

Pastor's Non-interlocking Responsibilities

The job of pastoring has been compared to that of a homemaker: many different tasks to perform, none of which connect with any other in any appreciable way, and no one standing over you to make sure each task is done properly. As a result, homemakers and pastors both tend to experience a great deal of anxiety as each confronts the beginning of their day or week, deciding what tasks to tackle, in which order, with what amount of intensity.

Consider this list (which undoubtedly is partial) of potential responsibilities:

- **Prepare to preach and/or teach**
- **Preach**
- **Teach**
- **Visit (sick, shut ins, new members, etc.)**
- **Counsel**
- **Team build**
- **Hire staff**
- **Lead the church board**
- **Train & develop staff**
- **Disciple**
- **Manage the budget**
- **Fundraise**
- **Develop various programs: e.g. Outreach (evangelism)**

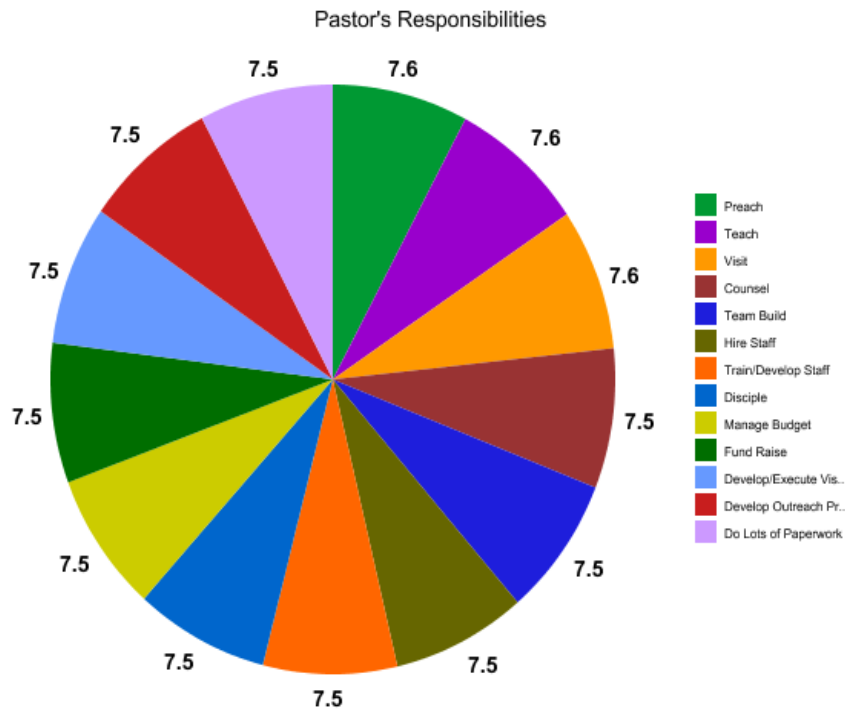
Let's graph these 13 responsibilities. Notice that each responsibility is given equal weight. And yet, everyone knows that each one of these responsibilities is not co-equal to all the rest. But which responsibilities are more important than other responsibilities? Is preaching more important than counseling, or budgetary monitoring?

Look at these responsibilities and try to ascertain which of these responsibilities you are good at and are thereby energized by when you perform them. Then note those items that you are okay at but would rather someone else perform. Lastly note those responsibilities that you are frankly poor at, and need to off load as quickly as possible.

If the pastor is in a smaller church situation, s/he will find her/himself responsible for most if not all of the above list. For those who minister in larger churches with multiple staffs, the ability to parcel out some of these tasks is much greater. But even pastors in much larger churches often get caught in the majority of this responsibilities list.

The Central Problem. There are at least three difficulties as the pastor considers this list of responsibilities:

1. This list is a recipe for burnout. Attempting to perform all of these tasks adequately, just from a time point of view, require a 24/7 schedule which is impossible to maintain.
2. No one person, no matter how wired, can successful perform more than four or five of the above. As an example, people who are good with other people (visiting, teaching, counseling) usually make poor administrators (hiring, developing staff, managing the budget, etc.).
3. We invariably default to our areas of strength, where we are energized and receive our highest accolades. Therefore, the four or so areas of our strengths will receive the lion's share of our time, while the other areas (especially those four or five we do extremely poorly) will languish. If I am good with people, I tend to ignore the administrative part of my job (unless our church is big enough that I can offload this to a more competent subordinate). If I like to preach, teach and do research and study, I tend to ignore visitation and possibly administration.



We have already looked at the concept of Intentional Difference (ID). This ID is what makes each of us unique. It's the cumulative elements of our talents, our experiences, and our learning that together sets us apart and makes us unique. To live as much as possible within our ID is to be energized and passionate about what we do.

When we are functioning in our ID, we are extremely focused, lost in the moment. Sufficient to say, the effective leader is one who spends a preponderance of her time functioning in her Intentional Difference. This ID represents that convergence of our talents-turned-into-strengths where all of our faculties are combined in a harmonious order. We perform at our peak, getting lost in the process and losing a sense of the passage of time. We can work for hours, and are actually energized rather than depleted by the experience. At these times, we are authentically centered in the true sense of ourselves – we are well-defined. We pursue our ID for its own sake, not worrying about the residuals that might flow from its successful prosecution. When we are in our ID, we are re-creating (though most would assume that recreation is the antithesis of work. This is true if our work involves us doing little of our ID).

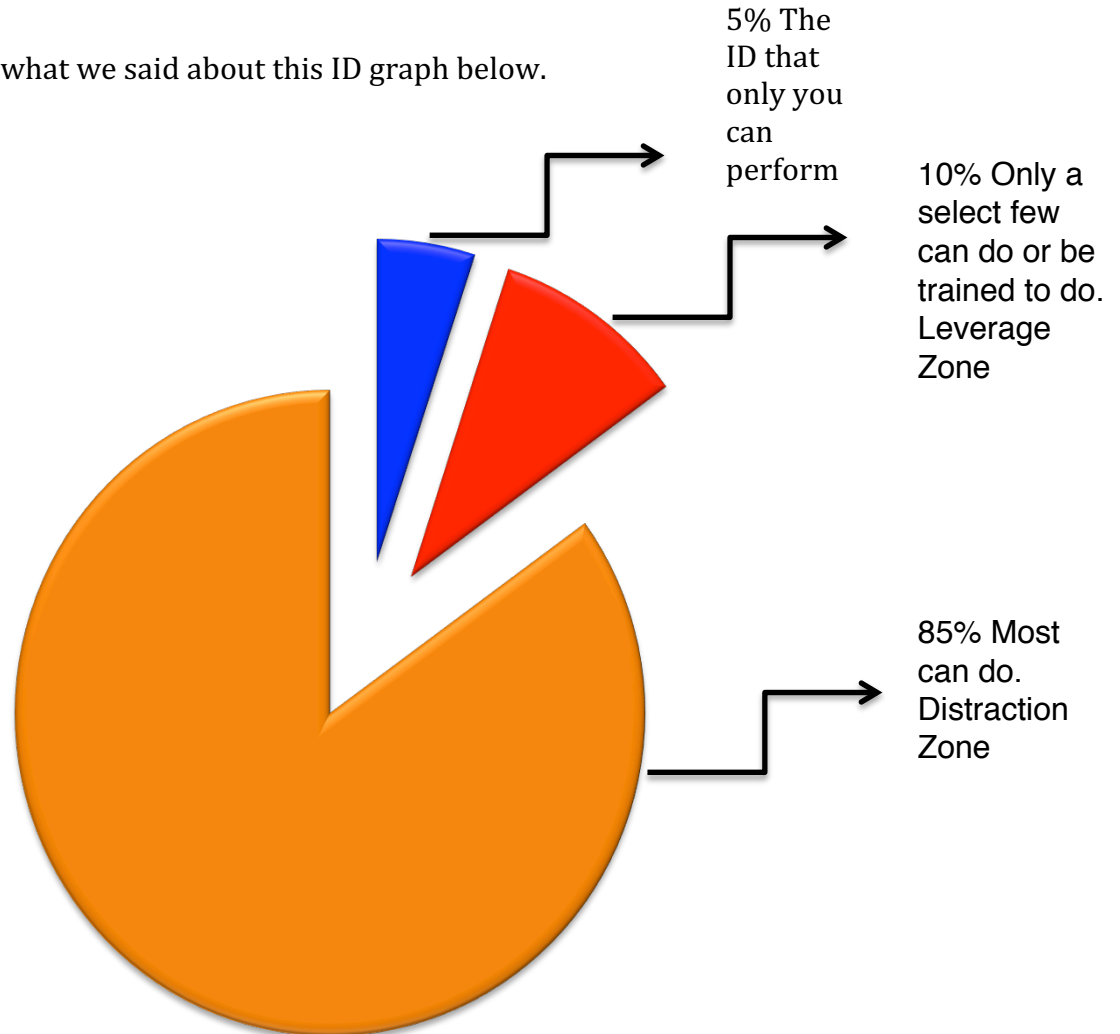
When we work within our ID, we are authentically centered in the true sense of ourselves – we are well-defined. We pursue our ID for its own sake, not worrying about the residuals that might flow from its successful prosecution.¹

Obviously, those who can combine their career with their ID will be those who function in those careers at the highest levels, at the same time maintaining a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment that unfortunately few of us realize. Those who are rarely if ever in their ID will usually find themselves depleted. These folks may also turn to artificial stimulants to produce the synthetic high that ID naturally produces (although these artificial means often lead to addictions and a host of problems associated with that).

¹ This seems to be the thrust of Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” (ESV). “The way he should go” I would argue is his ID. That’s why he doesn’t have a mid-life crisis and abandon his chosen career which has proved unfulfilling.

The Math

Remember what we said about this ID graph below.



What I find in my coaching of ministers is often a group of people who are over-worked and burning out, attempting to do tasks and functions for which they are poorly 'wired.' Yes, they may go off to various workshops in an attempt to bring up their very poor performance to at best marginal levels of performance. But is that the answer? Attempting to raise poor performance to marginal performance? Or is it better strategy to, as best we can, given our circumstances, choose more of our weekly tasks among those that fall within our 5%, leaving the rest to others who are better suited to perform them?

My ID and My Responsibilities. I want you now to consider your specific responsibilities that you have to perform in your role of minister. As in the example below, in the yellow line place the specific responsibility. Below it, break down that responsibility into specific behaviors needed to successfully complete that task. Then in the second column rank the responsibility as to priority placed on it to fulfill the

church mission. In the third column, score yourself from 1 to 5 (1 being poor, 5 being excellent) as to how you rank yourself actually performing that behavior. If you want, you can also give this to a trusted person or two who know your performance to see how they'd rank you.

My Responsibilities	Priority A,B,C	Score 1 to 5
<i>Staff functions</i>		
▪ Build trust among team members for him/herself as leader and for one another.		
▪ Engages in healthy conflict		
▪ Commits to decisions and actions		
▪ Builds team where everyone holds each other accountable		
▪ Focuses on collective results		
<i>Preaching and Teaching</i>		
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<i>Be with People</i>		
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<i>Administration</i>		
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Leading the Church Board		
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Those responsibilities above that you scored a 5 probably fall within your Intentional Difference – your ‘sweet spot,’ those tasks that only you can do. Those that you scored a 4 and 3 probably fall within the 10%, those tasks others can be trained to do. Anything below a 3 falls within the 85%, those tasks anyone can do. It is these lowest scored tasks that it is best to leave to others to perform.

A Team. I would argue that it is critical to work within a team, to *always* work within a team, even if you’re church planting. My friend Todd Hahn has planted a couple of very successful churches. He told me that he always begins with a team, realizing that he does not possess all of the gifts necessary to be successful. Team members do not have to be paid members. In fact, this may be completely impossible depending on your situation. But well-chosen volunteers can function just as well performing certain critical functions, functions that you as the pastor do not possess.

Selecting the Team. Team selection is usually problematic throughout the organizational spectrum. When leaders select for teams, they usually make two glaring mistakes:

1. They don’t have a clear idea as to the talents that will be critical for the team to successfully complete its mission.
2. They go about selecting people who are: a) just like themselves (therefore duplicating talents rather than expanding talents), b) people they would like to hang out with and have as buddies, not people with complementary talents.

Working With and Through the Team

Now one primary responsibility you the pastor have is to actually pastor your team. The team in turn are the primary ministers of the congregation in the various functions they perform. From Jesus sending out his disciples two by two, to Paul taking along a ministry team, scripture notes over and over that we are not called to ‘Lone Ranger’ ministries. We can’t be. The metaphor in First Corinthians 14 is that of a body, each part essential to the proper functioning of the whole.

Much has been said and written about team functioning. Google has included what they consider five key ingredients to successful teams which I have found helpful:²

² *The five keys to a successful Google team.* JULIA ROZOVSKY, ANALYST, GOOGLE PEOPLE OPERATIONS NOVEMBER 17, 2015.

1. **Psychological safety:** Can we take risks on this team without feeling insecure or embarrassed? This is the critical foundational issue for teams, and revolves around the whole notion of trust. Teams with high trust are able to admit mistakes, are able to enter into mission-focused conflict, are generally able to be vulnerable. As a result, these teams are able to 'think out of the box' and make significant strides that other teams can only dream about.
2. **Dependability:** Can we count on each other to do high quality work on time? This kind of dependability requires mutual peer accountability.
3. **Structure & clarity:** Are goals, roles, and execution plans on our team clear?
4. **Meaning of work:** Are we working on something that is personally important for each of us?
5. **Impact of work:** Do we fundamentally believe that the work we're doing matters?

Take Away

- ✓ Knowing your own ID, and working as best you can within that sphere, is critical to your own emotional well-being. Surrounding yourself with a team that can shore up those areas where you do not perform optimally is critical. And maintaining that team as a high-functioning entity is also critical to the well-being of your church.

Take Action

Above I had you mark down your specific responsibilities, the priorities of each, and how you see yourself performing in each of these. Now it would be good to get feedback from others in your life as to how they see you doing. Below is a survey that you can take yourself, and get a copy to your spouse, chair of your ruling board, key staff people, and one or two other leaders in the church. This will give you a better handle on how you're perceived by those you lead.

Directions: Please go through the following competencies and mark each according to the key below. Have spouse, several friends, and key church leaders take this will also be helpful.

Key

- 1 = Rarely or Never**
- 2 = Sometimes**
- 3 = Often**
- 4 = Most of the Time**

Spiritual Leadership				
1. Provides spiritual direction to the church.	1	2	3	4
2. Demonstrates personal spiritual maturity.	1	2	3	4
3. Leads others toward spiritual maturity.	1	2	3	4
4. Is personally committed to spiritual disciplines such as prayer and Bible study.	1	2	3	4
Comments:				
Preserves the Core Values and Purpose of the church				
1. Communicates the values and mission of the church (what the church is all about).	1	2	3	4
2. Lives out the values and mission of the church.	1	2	3	4
3. Makes decisions based on the values and mission of the church.	1	2	3	4
4. Protects what is most important to the church.	1	2	3	4
Comments:				
Mentors People				
1. Invests intentional time to develop leaders.	1	2	3	4
2. Shares responsibility with others.	1	2	3	4
3. Gives permission to allow others to take initiative.	1	2	3	4
4. Provides constructive feedback in helpful ways.	1	2	3	4
Comments:				

Empowerment				
1. Provides knowledge and resources to enable others to solve problems.	1	2	3	4
2. Provides encouragement and feedback.	1	2	3	4
3. Encourages risk-taking.	1	2	3	4
4. Provides strategic direction, without micro-managing.	1	2	3	4
Comments:				
Basic Management				
1. Demonstrates competence in financial / budget issues.	1	2	3	4
2. Demonstrates effective time management skills.	1	2	3	4
3. Demonstrates effectiveness in basic technologies for communication.	1	2	3	4
4. Leads meetings effectively.	1	2	3	4
Comments:				
Teambuilding				
1. Pulls together the right people for projects or ministries.	1	2	3	4
2. Builds consensus decision-making at the team level.	1	2	3	4
3. Keeps the team focused on the strategic direction.	1	2	3	4
4. Encourages brain-storming and idea generation.	1	2	3	4
Comments:				
Conflict Management				
1. Encourages healthy debate around ideas and issues.	1	2	3	4
2. Keeps conflict from becoming personalized.	1	2	3	4

3. Addresses conflict when it emerges.	1	2	3	4
4. Effectively resolves conflict.	1	2	3	4
Comments:				
Pastoral Essentials				
1. Is an effective teacher / preacher.	1	2	3	4
2. Shows care for people.	1	2	3	4
3. Creates a safe environment to discuss difficult issues.	1	2	3	4
4. Demonstrates integrity.	1	2	3	4
Comments:				
Is a Good Leader				
1. Initiates action, motivates others, and inspires people to follow.	1	2	3	4
2. Maintains own opinions while considering others' opinions (knows when to appropriately maintain own opinion when not in the minority).	1	2	3	4
3. Coaches, encourages and assists others, and inspires people to follow.	1	2	3	4
4. Understands impact her/his personality and behavior has on other people.	1	2	3	4
Comments:				