

### Part One: How to identify sabotage tactics

A well-known and successful strategy to retain newcomers is to include them in the events, activities, groups and the decision-making structures of the church. However, intercultural groups, including churches, are vulnerable to intentional and unintentional saboteurs. Here are some of most common sabotage tactics. Make sure you also read the accompanying tool for improving intercultural communication (also found in the toolbox). Take this list to a session meeting or retreat and discuss ways in which your session might counter each of these tactics.

1. Find a scapegoat to blame. Alternatively, find something very general to blame, such as “society today” or church polity.
2. Declare that you do not have “the” answer. This gets you out of having to answer at all.
3. Argue that the group must not move too quickly. This avoids the necessity of getting started.
4. Point out that no problem can be separated from any other problem, so no problem can be solved until all problems have been solved.
5. Suggest that the problem is simply a projection by unhappy members of their personal problems onto the group. Better: dismiss the problem as that being voiced by only a small minority. This is sure to thwart efforts for future consensus building.
6. Ask what is meant by the question. This will consume the discussion until time runs out.
7. Point out all sides of every issue to hide your own indecisiveness behind the illusion of objectivity.
8. For every proposal made, come up with an opposite so that the middle ground (no proposal at all) appears to be the wisest choice.
9. Retreat into general objectives on which everybody agrees but that are so general that they do not suggest a course of action.
10. Thank the person who raised the problem, point out the profound discussion that resulted and declare the meeting closed. This ensures there is no recommendation, conclusion or follow-up.
11. Use lingo that is not in general public use and confuses newcomers. When you use such words as “homologate,” “narthex” and “sederunt” do so with such authority that no one will dare ask what these words mean. This is a particularly effective strategy to exclude newcomers and ESL (English as a second language) members of the group.
12. Assume that if people don't speak up they have nothing to contribute to the discussion.
13. Do not prepare or circulate a report ahead of time. Not only does this save you time, but you can make up the recommendations as you go which will confuse everyone, especially those whose first language is not English.

If we can identify these tactics, we can begin to develop intentional strategies that will remove the roadblocks to good communication, include a diversity of perspectives and build consensus.

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