility of the small-group leader to express the vision in such a fashion that group members become **desperate** to see that **vision** become a reality. **Vision focuses the group.**
2. **They deserve to know the goals.** Goals energize a small group. **Goals should be measurable.** Some goals a group might adopt are to get three pre-Christians to become part of the group, to spend three weekends together on mission, never to miss a meeting unless there's a death in the family, to get together just for fun once a month, to pray daily for one another, to be available for one another, and to see the fruit of transformed lives.
3. **They deserve to help prepare the strategy necessary to accomplish the goals.** If a small group sets goals without creating strategies to accomplish those goals, the goals will most likely never be met. Strategies are vital because they organize the group to accomplish the goals that have been determined. It's important to involve group members in developing strategies. The outcome will likely be much better than what you would create alone, and will develop a healthy level of ownership. And when people have ownership, they willingly give their time and effort to executing the strategy.
4. **They deserve to be invited into the adventure.** Small-group members who see the group's vision will help to set the goals and establish the strategies to accomplish those goals, and they will be excited about doing their parts. As members are encouraged to exercise their natural abilities and spiritual gifts, they'll feel satisfaction because they want to be a part of something vital and significant. Growth naturally occurs when a person is encouraged to go beyond present abilities and comfort zones.
5. **They deserve to evaluate progress.** All great small groups evaluate group life together. They evaluate if they're **accomplishing the goals** they set and if they're **keeping the group covenant**. They also evaluate each strategic experience after its completion. **Evaluation** enables the group to modify some aspect of a strategy or revisit shared goals. Evaluation is vital not only to the retention of group members, but also to the level of **ownership** group members feel to the group. Each time your group spends time in evaluation, members are **reminded of the group's vision, goals, and strategies**. This **re-energizes** people.
6. **They deserve to celebrate accomplishments.** Celebration unifies a team forever. However, it is often the overlooked glue of group life. All too often we set goals, create strategies, work hard, and see amazing goals come to fruition—only to begin working on the next experience or event. We skip the most important bonding experience: **celebration**. Celebrating together is fitting anytime God does something wonderful, such as enabling you to reach a milestone. Evaluate, then celebrate, no matter how negative the evaluation is. We need to celebrate the completion of a project as well as its effectiveness.

What you've just read may go against everything you've always believed to be true about small-group life. You may have believed that the less people had to give, the more likely they were to stick around. Not so! Most people tend to give as much time as necessary to something **that's captured their hearts**. And most people don't give their hearts to a cause until they've gotten their hands dirty first. **Be a great leader** and give your group members ownership, allowing them to be involved in the process of preparation and accomplishment at all levels. Guide, guard, nurture, and cherish them throughout your time together, and most of your people will be fully committed to you and your group.

—Rick Howerton; excerpted from [Destination Community](#) (Serendipity House, 2007). Used with permission.

Discussion for the leadership:

1. Do I have a vision for our small group? If so, have I communicated that vision with my group members?
2. What are some possible goals for our group? How can we get the group to decide and commit to accomplishing them?
3. What steps can our group take to get better at evaluation and celebration?