

Do we really need an NCD coach? How coaching can help you with NCD

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What is a Natural Church Development (NCD) coach? Coaching is a relational process that facilitates the discovery of God’s agenda and then working together to see that agenda become a reality. A coach provides a supportive relationship with an objective perspective. An NCD coach can help design the process for a church, guide them through the diagnosis stage, brainstorm strategies, prioritize, plan a course of action, assess how it’s going, provide accountability, and celebrate the process.

Effectiveness with and without coaching

Coaching makes a difference in terms of results. A study was done comparing churches that worked with coaches through the NCD process with those that didn’t have a coach. The study was done on a group of 30 Christian and Missionary Alliance Churches. All churches were committed to the NCD process, having been through two cycles and completing either two or three surveys. Twenty churches received coaching and ten did not.

NCD without Coaching	NCD with Coaching
5 point quality increase	10 point quality increase
7% attendance growth	34% attendance growth
5 out of 10 churches declined in attendance	Only 1 of 20 churches declined in attendance

Of the churches that received coaching, average health scores went up 10 points, compared to 5 points for those that did not. Average attendance went up 34% at those churches with coaching, compared to 7% without. Only one of the twenty churches that received coaching declined in attendance, while five out of ten churches without coaching declined.

Reasons to engage an NCD coach:

1. Pastors need to be free to be part of the process rather than trying to wear a coach’s hat as well as a pastor’s hat. A coach can more easily and objectively ask some of the hard questions the church will need to wrestle with, and provides valuable outside perspective.
2. Pastors and church leaders are already busy people and a coach can help shorten the learning curve to incorporating NCD principles in the life of the church.

3. Our experience with churches shows that without an NCD trained coach to help guide the process, essential steps are missed or dismissed—steps that are vital to seeing the health of the church increase in a significant way.
4. Pastors and churches will experience bumps along the way, which can derail their plans to address their minimum factor. These bumps can come in the form of unexpected emergencies within the life of the church, events, attitudes or people who keep the plan from proceeding, or simply the busyness of ministry. A coach will bring expertise and experience to the process that can help churches avoid common pitfalls and will come alongside to help the church health team refocus their energy to accomplish the goals they have set.
5. An NCD coach has been trained in both the theory and practice of NCD, and is experienced in spotting and addressing issues the church health team will encounter.
6. An NCD coach has access to additional resources including a one-day orientation for pastors and leaders and a one-and-a-half-day training event for church health teams, which serves to orient the church health Team for their role in the NCD process and take the first steps.
7. Growth forces open the door to increased church health. An NCD coach has a deeper understanding of how and where the principles should be applied in the NCD process.
8. Accountability to an NCD coach to continue the plan developed by the church health team greatly increases the probability that all the time and effort will result in the desired fruit of increased health for the church.
9. During the diagnosis stage, coaches can help make sure that everyone is included that needs to be included, that enough brainstorming is done, that solutions aren't prematurely decided on, and that denial doesn't get in the way of progress.

What can I expect from coaching?

Here are some of the ways NCD coaches can be productively involved at each step of the NCD process:

- Prepare:
 - Helping gain buy-in and commitment to the process
 - Coaching the pastor and/or board to identify the appropriate people for the church health team
 - Training the church health team so they understand the NCD process and what to expect

- Diagnose:
 - Administering the survey or to coaching the pastor to administer the survey properly
 - Talking personally with the pastor to help him/her process the results when they come back
 - Presenting scores to the church health team or other key people and helping them process the results
 - Assisting with conducting focus groups and analysis of underlying causes
 - Helping identify 3 to 5 key issues

- Plan:
 - Providing guidance and exercises for the planning process
 - Ensuring that growth force principles are incorporated into planning
 - Conducting an action planning workshop

- Implement:
 - Providing support and encouragement throughout the process
 - Provides accountability for tracking the progress of the implementation plan
 - Helping assess how the process is going
 - Ensuring the team stays on track with their plan
 - Provides resources as needed

- Evaluate:
 - Celebrating accomplishments
 - Evaluating effectiveness
 - Planning for next round

How to pick a coach

What qualities should a pastor or a church look for in an NCD coach? One helpful question to ask a prospective coach is what *assessments* they've done. Most certified coaches have participated in an assessment that is designed to measure their effectiveness.

Also ask what *training* the coach has received and what *experience* they have. However, training and experience don't necessarily mean a coach is competent or effective, which is why we recommend asking for assessment results as well.

Third, ask for *references* from other churches or groups they have worked with. Feedback from others will help you determine whether this coach will be helpful and a good fit for your church.

Fourth, be sure they have access to the NCD resources on CoachNet. Many coaches are trained, but if they are not CoachNet members, they don't have *access to the latest tools and research*. Be sure your coach is current and well-resourced.

Last, be sure a prospective coach wants to come alongside your church as a *coach rather than as a consultant*. A consultant provides advice, while a coach comes alongside and is invested in the process and the relationship.

At CoachNet, here are five qualities we look for in good coaches:

- Empower and develop others
- Listen well and ask insightful questions
- Encourage and care for others
- Think clearly and strategically
- Continue to learn and grow personally

We highly recommend retaining an NCD coach for your church's journey through the NCD process. A coach will not tell you what to do or do your work for you. A coach will keep you accountable to your plans, help you negotiate the obstacles you encounter, and give you encouragement along the way.

In order to find an NCD coach you can:

- Contact your denomination to see if they have trained coaches ready to assist you.
- Contact your National Partner and request a coach (In the USA, customerservice@churchsmart.com.)
- In the USA, contact CoachNet International Ministries (coachnet@coachnet.org)