



PEOPLE AROUND US

How to Engage Different Types of People

In Canoeing the Mountains, Tod Bolsinger identifies six categories of people who it can be helpful to identify as we seek to work towards any change initiative (chapter 12). We've adapted his material a little for our context.

1. ALLIES

- Anyone who is convinced of the change initiative and is committed to seeing it fulfilled.
- They are in alignment and agreement with the adaptive changes.
- Not all allies are friends, as may not like you or share the vision for the change, but still directly benefit from change, whereas friends love you and are loyal to you whatever happens.
- Allies all about furthering the mission. Period.

Questions to reflect on:

- Who might be your allies?
- Why might they be allies? What do they stand to gain or lose from allegiance to the initiatives?
- What's their main objective in being your ally? (Support you? Support the initiative itself? Support the church?)
- How can this ally best help with the successful implementation of the change?

Reflections

2. CONFIDANTS

- To be a confidant they must care more for you than they do about the mission.
- Healthy confidants are normally outside the system and give honest feedback about yourself as a leader in the system.
- They are invested in you.

Questions to reflect on:

- Who are your confidants?
- What perspective do they offer?
- What do they need to fully support you?
- How can they help you best?

Reflections

3. OPPONENTS

- Opponents are those who have markedly different perspectives from yours and who risk losing the most if you and your initiative go forward.
- They are not your enemies, they are simply against the change initiative.
- Best to know them, respect them, and stay connected.

Questions to reflect on:

- Who might be your opponents?
- Why might they be opponents?
- What do they stand to lose if your initiative succeeds?
- How might you neutralise their opposition or get them on your side?
- How will your initiative be stronger through incorporating some of the ideas of your opponents?

Reflections

4. SENIOR AUTHORITIES

- Stay in relationship and close proximity with those above you.
- Help them feel the heat of urgency and anxiety that is creating the need for change, don't shelter them.

Questions to reflect on:

- Who are the senior authorities most important to your programme or initiative's success?
- Why are they important?
- What signals are they giving about how they perceive the change you are working towards?
- What might you say or do to secure their support as your initiative is being implemented?

Reflections

5. CASUALTIES

- In any transformational leadership effort there will be casualties.
- Pay extra attention to those who are going to experience the change most personally and dramatically.
- Assume responsibility.
- Find ways to help them endure the experience or get on with their lives in another way.

Questions to reflect on:

- Who will be casualties of your change programme or initiative?
- What will they lose?
- What new skills would help them survive the change and thrive?
- How might you help them acquire those skills?
- Sometimes casualties will leave the church, in this instance can you spot who they might be?
- What can you offer in terms of permission and support to leave the church?
- How could you help them find a church home elsewhere?

Reflections

6. DISSENTERS

- Have uncanny capacity for asking the tough key questions that you have been unwilling to face up to yourself or others have been unwilling to raise.
- 'Engage dissenters, don't discourage them.' Kotter

Questions to reflect on:

- Who are the dissenters in your church?
- Who are those who voice radical ideas or mention the unmentionable?
- What ideas are they bringing forth that might be valuable for the change initiative?
- How might you enable their ideas to have a hearing?

Reflections