

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



A Guide to
More Effective Team Huddles
at Your Church

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Are you a church leader wondering how to use team huddles to push the mission forward?

Have you ever considered that this small habit might make an enormous difference in the lives of the volunteers at your church?

Gathering your teams together before any service opportunity is a great way to keep your people connected and aligned. **It's a best practice to use team huddles with all of your volunteer teams every weekend so that your people stay informed and feel connected to the broader church community.**

High performance teams do huddles all the time—just look at a football team huddling to talk through the next step in their game plan before they go back on the field and carry out the play. **If something as simple as running a football play requires a team of professional athletes to huddle and make sure they're all in sync with each other, then maybe it's the kind of thing your kid's ministry team or your host team should do too.**

Highly trained surgeons have huddles with their team members and talk through the entire surgery that they're about to perform. [\[ref\]](#) Again, if a team of professionals at the top of their game take a timeout to introduce themselves, ensure they have the right equipment, and talk about the procedure for the upcoming surgery, how much more does your youth team need it before a Tuesday night youth event? **Team huddles are one of the best**

opportunities we have to move the culture and mission of volunteering forward.

Like a good Canadian kid, I played hockey when I was younger and spent many an evening skating on the rink. Now, I was kind of lousy at hockey. (In fact, all our hockey genes went to my brother, who performed so well that he was on the rep travel team while I was on the local house league team.) When I was around 9 years old, my team was so terrible that we lost every game of the season. It would've been easy to feel discouraged, worn down, and hesitant to play again next year. **It felt like there was nothing to gain or lose, and because we were just a house league team, it would've been easy to quit.**

I often look back and think about what kept me in it. Why did I keep going back week after week to practices and games? There's no doubt that my favorite coach as a kid was Jim Morlog because he inspired me. He ran the local auto wrecker and tow truck business. **His team huddles were full of vivid examples of exactly what you should do to pull your team together.** These motivational talks encouraged us in the face of loss and kept us focused on getting to know our teammates, learning the game, and having fun.

I would love to help your church improve its volunteer experience by increasing the quality of team huddles, so here are a few elements that I've seen repeatedly in teams that do a great job with their huddle experience.

Everybody Knows Everybody

Volunteers serve in our churches because they want to get to know other people.

The actual work is of secondary importance since the primary reason most people volunteer is because of relationships—even if they don't outwardly acknowledge that. People are looking for community, and the huddle experience, at its core, needs to be a relational experience. We need to relate before we delegate. We need to slow down and ensure that people get to know each other. Take a cue from the medical field: there are studies that reveal that the outcomes are better with surgical teams that stop and introduce each other by name before working together. [\[ref\]](#)



Taking time to have your team introduce themselves and share a little bit about their lives is an important piece of the puzzle. As team leaders, we need to be aware that not everyone on the team knows each other. **Our goal is to encourage the people on our teams to get to know each other and engage with one another.** An easy way to do that by using name tags as part of the huddle. Like 'em or not, name tags are a great way to help people become familiar with those who are on their team.

Celebrate the Win

How do you know if your team is winning?

What does a Sunday morning at your church look like when you're firing on all cylinders? **Can your team leaders define in a sentence or two what a win for their team looks like?**

Good team huddles define the win. They take time to point the team towards that common

goal. Just like in sports, things often change as soon as the action begins, so we need to go out of our way to focus on a win that focuses our people in the right direction. **We do this so that our teams know what steps to take when they're faced with an extra crying toddler in the nursery or too many kids in the elementary room.**

There's also an aspect of celebration that's important within team huddles. Take the time to celebrate when things go well, when you meet goals, and when you reach new summits, milestones, and benchmarks as a team.

Define the Next Challenge

Every Sunday presents a certain amount of unique challenges.

If I'm leading a music team, there might be a tricky transition in the second half of the service; if I'm on a tech team, there may be a piece of gear that seems to be acting wonky. Do not let those challenges go undefined for the team. **Taking time to talk about possible challenges ahead will instill a sense of confidence in your team.** Go out of your way to help the team understand things that they need to improve on. Don't shy away from calling your team to a higher level and envisioning what it could look like to see your team step up to new levels of performance by defining performance challenges as the next step in your team's development.

Have Fun (And Maybe Share Some Food Too)

I can't underscore this too much: volunteers serve at your church because they're trying to develop friendships with other people in the church.

Fun needs to be a regular element in your team meetings.

Find ways to mix up the conversation to help your people engage and laugh with each other along the way. There's surely someone on your team who has a wit about them and can get people smiling. Why not ask them to lead part of the meeting to bring a sense of joy to it?

Maybe get people to participate in a silly icebreaker or play a game. (For example, throw a ball from person to person and whoever catches it shares something about the team that they're thankful for.) Even just the task of throwing the ball from one team member to another will add lightness and fun to the environment.



Food always seems to create a positive atmosphere. **It doesn't take more than a box of donuts or some cookies to help your team have fun as they serve.** There's just something about sharing food with others that seems to help people form bonds. It's almost hardwired in us that the people we eat with are the ones we feel the closest to.

Finding a way to share positive fun moments together as a team will create and build more friendships.

Review Past Learnings

Don't shy away from highlighting what has worked well in the past—and what hasn't—and what your team has overcome.

Review the Christmas season events from last year and highlight how you were able to respond to the challenges you experienced, such as when two or three times more people showed up on Christmas Eve, in new and innovative ways. Remind your people that it's a strength to be able to solve problems and try new things together. This builds resiliency within your people when they face new challenges because they'll lean into the knowledge that your team will solve any problems that come up together.

This kind of review is still a powerful way to cement team progress. **One of the problems we have in local church leadership is that it can**

often feel like we're not making any progress because we only do our primary service opportunity every seven days. But going back and reviewing what you've learned together as a team is a powerful way of marking time and showing that you are improving and taking steps in the right direction.

Pray Together (Hold Hands for Bonus Points!)

I know you would think in a post like this that of course we're going to say that prayer is an important part of team huddles. But I don't want you to just pray in your huddles because it's the kind of thing that you're "supposed" to do. **For some team members, huddles will be the only place where someone will ask them for prayer requests and then actually pray for those requests.**

I challenge you to step up to the plate and include an opportunity to supply an authentic, touching moment of ministry for your people. Something as simple as holding hands as we pray together not only defines visually what it means to be a part of our team, but it also seems to bring things to a more personal level as we prayerfully support our teams.



Looking for More Help with Team Development?

[Click this link to access a free resource bundle from unSeminary](#) that's designed to help both your team and your church develop even better team culture. This resource has both an MP3 and a PDF that you can put into action right away as you develop a better sense of teamwork within your church.

This resource bundle includes:

- An MP3 featuring **David A. Miller where he talks through some best practices on developing the team culture within your church.**
- A PDF on the **four leadership personalities needed for your team.** This resource might be a great discussion starter to send to team members in your church.

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