

FORMAL, INFORMAL, & NONFORMAL METHODS

Staff development is not just about programs, but it is a heart for developing our staff with greater ability to fulfill their God-given destiny in missions. Out of that heart for developing our staff will flow three streams. One will be formal methods, such as scheduled training events or planning to send our staff for further training. Formal methods are important for passing on information and concepts that are foundational for broadening understanding and developing thinking and problem solving skills.

Another stream that flows from a heart for staff development is using informal methods such as working beside our staff, taking them with us to meetings or ministry, or just using normal every day opportunities to influence thinking and attitudes. Informal methods are ideal for nurturing values, and developing Christ like character, attitudes, and relationship skills.

The third stream flowing from a heart for staff development is nonformal methods such as sending new staff out to share about their ministry with three friends or discussing a case study of a conflict between two missionaries. Nonformal methods are *intentional* and *planned* (Ferris, pp 53-58), but don't necessarily require a scheduled seminar or workshop. Ideal for developing skills and application of teaching, nonformal methods can be applied to any kind of training. For example asking DTS students to observe three public presentations of the Gospel and reflecting on what they learned is a nonformal method used in learning evangelism skills. To enable application of training, a leader might ask a staff member after attending a budgeting workshop to be involved in writing the outreach budget for the DTS.

Providing for hands-on experience after formal training is vital for helping staff move beyond knowledge to application. Practically, this means that leaders set on developing their staff need to identify opportunities for staff to apply what they have learned in seminars, workshops, or schools. Trainers, also must think in terms of practical application methods. Just providing a workshop or sending someone for training is not enough for developing staff, unless new knowledge is transferred to consistent application through practice and experience.

For truly successful staff development, all three methods should be employed. Those with a heart for staff development will intentionally invest planning time in both formal and nonformal methods and will make themselves available for informal opportunities with staff to model values, character, and attitudes. These three streams of staff development will produce more knowledgeable, skilled and effective missionaries.