

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

From XP to SP: Leveling Up in Your Leadership - Episode 215

Winning in Your New Leadership Role (Part 2)

The transition from Executive to Senior Pastor can be difficult. But when it comes to ministry and leadership, “you need to give up to go up” (John C. Maxwell). You have to delegate what you used to own. You’re now the primary communicator of the vision. And the flaws and insecurities that were once hidden come to the spotlight.

In this conversation, Tony interviews Jeff Brodie, Lead Pastor of [Connexus Church](#) in Barrie, Ontario. After serving for three years in student ministry and three years as Executive Director, Jeff was called to replace Carey Nieuwhof as the senior leader of the church. Here’s what he had to say about the transition:

Interview with Jeff Brodie (Connexus Church)

What were the biggest challenges when stepping into your new role as Senior Pastor?

“Since I had been in the Executive Director role, I knew how things operated, but there were two big changes for me. The first was the vision-casting piece: casting vision a lot more often, casting vision to a camera, and stepping into a position that had previously been held by Carey, who is so gifted at being hyper-clear. So the biggest challenge was, **how do I speak from my heart and be who I am**, and at the same time, try to bring the level of clarity that people were used to? The other one would be donor relationships. While I’d handled the finances, I’d had limited relationships with donors, so fostering relationships, communicating with them, and investing in them was a new facet for me.”

Was there anything about your new role that you didn't fully grasp until you were in it?

“When we announced the transition, a lot of people had warned Carey and I to expect staff transition, but neither of us thought that would actually happen. Well, I became the lead pastor publicly in November and by January I had two staff members give notice that they were moving off the staff team. And they were the people I’d worked with the longest and the most closely. Another big surprise was the day-to-day pressure and weight of the position. When you’re in an executive role, you’re solving a lot of problems, but **when you’re in the lead pastor seat, your role is more about bringing perspective first and solving the problem second**. My role is to put the problem in the context of the vision and

the big picture, align you around the rest of the team, then help you solve the problem. It's definitely a shift to asking more questions and giving less answers."

What was the hardest responsibility for you to give up from your previous role? When you took on your new responsibilities as a lead pastor, what did you have to start delegating to others?

"When I became the lead pastor, **it wasn't the responsibilities that were hard to step away from—it was the relationships.** For me, ministry has all been about not just what you do, but who you do it with. So I would say the hardest thing for me was stepping away from relationships and having someone else build the relationship with that key staff member, and not being able to connect with them as often."

We often talk about [four roles that a senior pastor can't delegate](#). Do you agree with that list? Of those roles, which one challenged you the most early in your time as lead pastor?

"If I were to disagree on one, it would be teaching. Spiritual leadership to me is different from teaching, because I was clearly the leader of our church but not the primary teacher for a number of years. And that was part of my journey figuring out, how do I lead spiritually and vision cast when I don't have 40 minutes on Sunday morning? But I would say the most challenging area has been leading the leadership team. As we grew and added a new location, we needed to **scale up at the senior leadership level**, which meant creating an executive leadership team that reported to me and developing a team infrastructure below them."

What encouragement would you give pastors who are stepping into a lead pastor role for the very first time?

"At the beginning, you start with so much insecurity around your competency. But it's all about your character at the end of the day. Stepping into a leadership role ends up bringing a megaphone to so much of your character issues. So if you're trying to be a different leader, and you're trying to fake it till you make it, at a certain point, that becomes obvious to people. The pressure of leadership will push that out. So the important thing for longevity is to lean in and **become more of who you are and the leader Jesus has called you to be.** It was much easier for me to follow the lead of Jesus in leading my church rather than following the lead of my predecessor."

Any final thoughts?

"To anybody who's in leadership these days in the church world: know that what you're doing is really, really important. That person who you interact with today, that phone call, that email, it **is** important. It's **impacting** somebody. So don't give up; keep leaning into what God's called you to and He is going to use you where you're at."

Two Key Takeaways

1. Executive leaders tend to be problem solvers, but senior pastors need to bring **perspective** first. As senior pastors, we need to put problems in the context of vision and big picture. And then we need to bring alignment to the rest of our leadership team around the problems and empower others to solve the problems.
2. If you are new in your senior pastor role, take a look at the leaders around you and ask this critical question: Do I have leaders who are **problem solvers**, or do I only have problem deliverers? We have to make sure the team around us can not only identify problems, but solve the problems and help us get to the other side of those problems.

“Because of your expanded responsibility as a senior pastor, you have to delegate problem-solving to the high capacity team of leaders around you.”

Next Steps

We've had the opportunity to help several churches clarify their mission, vision, ministry, strategies, and structure as they were going through a key leadership transition.

If you're experiencing a similar leadership transition in your church, we'd love to have a conversation about working with you and your team to identify your church's next bold moves.

[Start a conversation today.](#)

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