

MAKE & BREAK PRINCIPLES FOR NETWORKS

1. Effective Networks are built on relationship of trust, openness and mutual concern

Effective networks depend on transparent relationships, trust, openness and concern for one another. Developing such relationships takes time and intentional effort. There is more to working in a network than co-ordination, planning and strategy. The heart of the Gospel is restored relationships. Effective networks demonstrate the importance of restored relationships, which may very well involve proactive managing of conflict situations to bring about reconciliation. Those involved in facilitation need to be sensitive and tolerant towards members from cultures and backgrounds other than their own.

2. Effective Networks recognize the spiritual nature of what they are doing.

Effective networks seek the direction of God in all they do and are open to His leading. Members are refreshed and empowered by praying together for one another's personal needs as well as for the work.

3. Effective Networks focus on what the members have in common rather than on what makes them different.

It is important for networks to focus on the things the members have in common – like vision, focus, values and a commitment to minister to the least, lost & lowliest. It is important to acknowledge and value differences, while not emphasizing them, so the many needs of the focus groups can be met, so the whole Gospel can be manifested.

4. Effective Networks need a Facilitator or a Facilitation Team

Network does not just *happen*. It takes a *Facilitator* who is skilled and committed to the development of a network. The Facilitator must be acceptable to all the members and needs to serve the whole network. Where possible there should be a team approach to the facilitation role because a variety of gifting can make the network even more effective.

5. Effective Networks have a clear purpose

An effective network stays focused on the ultimate vision for which it was formed. Experience shows that “*Network for Network's sake*” will fail. The *Purpose* of the network gives it meaning and life. Effective networks can answer questions like “*Why do we exist?*” and “*What are we trying to accomplish?*” The process is not easy, but by focusing on its *purpose*, a network is best able to plan and to be prepared for the unexpected. A network benefits from defining and clarifying expectations and by evaluating and measuring progress and success

6. Effective Networks recognize that a network is an on-going process, not an event.

The early stages of exploring and forming a network take time. The development of trust is essential before the potential Members come together. At the first, and indeed all network meetings, it is important to understand that imposing any single, partisan agenda will doom the network to failure. Later, in the operating phase of the network, time for *nurturing* trust and for processing issues is equally important. It is even more challenging to maintain a network than to launch it.

7. Effective Networks discuss *Function* before *Form*

An effective network will focus on its function and the needs it can meet. It will begin by identifying needs and barriers to progress and from these agree priorities for action. The initial focus needs to be on *what* the network can do (the function) rather than on *how* it works (the structure). An effective network needs to be able to accommodate changes and new members, to review and refine the *what* and the *how*.

8. Effective Networks recognize that they have various constituencies whose needs must be acknowledged and contributions valued.

There are more people involved in a network than those that sit around the table. The constituencies involved include the leaders and staff of the member agencies, the supporters of the member agencies, the people we are seeking to serve and the network itself. The network must understand the needs of each of these groups and seek to meet them. It also needs to acknowledge the contributions each constituency makes and value them.

9. Effective Networks maintain a high level of participation and ownership by the members but this does not come free of charge.

It is important that Members own and are committed to the common vision and its outworking. Increased participation in decision-making increases ownership and commitment. Just participating in meetings costs time and money. Deeper commitment involves an even greater investment, but the return on these investments should more than offset the contributions made.

10. Effective Networks impart the vision and skills for networking among all the Members continuously.

Effective Networks see the importance of Member members understanding the vision for network and developing skills in partnering. This may include training in development of networks on occasions when the network meets together.