



FREE House of Worship Safety & Security Assessment

American Crime Prevention Institute (ACPI) and Honeywell team up to offer this valuable resource to help you see how secure your church is and identify areas you can improve.



Take the survey now or call 1-800-796-2288 for more info!

Honeywell

Six trends in staffing

By William Vanderbloemen

13

Churches are being forced to think about how to maximize the impact of their staffing dollars.

Like

As I glanced through my messages and Twitter feed, I noticed a picture from Jud Wilhite. It was a snapshot of 1,100 people being baptized at Central Christian Church in Las Vegas earlier Sunday morning. It was like a payday for me.

Central is a client of ours, and even more, dear friends. You have to know some of the backdrop to really understand why I teared up when I thought about that scene.

Central has grown by leaps and bounds for the last decade. They now have about 20,000 attenders each week at their services. A lot of that growth has happened in the last few years. That's right, since the economic downturn of 2008, Central has grown. That's all in the context of a city many economists say has been hit harder than any other.

Unemployment hovers at about 25 percent. Central will have to add a ton of people this year just to offset the number of people leaving the city.

So what gives? How can they be growing in that setting? I think above all, God's hand is on the leadership of this church. They are the real deal. Moreover, they're smart. They're staffing in a way that really shows savvy use of talent in a time of shrinking dollars. And they're getting it done.

The amazing news about my work is, that's just one story. We have had the chance to get to know some of the largest, highest growth, and most effective churches in the world.

Probably the most common question I get from senior pastors and executive pastors at client visits is, "What's everyone out there doing?"

There's not a new idea under the sun, but here are a few staffing strategies God seems to be using to really help big churches reach more and more people.

Smart churches are spending more money on fewer people. As the economy continues to have a negative affect on church budgets and staffing dollars, churches are being forced to think about how to maximize impact of their staffing dollars. As a result, churches have to be even more careful about allocating staffing dollars. While it may sound counterintuitive,

I am seeing smart churches pay more for a few top notch staff and hiring fewer of them.

Quality, higher-salary candidates might cost a few more dollars in the short-term but many churches find that they are more likely to make a higher impact in the long-term. Instead of hiring a pastor who can do

the work himself, many churches are looking for a “leader of leaders” who can recruit, train and lead volunteers to accomplish the work.

Hire coaches. One client told me: “William, I need a coach for our team. And coaches just don’t touch the ball.”



Hillsong Church in Australia is a great example of this principle. You will find that the folks down under spend an inordinate amount of time training leadership. Their intern program receives enormous time and attention. Their training focuses on leadership development and not any one particular skill set. The result? When I’m visiting “down under,” I’m amazed at how little they are doing on as small a head count as they keep. Additionally, the leaders on staff are almost purely interchangeable among departments.

Get social. While you are reading this article many of you are also checking your email, tweeting and updating your Facebook status. Churches are recognizing this trend and are placing more and more emphasis on communications and social media, even in the form of

a chief communications officer.

If you look at church history, you’ll see that every seminal Kingdom breakthrough has happened on the heels of a communication breakthrough. Rome built roads and Paul was given a route to run missions. Alexander’s conquests created one common form of Greek, and the New Testament came together. The printing press is invented, and the Bible’s printing ushers in a Reformation.

Now that we are on the heels of the single biggest communication breakthrough ever, made possible by advances in technology, we may be the verge of perhaps the greatest Kingdom breakthrough ever. Smart churches are figuring that out and hiring around it.

LifeChurch.tv has created the number one Bible App in the world. If you have downloaded the Bible on your iPhone or iPad, it’s their app. The number and caliber of people they are devoting to their online team is astounding. The dividends are unquestionable.

Community Bible Church in San Antonio, TX, hired a pastor of social media last year. Nils Smith has seen unbelievable growth and involvement online at CBC even in the short time he’s been on board (see sidebar).

Hire from the inside and the outside. One of the best places to find good staff is inside your own congregation. We recommend hiring from within as a first option. In the 1980s Corporate America attempted to put a heavy emphasis on hiring only from within and in a lot of ways American churches followed suit.

But the trend we see among churches are those who also look outside their own congregations. Looking inside is not healthy if it is the only practice. I’ve witnessed plenty of inside hires that didn’t work out. I tell clients that I was born and raised in the Western

Appalachian Mountains, and can testify that constant inbreeding doesn’t always work out!

Outsiders may be helpful when you need a shift in philosophy or strategy, or when you need experienced

leadership or when you need a specialized skill. Looking outside your congregation may be your best option for your next hire.

Staff for fundraising development. Increasingly, we are seeing churches dedicate a staff position exclusively responsible for not only raising money for special projects but also for the weekly giving. This is often called a pastor of generosity. We helped

Central Christian in Las Vegas with this search and were impressed with the way that church has led the way in the arena of generosity.

Churches are taking a cue from colleges and arts institutions who excel at raising money from those in their network, and who are set aside to do the work of talking about money and giving.

While teaching and lead pastors have, in the past, been the primary fundraisers in a church – giving is a spiritual act of worship – very few teacher/preachers are gifted at talking about both spiritual matters and financial realities. We've also found that smart pastors are realizing that they cannot become the guy everyone expects a money pitch from. In order to protect their role as the spiritual leader of the flock, they need to offload some of the fundraising responsibilities to another team member.

Oftentimes a pastor of generosity is the smart staff move. The cost isn't insignificant, but if the hire is done well, it's more than worth the investment.

Get ready for tomorrow — today. Unless we are the pastor when our church closes, or we happen to be the pastor when Jesus returns, we are all only in our churches for a temporary stay. The aging workforce is affecting every job sector of the U.S., and the church isn't immune to it; pastors and leaders, more than ever, are beginning to plan for the day when they will retire.

Smart leaders are realizing that we are all interim pastors, and they are planning for transition well in advance. This is probably the sector that our firm works hardest on, because we believe it might be the biggest unspoken crisis the church in the U.S. will face over the next 20 years.

A great resource is *Transition Plan* by Rob Russell and Ryan Bucher. It's a telling of the transition at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, KY. Bob Russell and Dave Stone managed that handoff better than any I have seen, and the church of more than 20,000 hasn't missed a beat.

The last few years have been more challenging for churches than any in recent past. But there are signs of a new level of strategy in staffing; signs that show the church is not only alive and well, but thriving.

William Vanderbloemen is the founder and CEO of the Vanderbloemen Search Group, a retained executive search firm for the church. www.findourleader.com

Nils Smith: Church hires social media pastor