

building and mobilizing teams

by Marv Penner

Reviewed by Ruth Hassall

I really love it when I read a book and know that the person who wrote it is thoroughly immersed today in the things that they are writing about, rather than drawing on experiences from some time in the dark, distant past!

This book is part of the 'Youth Ministry in the Trenches' series, and there is a real sense that the book is grounded in day to day reality. All the books in this series are written by people currently serving in youth ministry and with many years' experience.

In this particular book, Marv Penner addresses some of the key issues surrounding the perennial joy (some might say challenge) of how we go about recruiting people well and then work effectively together as a team.

He offers helpful insights on how to build community and strong relationships, how to utilize the unique gifts of each volunteer, the importance of setting standards for accountability and safety as well as how to empower and energize volunteers to lead.

What I really enjoyed about the book was that it was very motivational but also incredibly practical – a good combination.

The book is split into three parts:

- Thinking it through
- Putting it together
- Making it work

At the end of each chapter there is a useful 'Action Plan', with questions to reflect on and then take action on.

The chapters are short, and I read the whole book in just over an hour, but it is a book I shall keep close at hand, and refer to regularly, as I think through the teams that I'm part of and how we work and serve together.

Penner is very honest as he reflects on his own experience as a leader of volunteers and courageously brings into the open some of the realities of leading a team, such as the attractiveness of doing everything yourself, or how we often recruit out of desperation, rather than thinking through the character and skills of the people that we're appointing to work with young people.

He raises the bar on the level of commitment and character required to serve teenagers well, but gives real encouragement as to how that could be made a reality in our own lives as leaders and the impact it can make on those that we lead.

With a great mixture of story, illustrations and practical wisdom I think this is a really helpful resource to have available to dip into, and while it may not offer a full, in-depth study of teamwork it's a great starting point that presents some key questions for us to consider.

