
How to Effectively Manage Your Church

Introduction

Over and over again, people come into positions of ministry with little or no idea as to what specific behaviors are necessary for successful management. And yes, ministry does involve management. Often it is the management of paid staff. Always it is the management of volunteers.

The only way to have a fully-functioning church is to build the kind of work environment that attracts, aligns, focuses, and keeps talented employees on the staff and in the ranks of the volunteers. But what are the behaviors that support this?

Your job as a pastor manager is to help build that environment.

Bad Management Practices

Let's begin with the negative. These are practices that I've seen over and over again in the church world, practices that have indeed harmed the life of the individual churches where they have occurred. Let's look at each one.

- 1. Failure to confront poor performance (i.e. hold people accountable).** I seen repeatedly the absence of accountability in the church world. People are just not held to a standard of conduct and performance. The first step in correcting this is to establish a clear set of performance guidelines for each person working at the church, be they paid staff or volunteers. As we saw in chapter 11, the three interlocking organizational models of the church makes accountability somewhat more difficult than say managing at Walmart. But the need for clear guidelines that are universally enforced is no less critical.
- 2. Failure to empower subordinates.** Again and again, clergy fail to help people identify their gifting, develop their gifting, and then turn that gifting loose to assist the church body in becoming all that God intended it to be. In some cases, this is the pastor's reluctance to cede power. In other cases it is quality control. "How can I allow you to do X? You might make of mess of things. I'll just have to retain that function."
- 3. Failure to communicate clearly, or communicating to the wrong people, or communicating to the right people in the wrong way.** Churches are rife with communication problems. People constantly complain that they don't know what's going on (and much of that is the fault of the individual congregants more than the church). But so often pastor leaders are unclear in their communication, especially when it comes to the communication of expectations. Surveys have

shown that the majority of the workforce throughout the U.S. do not have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. This is true in secular as well as sacred organizations. Extra care must be given to communicating clearly (and this assumes that you the pastor are clear as to what you actually do expect. Many are not) expectations to your staff and volunteers. And this is never a one time occurrence. Expectations must be communicated over and over again. And when these expectations change, efforts must be redoubled to communicate over and over again.

4. **Misunderstanding what hat you're wearing.** This was discussed when we looked at the church organizational model in Chapter 11.
5. **Not taking into account the culture that embodies the organization.** We discussed this in chapter 10. Remember, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast."
6. **Treating certain people special.** This is especially difficult in ministry. Just as parent foment sibling rivalry by treating one child special over another, so to do ministers. Should you then not have any friends within the congregation? Some pastors answer yes, having been burned a number of times by this. I think friendships are possible, but must be monitored closely to avoid as much as possible the appearance of special treatment (this is the parent 'hat' you wear as a minister).
7. **Avoiding conflict, or getting triangled into conflict.** We've looked at this when we discussed conflict. Sufficient to say, many ministers are positively allergic to conflict, a trait that gets them and their churches into trouble again and again.
8. **Failure to consider succession.** Who will succeed you is a critical question, and one that points directly to the sustainability of the ministry you are now creating and perpetuating.
9. **Allowing poor performers to absorb an inordinate amount of your time.**

Managing Volunteers

Just a few words at this point about managing volunteers. This is a critical aspect of successful church ministry. It is often completely overlooked. A more robust discussion can be found by googling "Managing Volunteers." Sufficient to say, most churches I'm aware of just sign up volunteers for Sunday School, for Youth Ministry, for Worship Team and then go about giving little to no specific guidelines as to what is expected and how long the tenure of the volunteer is to be. "Sign here, and I expect you to teach 4 year old Sunday School until this first group of 4 year olds are grandparents."

Volunteer involvement in your church will only be as good as the attention that is devoted to it.

1. **Get clear on you philosophy of volunteers at your church – how do they specifically help fulfill the mission.**
2. **As the numbers of volunteers grow, designate someone who is specifically responsible for overseeing all things volunteer.**
3. **Establish (if you have designated a volunteer overseer, s/he should have the central hand in creating this) written policies and procedures.**
4. **Establish position descriptions for each volunteer role.**
5. **Establish supervisors for each volunteer role.**
6. **Establish specific training for each volunteer role and position.**
7. **Periodically assess each volunteer area as to effectiveness.**
8. **Make sure that all volunteers are properly resourced to carry out their various functions.**

Managing Metrics

Now let's look at how to get clear on exactly what you want people to do at your church. Hopefully by now, you're seeing that what is absolutely critical to alignment and ongoing good performance has to do with clear-cut expectations that are clearly communicated. Let's take a look.

The People Part. Managing Others. Managing people undoubtedly is going to be and important focus in your job, not an add-on. So note the particular areas and a possible way to evaluate the people for whom you are responsible. What follows is merely suggestions as to criteria for evaluations. Note that what is essential is that each criterion is a clear a specific behavior that is expected. Much of the below criteria is for you in your role as pastor. If you were evaluating the worship leader in your church, much of this would have to be altered.

Scoring:

- Mark each behavior on the Priority scale as to whether each behavior is an A behavior (Very Important), B (Important), C (Less important).
- Mark each behavior on the Score scale as to your performance on each behavior – from 1 one (rarely occurs), to a 5 (constantly occurs).

Behavior	Priority A,B,C	Score 1 to 5
Build Team		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Builds trust among team members for him/herself as leader and for one another. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engages in healthy conflict 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commits to decisions and actions 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Builds team where everyone holds each other accountable 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focuses on collective results 		
Hire		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understands the particular behaviors needed to fill vacant positions. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understands the procedure to vet potential candidates to arrive at the optimum choice. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Orients new hires to the particular demands of the new position. 		
Train and Develop		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Helps staff and congregants identify specific gifting. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Helps staff and congregants develop their unique gifts. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Helps congregants utilize their individual gifts appropriately. 		
Align		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understands the unique culture of the church and how that culture influences the behavior of all members. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understands the principles that are key to effectiveness and success as a team and organization serve as a guide to all decisions. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continually communicates a clear, compelling mission and vision of the organization to the church board and the congregation. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continually orients each staff member and volunteer to team principles and the unfolding mission and vision. 		
Evaluate		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Orients new hires and volunteers to the church’s mission, vision and strategies. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Holds direct reports accountable to specific performance competencies by conducting periodic specific performance evaluations. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When necessary, works in conjunction with direct reports to establish improvement plans and provides support in achieving goals. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communicates clear consequences for performance deficiencies. 		
Mentor/Succession Planning		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identifies top performers within the organization who can be developed. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enters into mentoring (discipling) relationships with selected top performers. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assists protégés with Individual Development Plans (IDP) to intentionally develop them for future leadership positions. 		
Communicate		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Direction. Clarifies the future for the workforce. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Order. Creates the norms and customs that determine how the organization behaves. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection. Exposes the staff and congregation, at a rate they can tolerate, to the internal and external threats that potentially could undermine the long-term well being of the workforce. 		
<i>Handle Conflict</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourages disagreements that focus on the fulfilling of the mission. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Refuses to become triangled into disagreements between subordinates. 		
<i>Recognize and Reward</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understands different recognition venues. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understands each direct report vis-à-vis the particular recognition venue that best fits each person. 		
<i>Collaborate</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regularly shares and contributes expertise, knowledge and information. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Makes time available to assist others. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creates positive relationships with critical outside organizations. 		
<i>Serves Congregants</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understands the particular needs of each congregant. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Works to fashion individual responses to the needs of each congregant. 		
<i>Serves Congregants</i>		

Delegate		
▪ Provides knowledge and resources to enable others to step into areas of giftedness.		
▪ Provides encouragement and feedback.		
▪ Encourages risk-taking.		

The Non-People Part. Managing Tasks. Though managing people is the primary task of management, it is not the only task. There are the non-people elements, though it is important that these non-people elements do not expand to consume the lion's share of the manager's time.

Manage Resources		
• Knows the particular resources within and without the organization that can best assist in mission fulfillment.		
• Is able to apply appropriate resources to differing situations.		
Develop / execute strategic vision plan		
• Able to develop a strategic vision for the organization.		
• Able to execute the strategic vision.		
Do lots of email, paper work -- T&A, leave approval, etc., etc.		
• Able to collect, process, organize, plan, and perform daily tasks effectively.		
• Handles email in such a way that it does not consume more time than is necessary.		
Outreach/evangelism		
• Understand the missional nature of the church.		
• Able to clearly message to outsiders the essence of the mission of the church.		
• Able to understand the particular needs of the targeted surrounding community.		

The Personal Part. Managing Myself. Personal Awareness leads to Personal Management, which leads to Social Awareness, which leads to Social Management, critical prerequisites for effective management.

Body		
▪ Gets at least seven to eight hours of sleep.		
▪ Eats a healthy breakfast.		
▪ Works out (meaning cardiovascular training at least 3 times a week and strength training at least once a week).		
▪ Takes regular breaks during the day to truly renew and recharge.		
Emotions		
• Rarely feels irritable, impatient, or anxious at work, especially when work is demanding.		
• Savors accomplishments and blessings.		
• Has enough time with family and loved ones, and when with them, is truly with them.		
• Has enough time for the activities that are deeply enjoyed.		
▪ Frequently expresses appreciation to others.		
Mind		
▪ Focuses on one thing at a time, and not easily distracted during the day.		
▪ Focuses on activities with longer-term value and high leverage rather than reacting to immediate crises.		
▪ Takes enough time for reflection, strategizing, and creative thinking.		
Spirit		
▪ Spends enough time at work doing what one does best and enjoy most.		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What one claims to be of value matches how one actually allocates' time and energy. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decisions at work are more often influenced by a strong clear sense of one's own purpose. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Invests enough time and energy in making a positive difference to others or to the world. 		

Further Reading

- David Allen, *Getting Things Done*.
- Marcus Buckingham, *First Break All The Rules*.