

NETWORK MAPPING GUIDE

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CHURCHES CAN ACHIEVE TOGETHER WHAT NO ONE CHURCH COULD ACCOMPLISH ALONE.

As you read *Stronger Together*, I hope you pause and consider the two tensions that network leaders must inhabit. With the help of some smart friends, I've mapped these tensions on what I hope you will experience as an unbiased, evenhanded tool called the Network Matrix.

I'm deeply grateful to Todd Milby, Andy Graham, Doug Paul, and their team at Catapult Church Consulting for helping develop this tool. Any Christian leader would do well to discover more about what they do at wearecatapult.org. I believe you'll thank me!

THE ALIGNMENT CONTINUUM

The first tension relates to our convictions about interdependence. It's what I'm calling the alignment continuum, and it illustrates the way a network balances the emphasis their partnership puts on theology with the emphasis it places on mission.

The Alignment Continuum

THEOLOGY ←————→ MISSION

To plot where your network lands on this continuum, score yourself on the following quiz. Write your score for each question on the line to the left. Add up your score. If your network scored between -5 and 0, it plots on the theological side of the alignment continuum. If it scored between 0 and 5, your network plots on the missional side. The further your number is from zero, the closer your network is to one of the continuum's edges.

_____ Does our network have an agreed-on doctrinal statement, theological vision, or list of core beliefs? Yes (score -1) or No (score +1).

_____ Do new churches or leaders come into the partnership primarily because of their affinity with our theological vision and doctrinal distinctives (score -1)? Or do they enter our network primarily because of their affinity with the way we contextualize and do mission work (score +1)? Score 0 if you are unclear.

_____ Would our network be okay with planting broadly evangelical churches that don't fully agree with some of our core doctrinal statements? Yes (score +1) or No (score -1).

_____ Does the network require that new churches adopt a core doctrinal statement or book of church order that is more particular than the broadly evangelical Lausanne Covenant? Yes (score -1) or No (score +1).

_____ Are churches removed or asked to remove themselves from our partnership when their doctrinal commitments change? Yes (score -1) or No (score +1).

TOTAL: _____

THE STRUCTURE CONTINUUM

The second tension relates to our convictions about gifted leadership. It's what I call the structure continuum. The continuum illustrates the differing levels of involvement and kinds of authority that extra-local leaders (e.g., influential pastors, network staff, denominational leadership) have when new churches are planted. The key question for this continuum is this: "How is power shared?"

The Structure Continuum

CENTRALIZED ←————→ **DECENTRALIZED**

You will find gifted leaders in both centralized and decentralized networks, but two similarly gifted leaders would likely be deployed differently by two networks with differing organizational structures.

To plot where your current network or any network partnerships you are considering lands on this continuum, score yourself on the following quiz. Write your score for each question on the line to the left.

Add up your score. If your network scored between -5 and 0, it plots on the more decentralized side of the structure continuum. If it scored between 0 and 5, your network plots on the more centralized side. The further your number is from zero, the closer your network is to one of the continuum's edges.

_____ Is new growth or expansion initiated by network employees and extra-local leaders (score +1) or by leaders in the churches (score -1)?

_____ Are extra-local leaders required for the assessment and approval of new church planters? Yes (score +1) or No (score -1).

_____ Are new church planters primarily trained by their sending church or designated residency churches (score -1), or are they trained in a network-directed cohort or affiliated seminary track (score +1)?

_____ Are organizational decisions for the network primarily made by the network staff and board (score +1) or by delegates from the churches (score -1)?

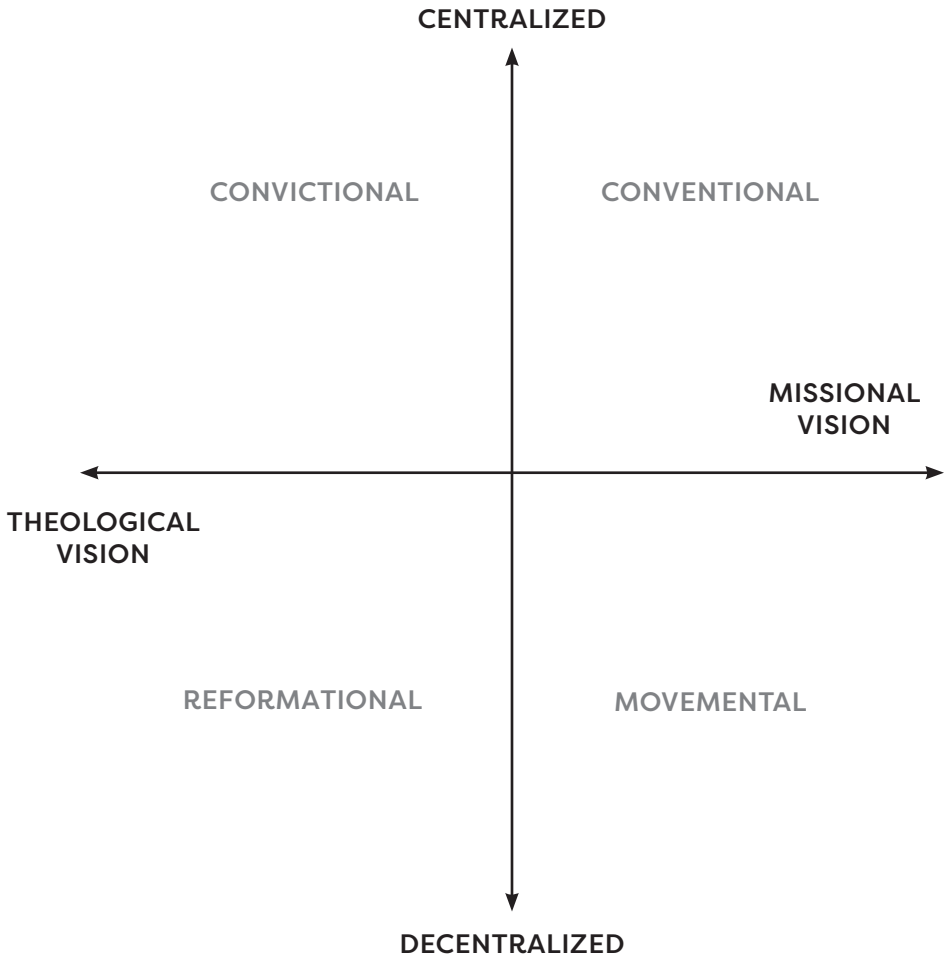
_____ Is support for a new church plant primarily channeled through the sending church (score -1) or through a shared network fund (score +1)?

TOTAL: _____

PLOTTING YOUR NETWORK PARTNERTSHIP

A matrix is created when two continuums cross to create four quadrants. When we overlay the alignment and structure continuums, we have a new matrix for church networks (see the chart on the next page). The four resulting quadrants are as follows:

- **Convictional:** centralized networks leading with theology
- **Conventional:** centralized networks aligned to a traditional and prevailing model of missions
- **Movemental:** decentralized networks leading with mission
- **Reformational:** decentralized networks leading with theology



it should be noted that where a network finds itself on the matrix isn't necessarily a fixed point. Think of it more as a snapshot of where they are now. A network that is in one place on the chart today could make important decisions about theological flexibility or their organizational structures that will relocate it to a different place in three years.

SWEET SPOTS AND BLIND SPOTS

We'll now explore a breakdown of each quadrant with a description of blind spots and sweet spots. A blind spot is an area of weakness that tends to push you toward the outer margins of your quadrant. Blind spots create imbalanced positions that undermine your network goals. Sweet spots, by contrast, help you better understand how God blesses networks in your quadrant. Regardless of your tribe, you'll be healthiest when you live in your sweet spots.

The lists below are not intended to be exhaustive. They should help deepen your own discernment toward celebrating your core strengths and improving your corrupting weaknesses.

CONVICTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS CENTRALIZED NETWORKS LEADING WITH THEOLOGY

Blind Spots:

- Difficulty distinguishing between primary, secondary, and tertiary doctrines is experienced.
- Love and mercy are obscured by the priority of doctrinal discernment.
- Multiplication is bottlenecked while waiting for fully formed theological leaders.
- Bright theological borders discourage partnership outside the tribe.

Sweet Spots:

- Doctrinal conviction inspires courageous leadership.
- Ministry practice is anchored in doctrinal conviction.
- High biblical literacy characterizes church leaders.
- Theological alignment fosters deeper camaraderie.

CONVENTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

CENTRALIZED NETWORKS LEADING WITH MISSION

Blind Spots:

- There is less awareness of mission drift.
- These networks are more apt to franchise a brand and less apt to contextualize models.
- Organizational structures can limit expansion.
- Over time, renewal dynamics can be co-opted by stability (see chapter 4 of *Stronger Together*); cultural moments trigger self-preservation more than innovation.

Sweet Spots:

- There is a defined ethos and process for reproduction.
- There is an ability to lead and act quickly in crisis.
- There is high quality control because of shared culture and methodology.
- Reproduction is prioritized on every organizational level.

REFORMATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

DECENTRALIZED NETWORKS LEADING WITH THEOLOGY

Blind Spots:

- Over time, theological convictions are assumed and diluted.
- It is more difficult to build and sustain community.
- Decentralization makes accountability difficult and perpetuates organizational incongruities.
- These networks are more apt to critique culture and less apt to engage culture.
- These networks lean heavily on personality to carry the message; there is a risk that teaching can become the

exclusive means of transformation.

- These networks are less inclined to conduct theological triage, making unity more difficult to achieve.

Sweet Spots:

- Renewal dynamics remain strong, and good news travels quickly.
- These networks are nimble and unburdened by bureaucracy.
- These networks are catalytic in leadership and attractional to outsiders.
- There is a culture of expectancy among participants.
- There is an increased capacity to broadcast the message with clarity and conviction.
- These networks often raise a prophetic voice toward the dominant culture and prevailing church models.

MOVEMENTAL PARTNERSHIPS DECENTRALIZED NETWORKS LEADING WITH MISSION

Blind Spots:

- Broad metrics for success tend to be quantity driven.
- It is difficult to control and influence quality.
- Radical autonomy can grow in organization and relationships.
- Unnecessary and unintentional groups are spun off.
- Rapid multiplication leads to less rigorous discipleship and weakened DNA.
- Growth is limited by volunteer capacity.
- Leaders are evaluated by competencies, not character or theological acumen.
- Zeal for lateral growth can compromise orthodoxy and leadership maturity.

Sweet Spots:

- Cycle of reproduction is simple, sustainable, and scalable.
- Organizational leadership requires less resources, finances, and management.
- There is a radical commitment to multiplication at every level—disciples, leaders, churches, and networks.
- These networks are able to adapt and innovate quickly.
- Gospel saturation is the shared outcome.

WHAT NOW?

Mapping your ministry onto the Network Matrix and identifying some of your tribe's blind spots and sweet spots is a great start. But don't see this as the end of the exercise. Consider these five additional steps:

DO A TEAM EXERCISE

Invite your board and elder/leadership team to map your church, network, or ministry using the Network Matrix. Discuss any surprises that surface.

THANK GOD FOR YOUR SWEET SPOTS

Talk about how God's grace was active in giving these strengths. Tell some stories about how the demonstration of these strengths has made a difference in the lives of those you serve.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE BLIND SPOTS FOR YOUR QUADRANT APPLY TO YOUR GROUP

Be honest about where you see these weaknesses at work and where they've resulted in bad fruit. Identify two or three ways you can respond.

AVOID THE "SKINNY GENE" POOL

Look outside your tribe and discover whether there is another leader or group from whom you can learn. See this as an

opportunity for fellowship. Humble yourself and grow from the places they are strong and you are weak. Remember, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6).

OWN WHO YOU ARE

The Network Matrix is not designed to move leaders into other quadrants. No, networks are typically conceived with genes that determine their identity. But knowing who you are is only the first step toward organizational health. Own who you are as a church or network and then seek to be a God-honoring, fruitful example of your quadrant.