

4 Essential Skills Most New Small Group Pastors Need to Develop

By Mark Howell

Share via:



What are the essential skills a new small group pastor needs to develop; to *have in their toolkit*? And I would clarify the question by asking what are the skills in which a new small group pastor must develop an *unconscious competence*?

But before we begin shaping a list of the skills most new small group pastors need to develop, to have in their toolkit, we might need to think about the four stages of learning.

You probably have heard about [the four stages of learning](#), but you may not know the name. Noel Burch, an employee with Gordon Training International, developed the *ConsciousCompetence* Ladder in the 1970s.

Here are the four stages of learning:

1. Unconscious incompetence: Don't know that they don't know.
2. Conscious incompetence: Know that they don't know.
3. Conscious competence: The skill requires concentration.
4. Unconscious competence: The skill has become second nature.

If *all* of us chimed in we could come up with a list of things a new small group pastor needs to know how to do.

Veteran small group pastors could come up with a great list of things we had to *know* how to do (or things we had to *learn* how to do). Of course, depending on how long it has been since we were new, we might not remember what we didn't know how to do when we began. Or we might actually be [unconsciously competent](#).

New small group pastors could also come up with a list of what they are learning to do right now (or learned recently). And the truth is, new small group pastors may not yet know what they don't know how to do. A new small group pastor would often be [unconsciously incompetent](#). Right?

So, what are the skills most new small group pastors need to learn?

I made a preliminary list (and I'd love you to add your ideas in the comments below).

- How to prioritize.
- How to schedule their week for productivity.
- How to develop an annual grouplife calendar.
- How to make choices about what to do and what not to do.
- How to develop small group leaders.
- How to identify, recruit and develop coaches.

4 Essential Skills Most New Small Group Pastors Need to Develop:

I believe there are four essential skills in which a new small group pastor must become unconsciously competent:

1. A behind the scenes instigator who sets in motion an annual strategy to connect people.

There are two key elements to this role. First, small group pastors with thriving small group ministries almost always operate behind the scenes and are unknown by the congregation. Second, they're thinking year round about opportunities to connect unconnected people and designing strategies around those opportunities. See also, [5 Keys to Launching New Groups Year Round](#).

Small group pastors with thriving small group ministries almost always operate behind the scenes and are unknown by the congregation.

SHARE ON X

2. A role model, doing *to and for* your leaders (or coaches as your ministry grows) what you want them to do *to and for* the members of their groups.

Since adults learn on a need to know basis, developing leaders is a customized and just-in-time practice. When this role is played effectively, leaders learn to do what you want them to do to and for their group members. See also, [The Most Important Contribution of the Small Group Pastor](#).

Since adults learn on a need to know basis, developing leaders is a customized and just-in-time practice. When this role is played effectively, leaders learn to do what you want them to do to and for their group members.

SHARE ON X

3. A talent scout always identifying, recruiting and developing high capacity people, managing a reasonable span of care.

The key here is that building a thriving small group ministry is a team effort and every congregation has [high capacity people](#) who will only be fruitful and fulfilled when they play a high-impact role. See also, [5 Habits I'd Look for If I Was Hiring a Small Group Pastor](#).

4. A Joshua to Moses or Timothy to Paul, looking for ways to help your senior pastor be the small group champion.

Never underestimate this aspect of the role of the small group pastor. Thriving small group ministries aren't built when the senior pastor delegates the role of small group champion. See also, [Your Senior Pastor as Small Group Champion Leads to a Church OF Groups](#).

Thriving small group ministries aren't built when the senior pastor delegates the role of small group champion.