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Size Matters: Staffing Your Church

Years ago, someone gave one of the Church Doctor consultants this item about the chain of command in the church:

Senior pastors are faster than a speeding bullet, stronger than a locomotive, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound, can walk on water and talk to God.

Associate pastors are almost as fast as a speeding bullet, are stronger than a switch engine, able to leap short buildings in a single bound, can walk on water but their ankles get wet and sometimes they talk to God.

Music ministers are faster than a speeding BB, are stronger than a Lionel (model) train, able to leap short buildings with a long running start, can walk on water, as long as it is frozen, and talk to God, but often wonder if God hears.

Youth ministers are slower than a snail, trip over railroad tracks, walk into buildings, almost drown in the bathtub and mumble to themselves.

Church secretaries catch speeding bullets in their teeth, chew them up and use them for staples, could stare a locomotive off its tracks. If a building gets in

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MULTIPLYING MINISTRY

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the way, they just knock it off its foundation. They part the water to walk through on dry ground, and when God calls, they ask who is calling and put Him on hold.

The Same and Different

Whenever your church changes size, it is the same congregation in substance. A larger or smaller version of your church should maintain the same culture: values, beliefs, attitudes, priorities, and worldviews. The change in size may not change your philosophy of ministry—the unique personality of your church. A philosophy of ministry statement that describes who you are (as opposed to what you do) should be the continuing thread as your church changes size.

Think of it this way: two people marry and form a household. If it is a good marriage, they will develop some clear similarities: values, beliefs, attitudes, priorities, and worldviews. As they have one child, then another and another, they reflect these cultural markers to their children. The size of their family will not, should not, change their basic philosophy of marriage and family. However, most organize and operate larger families differently—for efficiency, if not for survival.

As your church grows, it must change in style and structure. The pastor of the smaller church transitions into the senior pastor of a staff. The structure changes. The style of how the senior pastor serves is different. In the large church, the senior pastor may not know everyone in the congregation, can't visit everyone in their homes, and can't be present at every ministry activity.

In the larger church, worship changes from one service with everyone present to multiple services, sometimes with different styles, often in different locations, on or off the original church campus.

The decision-making group of the larger church should change in three structural ways: (1) it should become smaller as the church grows larger, relying on more input from staff; (2) it should focus on vision and direction: “big picture issues”; and (3) not get involved in management issues.

THE TEN GUIDELINES FOR STAFFING

1. Before you staff, initiate a season of prayer in your church. Jesus said, “The harvest is large, the workers are few. *Pray* to the Lord of the harvest” (Matthew 9:37-38).
2. All work for God should focus on a calling, not a job. A calling is when your most important relationship is the Lord, not your boss or fellow worker.
3. All workers, paid and unpaid, should be asked to pick a number between 1 and 10 (1=job, 10=calling). Choose those ranking a 7 or higher. Disciple those with a ranking of 6 or less.
4. When Christian calling overshadows the concept of a job, the motivation changes from reward to joy. Intrinsic motivation occurs, even if you get paid. Your motive is joy (John 10:1-11).
5. The biblical ideal for staffing is to disciple a person while “on the job”: I do/you watch; I do/you help; you do/I help; you do/I watch. This puts the focus on adding staff from within.
6. When deciding where to serve, where to focus, and where not to serve, the most important consideration is the spiritual gifts given to you by the Holy Spirit.
7. Clearly discern (through observation and conversation) if a potential staff person is actively living the faith, demonstrating the fruits of faith (Galatians 5:22-23).
8. Before you add new staff, make sure they clearly understand your philosophy of ministry and accept it. If you do not have a written philosophy of ministry, write one—before you staff.
9. As a church grows, it may require *different* staff. In the small church, staff must be capable managers. As a church grows, they must become capable leaders.
10. In the growing church, staff develops operational worldviews around the next size of the church rather than the present size. This allows the Holy Spirit to grow the church into the next level.

A larger church is, in style and structure, a different church. If your church operates in the same way it did when it was smaller, it will self-prune: it will move in the direction of being smaller to fit the smaller style and structure. The result? The inefficiency of operations, based on the smaller version, will frustrate church members. As ministry efforts “fall through the cracks” of a structure that doesn’t fit the body, people become annoyed...and leave.

An important element of structural size is the operational styles of staff. If staff *only* adjust to the new larger size, the church will plateau—stop growing. This is why staff, leadership styles and structure should reflect the *feel* of the “next” size, not the present size of your church. A church should be always growing into its next size. Have you ever purchased clothes for a child?

What if some staff are unable to grow into the next size of style and structure? The church could plateau or begin to decline. This is not the only cause of a declining church, but it is one most overlooked.

Size, by Perception

Often, the size of your church is held captive by the worldview of those who attend. If they come from a large megachurch, your large church, to them, may seem small. This is an important factor when adding staff. If staff come to your church from a larger church, each carries a vision based on one of two possibilities: “This is a small church, so I’ll adapt to it” and contribute to a plateau. Or, “I will continue to operate as a larger church, like where I served before” and will project future elements that allow growth for your church. While it seems strange, these issues are almost never discussed.

When we consult a church, we ask everyone in the congregation, “Is this a small, medium-sized, or large church?” Why? Perception drives behavior. At the heart of many disagreements among Christians is the unspoken and very different perceptions about the relative size of the church. Most often, church members err on the side of smaller. When they do, they may try to limit the size of the staff, underestimate their church’s potential to accomplish greater ministry, and have a scarcity mentality toward finances—what the church can afford.

We help Christians reflect about the size of their church

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to help them consider more God-sized possibilities. We ask, “Among all the churches in the country, what percentage of churches, by size, do you think your church fits? If the smallest churches are at 1%, and the largest churches are at 100%, where would your church fall?”

Here is the logic of this exercise: if you rank your church at 60%, it means that 59% of the churches in the country are smaller and 39% are larger. On a recent Staffing Consultation at a fairly large church, we asked each staff person to rank the percentile of their church by size. Among the eight staff persons, one ranked the church at 97%. However, two ranked the size at 40%. What does this imply about the way they think, act, and carry out their style and approach to ministry? What does it reflect about each staff member’s views about the appropriate structure for their area of ministry?

In this same church, we asked the entire congregation whether this was a small, medium-sized, or large church. Here are the results:

Small 3%
Medium 74%
Large 23%

While 3% of the congregation said their church was relatively small and 74% said that it was medium-sized, the actual ranking among all churches in the country was in the 96th percentile. This means only 4% of the churches in the country are larger and 95% are smaller.

What do you think that means for the worldview—the mentality—for the people in that church? How does it limit the realm of their possibilities for ministry? How does it affect their view of the number of staff the church should have? How does it impact their understanding of the appropriate salary for the senior pastor? What does it communicate about the potential their congregation has to impact their community for Jesus Christ?

Staffing the Larger Church

The following is a guideline of style and structure for the staff of a small, medium-sized church, as compared to a large-sized church. The percentages in this table represent the level of focus for each area and how it differs between the small and medium-sized churches, on the one hand, and the large-sized churches on the other.

KEY RESOURCES

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**Small/Medium-Sized Churches
(300 average worship attendance or less)**

**Large-Sized Churches
(301+ average worship attendance)**

80% Focus on doing the work, hands-on	80% Focus on directing the work through others
80% Doing ministries	80% Overseeing ministries
20% Casting vision	80% Casting vision
20% Growing and building leaders	80% Growing and building leaders
20% Joint coordination with others on staff	80% Joint coordination and administration with others on staff
40% Focus on making disciples who make disciples	80% Focus on making disciples who make disciples
35% The ability to say “no”	65% The ability to say “no”
30% Energy/Stamina level required	70% Energy/Stamina level required
70% Multitasking/Variety/Generalists/Doing many activities	70% Focus on being a specialist
30% Importance on communication skills	70% Importance on communication skills
40% Requirement for strong emotional quotient (EQ)	70% Requirement for strong emotional quotient (EQ)
40% Importance of skill set honed	70% Importance of skill set honed

What does this say about those who serve on the staff at your church? What does this say about your understanding of staff? Even more fundamental, what is the *real* size of your church?

To schedule a phone appointment to discuss this topic further with Kent, call Jason Atkinson at 1-800-626-8515.



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