



## 05 Being a Strategic Partner

### Summary

There is an increasing need for LDHR to be a strategic partner, but what does that mean? This lesson outlines ways LDHR can be more strategic and offers suggestions for developing skills in this area.

### Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

1. Explain the value of the LDHR strategic partner
2. Name seven different ways to partner strategically
3. Describe the purpose and work of a strategic partner
4. Plan steps required to develop skills in this area

*(Special thanks to Mike Brown, US Campus Ministry, and Paul Cheesman from Global LDHR for their collaborative work on this lesson.)*

### What is a Strategic Partner?

Being a strategic partner is about developing ways to align our people and LDHR strategies most effectively in collaboration with the broader ministry. In this way, LDHR plays a significant role in accelerating the accomplishment of ministry objectives. By taking the initiative and leading forward, an LDHR leader can increase the capacity of a ministry in several ways:

1. The ministry more readily channels resources to meet the demands of specific strategies.
2. People are equipped and trained to accomplish ministry objectives.
3. Leaders execute change processes more rapidly.

## Strategic Partnering in Action

### Partnering in Policy

A campus sending team noticed a steady increase in staff applicants from two-year university graduates. The traditional policy required a four-year degree. The campus team and LDHR, as strategic partners, knew the scope of the ministry would be enhanced by including applicants from two-year universities. The Sending Team partnered with the LDHR leaders to change the policy and opened the way for men and women with two-year degrees to join in reaching the mission.

### Partnering in Training

The national ministry leaders recognized that staff members and volunteers needed more training on launching spiritual movements. Because of security reasons and COVID restrictions, it wasn't easy to effectively train staff across the country. Recognizing this gap, LDHR, as a strategic partner, collaborated with other ministry leaders to create online courses that allowed staff in multiple locations and strategies to receive the training they needed.

## A Role for LDHR

An LDHR strategic partner recognizes that sometimes LDHR practices and policies may need to be maintained and sometimes may need to change to help the organization accomplish its mission objectives.

The primary work of the LDHR leader as a strategic partner is to translate the current reality related to ministry strategies into LDHR priorities. This may require leaders to shift their focus toward:

- More partnering with other leaders and less policing current policy.
- More longer-term planning and less short-term thinking.
- More longer-term planning and less short-term problems
- More mission-focus and less policy-driven.

So how do we move toward these new paradigms? What can LDHR do to be an effective strategic partner? Every ministry situation is different, and there are many ways we can strategically come alongside other leaders to accelerate movements. In the coming lessons, we will look at these seven ways LDHR can be a strategic partner:



### 1) Partnering in strategy development

Today, more than ever, leaders see the value of having people-specialists involved as strategic partners. LDHR leaders who develop their strategic planning, thinking, and relational skills will be able to engage confidently in conversations with other leaders and contribute their best to the teams they serve. Familiarity with specific tools like [SWOT analysis](#) and [PrEFACE](#) adds extra value to our participation.

### 2) Identifying the people-implications

Knowing your team is vital for implementing strategies. Here are some of the questions to consider related to people-implications when discussing a change initiative:

- What is our movement’s capacity for change right now? (leadership, field staff, infrastructure).

- What’s the feeling on the field about this change?
- How are we going to involve others in the decision-making process? (communication, involvement, feedback)
- What’s the current reality of staff members’ lives? (what other stuff is going on at the moment?)
- How much change have your staff members experienced in the last five years? (How many times have they moved or changed roles?)
- How robust are staff and team relationships right now?
- What training, support systems, and care processes can we implement to help the team adjust to the changes? (for those who desire the change and those who don’t?)
- How else can LDHR support the change process?

### 3) Strategic Problem Solving

Ministry leaders often face decisions with no clear answers; they encounter obstacles that appear insurmountable. Some day-to-day choices are simple, but others are complex — significantly impacting major strategic initiatives. An LDHR leader, who considers people resources, training, and developmental tools used in all strategies, sees things differently. This perspective helps in problem-solving. LDHR can come alongside leaders with tools such as PrEFACE and can facilitate problem-solving from a neutral position. We have the opportunity to help leaders make things happen proactively.

### 4) Adding value through leveraging strengths

We sometimes hear comments like “I’d never considered a role in operations before,” “I’m excited to look into a different role that fits better with my strengths,” or even “This is the first time I’ve found my niche in the ministry.” Research shows that when people know and leverage their strengths at work, they are more fulfilled and engaged; therefore, the organization benefits also. Staff members sometimes stay in a role because of a misplaced sense of calling, responsibility, or loyalty. Through assessments, surveys, and connecting with our staff, LDHR can suggest individual or ministry-wide opportunities that help staff members thrive as they contribute to the mission.

## 5) Integrating LDHR strategy

It's vital to develop a strategic plan for LDHR that considers accelerating movements everywhere. An effective LDHR leader integrates people needs and strategic needs. The LDHR strategy contributes to the overall ministry strategic plan. We can ask: How will LDHR collaborate with others to produce a sustainable quantity and quality of leaders to help accomplish the mission?

Our leadership frameworks – Strategic Planning, Building Powerful Ministry Teams (BPMT), the Leadership Framework, and the Movements Framework integrate powerfully to move the mission forward. These four also integrate with our five Strategic Intents. Watch this [video](#) of Andrea Buczynski as she demonstrates integrating LDHR strategy.

## 6) Organizational Diagnosis

LDHR leaders effectively serve in the strategic partner role when skilled in organisational diagnosis. They understand the ministry's current reality, including the "condition of the flock" (Prov 27:23) or how the people are doing.

Organisational diagnosis includes knowledge of the strategic plan and how the ministry is moving toward God's future for us.

Answering diagnostic questions like these helps set priorities for LDHR:

- What are we doing well? What can we continue? How can we celebrate?
- Where do we need improvement? What's at the root of the problem? What can we do differently?
- What resources do we need to accomplish our objectives? How will we obtain those resources?

## 7) Organizational Development

As a strategic partner, LDHR thinks with other leaders about the bigger picture of organisational development. Part of our ability to implement our strategies relies on having the appropriate, healthy elements to accomplish all we envision. Some organisational elements to consider include policies, processes, structures, and mindsets and behaviors. Leadership, values and strategy are other crucial elements of the big picture.



As we develop the organisation, ask questions about any of the elements. Developing these areas well improves motivation, individual engagement with mission goals, teamwork, healthy culture, performance levels, and results. Here are sample questions to begin:

## Policies

Do our policies restrict or enhance the movement? Do they accelerate the mission or put the brakes on?

## Processes

Do we continue using processes because “We have always done it that way,” or are we updating technology appropriately and adapting our tools to fit culturally and support leaders?

## Structure

Are we organised to achieve the maximum effectiveness for the national and local teams?

## Mindsets and Behaviours

Structure change alone will not get us to the mission. LDHR plays an essential role in building healthy culture and training and equipping leaders for the whole organisation.

## Developing Skills for New Opportunities

There are several skill areas to develop as a strategic partner:

- Understand and become an effective communicator of the ministry’s mission, vision, values, and strategic plan.
- Become knowledgeable of the ministry’s current reality. Talk to leaders and staff on the field to understand what is going well and what needs to change.
- Become proficient at leading groups through strategic planning, decision-making, problem-solving, and organizational change processes.
- Consistently schedule times to think and plan.

As we gain competence in these skills, we also grow in confidence and contribute strategically to collaborative opportunities.

## Reflection

- What is the value and importance of being a strategic partner?
- Does the thought of being a strategic partner challenge you? Scare you? Excite you? Seem irrelevant? Please explain.
- What benefits and difficulties can you see in becoming a strategic partner?
- From what you know of your role so far, how can you begin to operate more as a strategic partner?

## Assignments and Resources

### Assignment Options

- Identify a change or new strategy to implement in LDHR to give lift to your ministry’s strategic plan.
- Meet with several ministry leaders to better understand your current realities.
- Use PrEFACE or another tool with your team or another collaborative group to solve a problem.
- Read chapters 3-6 from *Human Resource Champions* by David Ulrich.

### Additional Resources

1. [SWOT analysis](#)
2. [PrEFACE problem-solving method](#)
3. [HR as a Strategic Partner](#)
4. [The Return of Well-Being](#) by Paul Cheesman