

## Very Cool, but Not Too Cool: What to Expect from a Youth Leader

Youth workers often describe their job as undefined. When Hans Kristian Skaar started his career as a volunteer youth leader at the age of 16, he received no job description, and the only training he got was the previous leader saying, “Good luck, I will be praying for you.” But he soon realized there were a lot of expectations, some of which he was not aware of until he failed to meet them. Research shows that undefined goals, undefined expectations, and a weak job description are major reasons for burnout among youth workers. How can we help the next generation of youth leader gain a clearer picture of what is expected of them? To help answer this question, Skaar interviewed 100 leaders, parents, and students. He will share what he has learned about the following questions and more:

- What do people expect from a youth leader?
- What is special about youth ministry leadership compared to other leadership roles?
- What are a youth leader’s most important tasks?
- How can a youth leader avoid discouragement and burn-out?

**Hans Kristian Skaar** has been involved in youth ministry for 25 years as a volunteer, a youth minister, a teacher, a youth ministry consultant, and for the last eight years as director of Norwegian Lutheran Mission Youth. He lives in a small town outside of Oslo. His biggest passions include football, youth ministry, and mission; and in recent years, he has been launching youth groups in areas without Christian youth work.

I. What’s so special about youth ministry?

II. The research – part 1: What to expect from a Youth Leader? – all the expectations

A. What did I do and what did I find? - 465 tasks, 30 categories, 4 groups

<b>Youth leader’s roles</b>	<b>Relational-focused roles</b>	<b>Activity-focused roles</b>
<b>Development-focused roles</b>	<b>Personal development (144):</b> Role model (33) Inspirator (12) Missionary (7) Recruiter (23) Community developer (2) Preacher (32) Leader developer (35)	<b>Ministry-development (33):</b> Innovator (6) Apprentice (4) Program designer (7) Theologian (8) Youth expert (5) Vision designer (13) Vision-carrier (4) Spiritual leader (5)
<b>Stablizing roles</b>	<b>Relationship building (139)</b> Ambassador (17) Bridgebuilder (14) Mingler (37) Coddler (11) Good Samaritan (24) Relationship-builder (13) Partner in life (18) Friend (5)	<b>Administration (129):</b> Administrator (50) Entertainer (21) Person in charge (11) Butler (10) Communicator (6) Organizer (27) Tradition-carrier (4)

III. The role as youth minister in the study of youth ministry

A. The big picture

B. Houston Heflin: *Youth pastor*

1. Approach to Education: Evangelistic Missionary (Matt 10:16) vs Discipling Teacher (John 13:14)
2. Allocation of Time: Pastoral Shepherd (John 10:11) vs Organized Administrator (Exodus 18:17ff)
3. Position of Advocacy: Bold Prophet (John 4:18) vs Compassionate Priest (Heb 4:15f; 5,1f)
4. Focus of Relationships: Spiritual Friend (John 15:15) vs Equipping Recruiter (Matt 4:19)
5. Division of Responsibilities: Visionary Leader (John 3:15) vs Faithful Teammate (John 5:19.30)

C. Doug Fields: *Your first two years in youth ministry*

1. Personal: Committing to the essentials, dealing with discouragement, stay spiritual fresh
2. Relational: being with them, become family friendly, dealing with difficult people
3. Leadership: submission and supervision, team of leaders, investing in student leaders
4. Program: evaluating programs, the phases of change

D. The paradigm shift in youth ministry

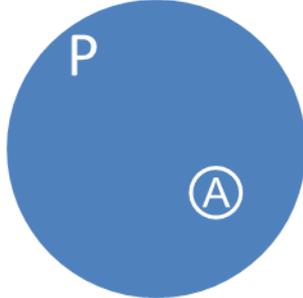
New paradigms: Faith practices, missional life, diakonia, relational ministry, the theological turn, family based, preaching-focused.

E. What could we learn from the study of leadership?

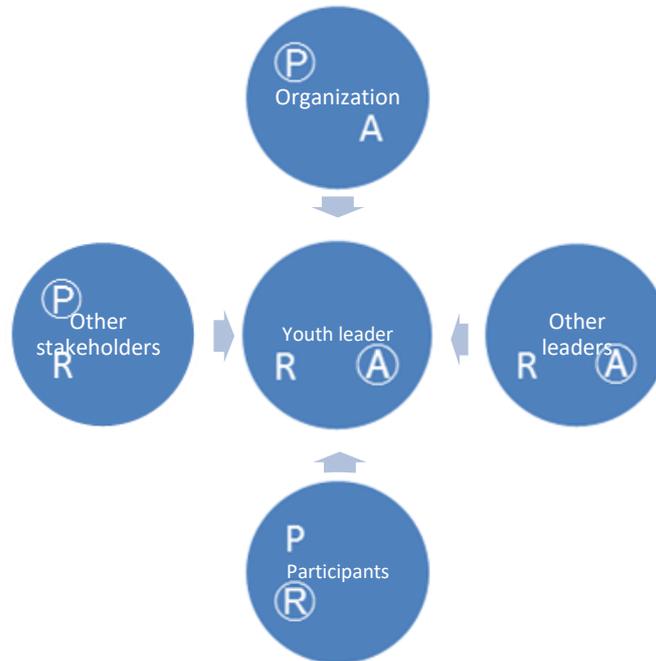
1. Henry Mintzberg:
  - a. Interpersonal roles: Figurehead, leader, liaison
  - b. Informational roles: Monitor, disseminator, spokesperson
  - c. Decisional roles: Entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, negotiator
2. Isaac Adizes
  - a. Integrator
  - b. Entrepreneur
  - c. Administrator
  - d. Producer

IV. The research – part 2: Different expectations

A. Different expectations in different youth groups?

Congregation	Independent	School
		

B. Different expectations from different interest groups

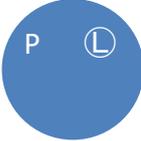


C. Contradicting expectations

D. Expectations without limit: Very cool, but not too cool

V. Conclusion: Establishing boundaries

A. The most important roles

The most important roles				
Organization	Youth leader	Other leaders	Participants	Other stakeholders
				

B. Is there a solution to the problem of burnout and discouragement?

C. Very cool, but not too cool – what’s the center of youth ministry

***Suggested Readings:***

Houston Heflin: *Youth pastor*

Doug Fields: *Your first two years in youth ministry*