

## Internship: The Path to Cell Leadership

Our cells will grow if they are healthy. The values of Radical Inclusion and Committed Intimacy will draw in people and the groups will grow. But the only way to keep the value of Committed Intimacy high as the group grows is to multiply. The only way a group can multiply is if there is a leader in place equipped to take on the responsibility for the new group. Because of this, it is our role as cell leaders to be continuously developing the leadership of the people around us. This has two aspects:

### **1. Discipleship is Leadership Development.**

As Christians we are called to grow in our faith and in our spiritual journey. In the cell we assist one another in the pursuit of this growth. All Christians are called to be influencers. That means that at some level, all Christians are called to be leaders. As we disciple each other in the group, we are all going to be growing in our ability to influence. This applies to everyone. This is the reason why the Equipping Track is encouraged for all cell group members, even those who don't see themselves as cell leader material. After all, you never know what God is going to call you to do!

But, not everyone is wired up to be a cell leader, and not everyone who is wired that way will receive the calling to take on that responsibility. The path to formal cell leadership requires something more. This leads us to the second aspect of leadership development in the cell:

### **2. Internship.**

This is the formal path that prepares a person with the experience and understanding necessary to be a cell leader. Becoming an intern, even completing the internship process does not guarantee that a person will become a cell leader. "We prepare people for leadership, but God calls them and the community confirms them into leadership."

**Here's the path that an internship takes:**

#### **Pre-Internship**

- **Active Cell Participation.** The first "qualifier" for someone interested in internship is that they are an active and vital part of the cell group. They attend regularly. They get involved in cell activities outside the weekly meeting. They have a commitment to the importance of cell in their own spiritual journey. Of course, this is only something that can be evaluated over time. For that reason, it's not wise to consider someone for internship who has not been a part of the cell for a significant period, and it's recommended that they have already experienced at least one full cell cycle before they can officially be an intern.
- **Equipping Track.** The Equipping Track is the formal discipleship process that runs parallel to the cell group. It provides an opportunity for mentoring, intentional conversations, discussion on basic Christian theology and practice, and leadership development. Everyone in the cell is encouraged to participate in the Equipping Track. But it is required for interns. The Equipping Track can begin at any time a person is interested, regardless of their interest in leadership.
- **Demonstrate an Initiative to Lead.** The next "qualifier" for someone interested in internship is that they have a heart to further the mission of the cell in an active way. They take the initiative to lead in some way. Perhaps in the area of hospitality, perhaps in prayer for cell group members, perhaps they demonstrate skill in leading one of the Ws. You can equip people with skills and understanding, but you cannot create a desire to lead or passion for the ministry. Be watching for this to naturally occur in people who are good intern candidates.
- **Informal Leadership Mentoring.** As a person demonstrates commitment and initiative, the cell leader should look for opportunities to invite that person to greater leadership. Ask them to lead in the Ws more frequently. Invite them to take on periodic pastoral care connections. Give them opportunities to take more ownership. Process these efforts with them so they can learn and grow.

## Formal Internship

At some point this person will indicate that they are interested in being an intern or becoming a cell leader. This opens the door for great conversations about their heart, about leadership, and about their understanding of the purpose of cell. If they have “qualified” by showing themselves committed to the steps indicated in the pre-internship section above, they may be ready to begin their formal internship.

- **Equipping Track Process.** Ideally they will have already started the Equipping Track. If not, it is mandatory that they begin so now. Completing the entire equipping track is a requirement for a cell leader.
- **Join the CLI Community.** In order to become a formal intern, this person needs to be willing to commit to the responsibilities of the Cell Leader and Intern community. This includes:
  - Faithfully attending their cell group.
  - Participating in two monthly CLI meetings.
  - Participating in an annual cell leadership event.
- **Increased Leadership in the Cell.** Once this person is a formal intern, it is the cell leader’s responsibility to mentor them in the responsibilities of leading the cell. This begins with higher responsibilities for the Ws and other logistics of the cell, but also includes being involved in pastoral care conversations, planning special cell events, and regularly meeting and praying with the cell leader for the cell group and members.
- **Cell Leader Training Weekend.** This intensive training weekend will build community, deepen understanding and equip the intern with many tools to help them be successful in their ministry. As far as possible, it is ideal that an intern attend at least one of these before becoming a full cell leader.
- **Pre-Multiplication Leadership Ownership.** When an intern is ready, or when the cell is ready to multiply and an intern is ready, the cell leader should slowly start phasing themselves out of primary leadership, and handing those responsibilities over to the intern. The goal is that in a set period of time, say 6-12 weeks, the cell leader becomes more and more a coach, while the intern becomes more and more the full-fledged leader of the cell. This process should be complete a few weeks before the cell multiplies.

## Qualities that Make for A Good Intern.

1. **Prayerful.** More than any other skill this rises to the top. Effective cell leaders pray for their group and their people.
2. **Interested in People.** Cell leaders don’t have to be charismatic people people, but they do need to genuinely like interacting with people. This is above all a people ministry.
3. **Strong Initiative.** If you have to remind a person about their cell responsibilities, or call them to make sure they’re going to be on top of things, they are not ready to intern. An intern will have an internal motivation for the process, and they will become influencers without a formal position.
4. **Humble.** The most critical quality is that the person is willing to submit themselves to the cell ministry process. That means being willing to go through the Equipping Track, even if they are an experienced Christian. That means being willing to take feedback from the cell leader and other church leadership. That means being willing to passionately engage the structure we’ve put in place for cells. If there is a spirit of self, they will not want to do these things and they are not ready to be interns.

Don’t assume that a person with twenty years as a Christian under their belt will be a good cell leader. Don’t assume that if they led small groups or taught classes at another church, that they will be a good cell leader. Everyone, regardless of background, needs to go through the same process lined out here. This allows us to make sure all our leaders are on the same page, it helps us protect this distributed leadership process from running wild, and it allows us to discover if a person is willing to submit themselves to spiritual leadership.