



# Working with a No. 2

**TN101** Training Notes series: Leadership

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**These notes have been prepared for No. 1's in churches or Christian mission agencies who find themselves in the privileged position of having a No. 2.**

**A typical example would be a Senior Minister with an Associate. But the notes apply just as much to a Youth Worker who has a deputy, and even to voluntary roles if a particular leader is training up someone to take over.**

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These notes focus on an Assistant/Associate/Second-in Command role rather than on line management in general. This is not quite the same as an Anglican Vicar with a Curate as this is a training rather than a leadership role. Nor do I have in mind, for example, a Pastoral Co-ordinator with a team of workers. The setting here is a leader with a deputy leader and the special relationship formed by this partnership.

From time to time I am asked for help in this area by a No. 1 and, rather more frequently, a No. 2 shares something of their frustrations with me. They may feel they are micro-managed, treated as a junior, or left to get on with major responsibilities without adequate training and back-up. So here are some suggested guidelines.

I then add an extra section, applying the same principles to working with an Executive or Personal Assistant (EA/PA). This is a different arrangement because the No. 2 here is not seeking to become a No. 1 and has a complementary rather than a leadership role. They are also in a different gift area, normally administration.

As with all my notes, I update them regularly and so welcome feedback from readers to help me improve later versions. Here are ten principles to put into operation. In each case I address the No. 1.

## 1 **Ensure they share your vision**

Expect there to be clear differences between the two of you in personality, experience and style, but what matters is that you share the same vision for the work you are engaged in. You both need to be heading for the same eventual outcomes with something like equal fervour. Agreement on the big picture is key. This will probably mean some equivalence in doctrinal positions too, although some measure of difference here can be beneficial if it challenges both of you.

If the No. 1 appoints the No. 2 this needs to be firmly on the set of selection criteria. If the No. 1 inherits the No. 2 there can be real problems on this point and the two of you can find yourselves working against the other. In an earlier age a No. 2 would offer their resignation on the appointment of a new No. 1.

## 2 **Give them an overall role that is both clear and challenging**

I stay here with the idea of big picture but move from vision to purpose. This is the 'Why' of their appointment which you need before you define their areas of responsibility (the next heading below).

What exactly is the purpose of their post in one sentence, or two or three short bullet points? This is one level about their responsibilities and should have a clear 'so that ...' phrase within it. If it fails to challenge, or if it reads as a junior version of you, it will hardly excite them.

This short statement will give you and them obvious clues to what needs to stay as priorities for them and what can be put on the back burner if necessary.

## 3 **Put them in charge of defined areas**

Avoid making them No. 2 to you in every area in which you operate. Instead give them some specific areas with defined boundaries where they are in charge. Choose these with care. This list can start small and grow, but this will only work if you let go in these areas – and this is an issue where No. 1's are not good at from all I observe. You need to oversee them but not to meddle, to remain closely in touch but not to undermine authority, to hand over and not to take back at the slightest problem.

For example, an Associate Minister may oversee all small groups, one particular weekly church service, volunteer mobilisation and/or other specifics with the challenge of developing these.

## 4 **Line manage them well**

This is the bottom line: everything about good line management applies to this relationship. In Article A32, *Be creative as a line manager*, I suggest seven features to work on, with each of about equal importance: Attitude (seeking to develop the person), Analysis (understand both of you), Foundations (job description, person profile, etc.), Plan (aims, targets, development), Review (not just the annual appraisal), Encouragement (day by day), Reprimand (day by day too).

Some of these are picked out for special mention in this list (see 5 and 6 below, for example) but all seven apply, even if handled with a light hand for a No. 2.

## 5 **Meet regularly**

If they are your No. 2 you probably need to give them more of your time than others you manage. Some of this will be to review their work, but much will be to be equals: sparking each other to think creatively, sharing insights to help the other, working together on specific projects, cultivating an atmosphere of trust, vulnerability and honesty.

Review will be two-way and much will be on reviewing the two roles rather than the people. Do these need to be developed from time to time? But both need to be honest with the other about their view of the relationship they have formed.

## 6 **Affirm them in public**

Let others see you celebrating your No. 2's successes. Drop into sermons and written articles subtle hints or outright statements that your work is enhanced by your No. 2 (if it is!). When someone asks you a question about an area you have delegated to your No. 2, refuse to answer on principle.

I suspect some No. 1's find their No. 2's a threat to their own position and so keep quiet in public. If the deputy is creating problems by what they say or do (and this is not uncommon), this can be difficult. All ten points in this list need to work in harmony; they should not be seen in isolation from each other.

## 7 **Put them in charge when you are away**

If the relationship between the two of you is working well, this should not be a problem. But I have seen several cases where everything stops when the No. 1 is away from base. Tell the deputy what kind of decisions they can take, and that you will back them even if you might have done something differently yourself. Then pack your bags and go, whether it is a day off, a conference to attend or a holiday.

Tell everyone that the No. 2 has authority for certain areas while you are away. Don't overturn decisions made once back if you can possibly help it.

## 8 **Work on a few projects together**

Although the two of you may have distinct areas of responsibility, it is a good idea to aim to do a few things together. This means you learn to work together; it helps both of you with, perhaps, the frustration of *having* to work jointly, and it shows everyone else that you are a team of two.

Of course, there will be areas where you share in the work anyway. A Senior Minister and their Associate will both be worship leaders and preachers. But you can do these ministries individually. Try to find some specific projects where you have to work jointly – so that it really has to be teamwork.

## 9 **Appoint an enabler**

Appoint someone you both trust to work as your relationship enabler. If things go well, this may simply mean an occasional meeting with them. But if the relationship breaks down you need a third party to intervene in the early stages to prevent things getting

really difficult. You also both need to be accountable to this person over the danger of letting the relationship become over-friendly, especially if of opposite genders.

## 10 **Champion their growth**

Pray for them regularly and show them that you do (eg. by asking afterwards how things went at events where you had promised to pray). Seek to develop them in their leadership skills – and remember that they will be picking these up from your example in front of their eyes. Encourage them to go on training events and to outshine you in a range of areas.

In particular, seek for them to become a No. 1 when they move on from you – unless they are one of those valuable people who thrive as No. 2's but should never be put in the No. 1 spot.

## **Application to EA and PA appointments**

As explained in the introduction an EA or PA role is not the same as an associate or deputy. But the same ten principles apply with minor adjustments. Here is an outline. In each case they relate to the ten headings above and adapt or add to the points already made earlier.

- 1 Ensure your EA/PA has a clear grasp of the church or mission (and your) vision – let them in to the secrets of the big picture rather than just focusing on daily detail.
- 2 Similarly, help them to see that the purpose of their role includes to release you for your priorities so they share in the front-line ministry of the church/mission.
- 3 A sharply worded Job Description is a must so they know exactly what their responsibilities are (and perhaps include some negatives too to define the boundaries).
- 4 Follow all good line management principles: including to remember birthdays and other important events.
- 5 Give them your time whether daily or weekly. Ask them what kind of meetings they would value.
- 6 Tell everyone how much your ministry depends on them.
- 7 Let them know where you are when you are away, even if they are told to keep that information to themselves.
- 8 Ask them to help you become a better boss to work for – and then action the advice suggested. Avoid giving them extra work just before they are due to leave for home.
- 9 Be particularly careful over how much time you spend in each other's company out of sight of others – especially if of opposite genders. If married ensure your spouse gets to know the EA/PA.
- 10 Pray for them and seek to help them develop in their role.

## Finally

If you are a No. 1 put yourself in the No. 2's shoes and aim to keep three areas in balance:

- 1 between micro-management and having no idea what your No. 2 is up to;
- 2 between a relationship that becomes over-familiar and staying distant and cold from them;
- 3 between dumping work you dislike on them and holding from them work you love but which should not be a priority for you.

These notes are available at <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/Training-Notes-index> then TN101. See also Articles A32, *Be creative as a line manager*, and A45, *How to lead a team at church*. Also Training Notes TN32, *What do you mean by 'vision'?*, TN78, *The role of a church leader*, TN87, *What to look for in your leaders*, and TN94, *Becoming self-aware*.

Contact John if you would like to enquire about the possibility of his one-to-one service on issues of staff management.

Cartoons are by Micki Hounslow for filing categories of Leadership, Management, Structures, Planning, Communication and Administration. File TN101 under Leadership with a link to Management.

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