

Your go-to guide for humbly leading and stewarding church networks...

Daniel Yang

Here is mature, gospel-rich, battle-formed ministry wisdom!

Paul David Tripp

STRONGER TOGETHER



PARTNERSHIP VIRTUES and the VICES THAT SUBVERT THEM

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ZONDERVAN REFLECTIVE

Stronger Together

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VIRTUE

CONVICTION

Vice Audit 1: Consumerism

Rank the degree to which you agree with the following statements on a scale of 1–5 (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree). Write your ranking in the blank to the left of each statement.

- _____ 1. Our attitude toward network partnership is driven more by the calculation of benefits (or consumer interests) our church might receive as our return on our investment.

- _____ 2. The conscience of our leadership team would be clear if our church was completely independent, with no outside network or denominational affiliation.
- _____ 3. The opportunity we have to give to gospel missions rarely factors into our evaluation of our network or denominational partnership.
- _____ 4. When we joined our network, our hopes that the partnership would help us grow numerically and financially were the primary drivers behind our decision.
- _____ 5. We find ourselves regularly disappointed with the fact we're giving more than we feel we receive from our network.

_____ **Total**

If your church and leadership scored between 0–8, you likely have strongly held Great Commission convictions. If you scored between 9–18, take some time to sit with your leadership team and talk through the four pillars in this chapter. If you scored between 19–25, your church is in danger of succumbing to the vice of consumerism. Take some time to confess this to the Lord and pray that God will help you develop a local church culture that values his mission beyond your church.



GIFTED LEADERSHIP

Vice Audit 2: Isolationism

Rank the degree to which you agree with the following statements on a scale of 1–5 (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree). Write your ranking in the blank to the left of each statement.

- _____ 1. There are more leaders on our team who are gifted for care, teaching, protection, and stability than there are leaders who are gifted for catalyzing mission efforts.

- _____ 2. I tend to believe that our church can catalyze mission efforts apart from a partnership with gifted leaders outside of our local church.
- _____ 3. Our team finds it more appealing to just run our own ministry playbook without being challenged by new leaders, new ideas, new methods, or people who are less impressed with our methods, models, or church achievements.
- _____ 4. The leaders on our team are untethered from small groups where people know them. They are not connected to truth-speaking relationships where their attitudes and behaviors can be regularly challenged.
- _____ 5. It's rare for our church to recognize leaders from within our congregation who could plant a church or are gifted and called to bless the larger church.
- _____ **Total**

If your church and leadership scored between 0–8, you likely have a healthy understanding of gifted extra-local leadership. If you scored between 9–18, take some time to sit with your leadership team and talk through the isolationism verdicts in this chapter. If you scored between 19–25, your church is in danger of succumbing to the vice of isolationism. Take some time to confess this to the Lord and begin praying that God will help you to develop a church culture that values accountability and the gifts of extra-local leaders.

MAPPING YOUR NETWORK



Alignment Continuum Audit

To plot where your network lands on this continuum, score yourself on the following quiz. Write your score for each question on the line to the left:

- _____ Does our network have an agreed-on doctrinal statement, theological vision, or list of core beliefs? Yes (score -1) or No (score +1).
- _____ Do new churches or leaders come into the partnership primarily because of their affinity with our theological vision and doctrinal distinctives (score -1)? Or do they enter our network primarily because of their affinity with the way we contextualize and do mission work (score +1)? Score 0 if you are unclear.
- _____ Would our network be okay with planting broadly evangelical churches that don't fully agree with some of our core doctrinal statements? Yes (score +1) or No (score -1).
- _____ Does the network require that new churches adopt a core doctrinal statement or book of church order that is more particular than the broadly evangelical Lausanne Covenant? Yes (score -1) or No (score +1).
- _____ Are churches removed or asked to remove themselves from our partnership when their doctrinal commitments change? Yes (score -1) or No (score +1).
- _____ **Total**

Add up your score. If your network scored between -5 and 0, it plots on the theological side of the alignment continuum. If it scored between 0 and 5, your network plots on the missional side. The further your number is from zero, the closer your network is to one of the continuum's edges.

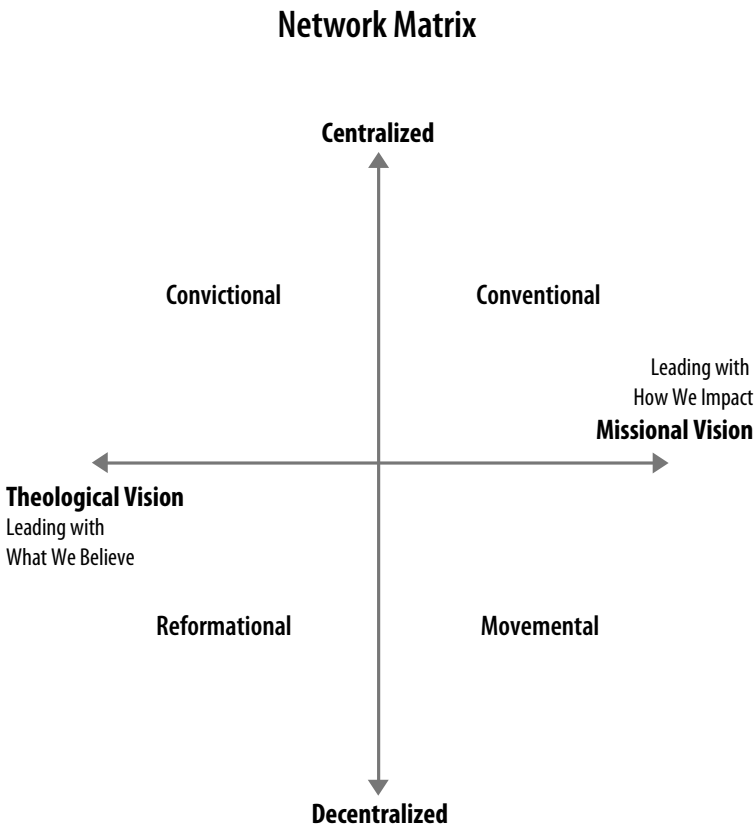


Structure Continuum Audit

To plot where your current network or any network partnerships you are considering lands on this continuum, score yourself on the following quiz. Write your score for each question on the line to the left:

- _____ Is new growth or expansion initiated by network employees and extra-local leaders (score +1) or by leaders in the churches (score -1)?
- _____ Are extra-local leaders required for the assessment and approval of new church planters? Yes (score +1) or No (score -1).
- _____ Are new church planters primarily trained by their sending church or designated residency churches (score -1), or are they trained in a network-directed cohort or affiliated seminary track (score +1)?
- _____ Are organizational decisions for the network primarily made by the network staff and board (score +1) or by delegates from the churches (score -1)?
- _____ Is support for a new church plant primarily channeled through the sending church (score -1) or through a shared network fund (score +1)?
- _____ **Total**

Add up your score. If your network scored between -5 and 0 , it plots on the more decentralized side of the structure continuum. If it scored between 0 and 5 , your network plots on the more centralized side. The further your number is from zero, the closer your network is to one of the continuum's edges.



3 VIRTUE

COLLABORATION

Vice Audit 3: Radical Individualism

Rank the degree to which you agree with the following statements on a scale of 1–5 (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree). Write your ranking in the blank to the left of each statement.

- _____ 1. Our church's leaders are more predisposed to seeing other churches in our region or network as competitors than we are to serving the other churches for the greater good.
- _____ 2. Leaders in our church typically buck against the group norms of our network. It's hard to find common ground with other churches and leaders.
- _____ 3. It's hard for our leaders to recognize there are others outside our church who can help us.

- _____ 4. It's difficult for the leaders at our church to imagine a definition of success that's different from the way we've always defined it.
- _____ 5. Our church leadership team struggles to make commitments to outside groups, particularly if that commitment involves a level of sacrifice.
- _____ **Total**

If your church and leadership scored between 0–8, you are likely strong collaborators. If you scored between 9–18, take some time to sit with your leadership team and talk through the three expressions of healthy collaboration discussed in this chapter. If you scored between 19–25, your church is in danger of succumbing to the vice of radical individualism. Take some time to confess this to the Lord and begin praying that God will help you develop a church culture that looks away from “Me” and more to “We.”

4 VIRTUE

THE DYNAMICS OF RENEWAL

Vice Audit 4: Institutionalism

Rank the degree to which you agree with the following statements on a scale of 1–5 (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree). Write your ranking in the blank to the left of each statement.

- _____ 1. Our team craves clarity in a way that diminishes our willingness to take risks for the mission.
- _____ 2. We're tempted to turn our preferences into immutable principles.

- _____ 3. Our team trends toward dictionary leadership, not thesaurus leadership. In our organization, we regularly judge new ideas by whether they fit with our preconceived definitions, custom, and rules.
- _____ 4. It's not common for leaders on our team to confess their sins to others in the organization.
- _____ 5. Our team spends more time on maintaining ministry agendas and programs than we do pursuing a culture of creative multiplication.
- _____ **Total**

If your church and leadership scored between 0–8, you have the kind of culture that is positioned for movement. If you scored between 9–18, take some time to sit with your leadership team and talk through the dynamics of personal and organizational renewal in the chapter. If you scored between 19–25, your church is in danger of succumbing to the vice of institutionalism. Take some time to confess this to the Lord and begin praying that he will help you develop a church culture that embodies movement dynamics.

5 VIRTUE

A KINGDOM MINDSET

Vice Audit 5: Tribalism

Rank the degree to which you agree with the following statements on a scale of 1–5 (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree). Write your ranking in the blank to the left of each statement.

- _____ 1. The celebration of *our* ministry and *our* leaders is our driving ethos.
- _____ 2. In our churches, everything must be done “the network way.”
- _____ 3. It’s rare for our church or leadership team to publicly celebrate something God is doing in a church outside of our tribe.

- _____ 4. Often our affiliation with our network and denominational group gets top billing, even over our kingdom citizenship.
- _____ 5. Our church does not give money except to entities affiliated with our denomination and network.
- _____ **Total**

If your church and leadership scored between 0–8, you likely have the kind of culture that embodies a kingdom mindset. If you scored between 9–18, take some time to sit with your leadership team and talk through the three kingdom reminders in the chapter. If you scored between 19–25, your church is in danger of succumbing to tribalism. Take some time to confess this to the Lord and pray that he will help you develop a love for his larger kingdom work.

VIRTUE

HUMILITY

Vice Audit 6: Egotism

Rank the degree to which you agree with the following statements on a scale of 1–5 (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree). Write your ranking in the blank to the left of each statement.

- _____ 1. Many of our ministry efforts as a church focus on building the influence and platform of our key leader or leaders.
- _____ 2. Our leaders live within their own “reality distortion field.”

- _____ 3. Our leaders have relational networks or small groups that create the illusion of honesty but supply little actual accountability.
- _____ 4. For us, team has often been a revolving door. It's been difficult to keep good leaders.
- _____ 5. The ambitions of our church have settled more exclusively on promoting our brand and don't often include promoting the greater kingdom good.
- _____ **Total**

If your church and leadership scored between 0–8, you're likely cultivating a culture of humility. If you scored between 9–18, take some time to sit with your leadership team and talk through the marks of egotism in the chapter. If you scored between 19–25, your church is in danger of succumbing to the vice of egotism. Take some time to confess this to the Lord and begin praying that he will help you put off the selfish pursuit of a celebrity platform to humbly honor him.



MODESTY

Vice Audit 7: Triumphalism

Rank the degree to which you agree with the following statements on a scale of 1–5 (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree). Write your ranking in the blank to the left of each statement.

- _____ 1. Our mission updates, ministry overviews, and conversations with prospective members are often filled with hype.
- _____ 2. It's easy for our leadership team to get impatient with fruit that doesn't come according to our timetable.

- _____ 3. Our excitement and experience of a new gospel movement in our church and network tempt our leaders to see ourselves as better than those around us or those who went before us.
- _____ 4. The newest ministry ideas get the buzz at our church. It's rare for our leadership team to look at church history as a way of evaluating our ministry.
- _____ 5. I just believe that our church will be around forever!
- _____ **Total**

If your church and leadership scored between 0-8, you're likely cultivating a culture of modesty. If you scored between 9-18, take some time to sit with your leadership team and talk through the characteristics of triumphalist leaders described in the chapter. If you scored between 19-25, your church is in danger of succumbing to the vice of triumphalism. Take some time to confess this to the Lord and begin praying that he will help you cultivate a culture of contentment and modest expectations.