

→ LEADERSHIP—Be Worth Following

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Multisite Leadership: Divide and Conquer

Moving from one site to multisites is one of the hardest and most rewarding endeavors you, your team, and your colleagues will tackle together as a church or ministry. And while you probably have a handle on the nuts-and-bolts details it'll take to move to a multisite ministry, you may be wondering what it'll be like to *lead* a multisite ministry. This quick guide will prepare you for the key leadership points you'll face as you work to become one children's ministry in multiple locations.

STEP 1: Create Excitement and Buy In.

Some of your most challenging conversations will occur before you actually begin ministry at each site. That's why step one is all about handling your team—and your key leaders—with care before the transition. Begin by pitching the concept and new format to your key volunteer and staff leaders—and actively pursue their buy in. Remember these keys when you talk to your team.

- **Keep the big picture up front.** Your church isn't going multisite as a means to explode membership or give everyone more work to do; the ultimate goal is to reach more people and minister to more children.

- **Don't settle.** There'll be a tendency (as is our human nature) to settle for "good enough" or the minimum that'll get your ministry by. Avoid the temptation to settle; make your plans and shoot for the stars. Encourage your team to commit to excellence. Plan big—together.

- **Strive for commitments and clear expectations.** Ask the team members you've recruited for the new site to commit to at least one year of service at that site, and ensure they have clear job descriptions and expectations. Clear expectations eliminate many difficult conversations and hurt feelings later on.

STEP 2: Prep for Launch.

This step is all about managing the workload of those you lead at one site while training those who'll be leading at other sites. This is the point where a lot of "heavy lifting" comes in.

You're fleshing out plans, making late decisions, ordering everything from supplies to environments, and beginning to think that meetings are a permanent state of being. Despite all that overwhelms you, you must ensure you're adequately caring for those you lead. Otherwise, you risk burning out your team and creating a culture where multiple sites are a negative rather than a positive.

Commit to train your new campus team during this time—before they ever set foot in the new location. Include these people in decisions regarding the new site—after all, they'll be the ones living with it. And use this time to apprentice your existing team, letting them shadow the roles they'll be taking on for as much time as possible.

STEP 3: Launch.

As you move into the launch phase, two key leadership areas you can't overlook are managing expectations and preparing for the oncoming crowd.

- **Managing Expectations**—There'll be the inevitable person or people on your team who'll be disappointed by your initial turnout (no matter how large it is) and who spread that negative impression. And there'll be others who expected fewer people who get overwhelmed. Prepare your team to have reasonable expectations on launch day. In general you can expect 25% of the total attendance to show up in your children's ministry. So if you're expecting 400

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people on launch day, plan for about 100 children—and confidently plan for them.

- **Preparing for a Crowd**—Launch day will be your first real “load test” where rooms are actually full of children. Train your team long beforehand to keep cool heads and smiling faces even in the midst of chaos. Convey the importance of presenting an efficient, secure, well-organized environment. This is vital for the first impressions you make and the overall experiences families and kids have.

STEP 4: Pursue the Mission.

After launch, your goals shift from managing startup requirements to creating sustainability and growth. Priority one is to ensure that your team is properly cared for. This includes scheduling well, sharing wins, and taking small steps.

- **Scheduling Well**—Take pains to schedule people efficiently and give them ample time off. It’s always a temptation to overuse your team members when you’re implementing something new or are in the early stages of a launch, but in reality this is when your team most needs to be well-rested. Over-scheduling them comes with a price—sometimes that price is burn out, low enthusiasm, mistakes, and even unpleasant interactions with families. Your team has been through a lot to make it to this point; allow them time to breathe away from the ministry.

- **Sharing Wins**—Another key is to become a

story collector so you can remind your teams of the great things they’re accomplishing. Share the stories you collect during huddle times or one-to-one to keep people motivated and gratified.

- **Taking Small Steps**—Your focus will eventually become about continual, incremental improvement and growth. Your team can’t accomplish every goal it sets from Sunday to Sunday. However, you can take small steps each week to keep improving...and as you improve, you’ll grow. These small steps are called the 1-percenters—they’re the things that’ll make you 1 percent better if you do them. They’re not big—maybe as simple as wearing name badges on the right rather than the left because they’re more visible that way. But if you do two 1-percenters each week for one year, you’ll be 104% more effective than you were at the same point the year before.

There’s no sugar-coating the truth: Leading a multisite ministry is a huge undertaking that’ll challenge every level of your leadership. But it’s also one of the biggest opportunities you have to leverage quality ministry into new geographic areas that reach people and children right in their communities. And of course, that makes it worth everything it takes to see it happen. Lead well and remember: You—and your team—are up to the challenge!

Bill Anderson is a writer and family life pastor for a multisite church in Millersburg, Ohio.



Three Questions for Any Decision

As leaders increase in influence and responsibility, they likewise increase their need to effectively make pressing decisions that often carry a lot of weight. And if you’re like most, making weighty decisions either excites you or burdens you. But no matter how you feel when faced with a decision, leadership experts agree that the ability to accurately discern pros and cons, act decisively, and take responsibility for your decisions is a key

characteristic of effective leaders. They also warn that the inability to do so may limit your ability to lead. So make it a point to hone your decision-making skills. Begin by asking the following three questions any time you’re facing a decision.

1. **What’s the downside?** Or, what’s the liability to your ministry or church? In the worst-case scenario, what risk does the decision you make present to your ministry? For instance, if you must decide whether to remove one of your top team leaders for sexual harassment or invest in coaching the person, what’s the worst that could happen if you decide to remove the person? What’s the worst that could happen if you opt for coaching? At what risk will the decision you make place your ministry, team, or church?

2. **What is the cost/benefit ratio?** “Good decisions are highly leveraged with low cost/high benefit,” advise the experts at Teambuildingusa.com. “Poor decisions are high cost/low benefit.” That

A Source of Stress

Recently, 88% of surveyed leaders reported that work was a primary source of stress in their lives. 90% of leaders said they attempt to manage stress by removing themselves—either physically or mentally—from the source of stress.

Source: Center for Creative Leadership

means you must objectively consider what your ministry stands to gain in relation to what it must invest or risk. If the benefit to your ministry isn't worth the investment or risk, you must make a decision based on that assessment. For instance, imagine you're dealing with a group of parents who've threatened to pull their kids because of the curriculum you're using—but the majority of parents are pleased with it. You must make a decision based on your assessment of what it'll cost your ministry to replace the curriculum vs. leaving it in place.

3. Who needs to be involved in the decision? You may ultimately be the person who must make the final call, but often it's critical to involve others in significant decisions. These

people may have information that'll help you make a decision, they may be the ones who have to live with the decision you make, or they may simply be in authority positions where it's important to get their input. Identify the stakeholders in each decision you're considering, investigate the facts, open a discussion, and then cultivate support and commitment for the decision you're making.

By all accounts, an effective leader is one who doesn't shy from making big decisions—and bearing responsibility for those decisions. Hone your skills in this area, and you'll better serve your team and your ministry.

Source: Teambuildingusa.com

Keep Your Integrity

If you've ever found yourself in a ministry situation where you wondered whether your integrity might come into question, don't feel bad. Almost every leader has either inadvertently or semi-inadvertently stepped into a situation where issues of integrity grew murky. These situations can be as simple or as complex as you can imagine, but you can steer clear of questionable intentions by following these rules of thumb.

- **Ask yourself how Jesus would handle the situation.** Think of this as stamping "WWJD?" on your forehead backwards so you can read it in the mirror every day. Seriously, though, this is usually the quickest and most accurate way to keep yourself and your actions on track.

- **Listen to your gut.** In a perfect world, we could fully trust everyone. In our world, that is not the case. You likely have a solid gut feeling regarding the people you lead and the people who lead you. You may even have a good idea about their intentions. If you sense that someone is up to no good...listen to that feeling. If you sense someone has good intentions but is executing in an unhealthy way, address it.

- **Clearly communicate with others.** Many a disaster has been averted thanks to an overabundance of clear communication. Become an overcommunicator who regularly ensures that people understand what you've communicated. Clear up miscommunications, misinterpretations, and mixed messages by being concise, upfront, and open in your communications.

- **Don't ask for someone's confidence.** Or, more precisely, don't expect people to keep your

secrets; they won't. Secret-keeping translates into murkiness. As a leader, you shouldn't have secrets. Everything must be out on the table, open to examination. If you catch yourself asking someone to "not tell a soul"—reconsider what you're about to say.

- **Realize that your moral code isn't everyone's.** What you deem to be a violation of integrity...might not be to someone else. Adultery might be a nearly unforgivable sin to you; to someone else it might rank with shoplifting. The point is, you never know how one person perceives transgressions of integrity. So don't assume that a "tiny misstep" by you will be perceived that way...especially since you're a leader. It's been said before, but it's worth repeating: As a leader of children's ministry, everything you say and do must be above reproach.

Adapted in part from "Workplace Politics vs. Integrity" by Rick Brenner



Master Leaders

George Barna, noted researcher and author, offers up a new book that hungry leaders will devour. Prompted by Barna's desire to improve his own leadership skills, he sat down with some of the most compelling and successful leaders today to get their blunt advice and tales of their experience. The result is a book filled with core principles and frank insights from some of today's most notable leaders.

\$24.99; BarnaBook

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Revealing conversations with 30 leadership greats

GEORGE BARNAL
WITH BILL PALKA



Speak, Your Audience Listens!

There's a school of thought that says if you want to get a message across to a large group of people, you must say it seven times in seven ways. When it comes to church ministry, there's no doubt this is a great principle to take into account. But I don't wish to reiterate the various means of communicating with your church body—chances are you know them and have used them all. Rather, my aim is to challenge your thinking from, *How can I better get information out? to Why aren't they listening?*

I bet the people you're trying to reach have no problem knowing when their sports teams are playing and on what channel or where they need to drop off their kids for various non-church activities. Before you wring your hands or start complaining about how the church is such a low priority in the lives of Christians today, a more positive approach is to ask some honest questions of ourselves as leaders. Begin to think about how we can be proactive and creative in the way we communicate and attract families to our ministries. Let's take a step back and look at common communication problems that plague the church. A proactive leader will look inward rather than simply blaming the audience. Some of these may be tough questions, but if you're willing to do an honest assessment and then make changes as a result, you'll see a marked improvement in the response to your communication efforts.

Questions to Consider

Start by answering these questions.

- **How easy or difficult is it for newcomers to your church to find the information they need to become involved?** For most churches I visit, I can't find basic information about the children's ministry—and I'm looking for it! Information must be readily available and in multiple locations to make it easy for anyone to find. On families' first visit, provide them with all the pertinent materials they need to get involved in children's ministry.

- **Do you have a central location at your church where people can get information on any children's ministry program or event?** Use clear signage to indicate where families can find information about all things related to your ministry. Make sure your church's general information area also has all of your information for families who opt to bring their children to the adult worship service on their first visit but go to a general location for children's ministry information.

- **Can people go to the church's main website and easily get the information they need?** If you have a separate children's ministry website, ensure that it's linked to your church's

portal site. If you have a ministry page, check to see that it's easy to find and under a clear heading such as, "Children's Ministry."

- **Do you use easy-to-understand and recognizable names for programs and events, or is your ministry like an exclusive club where only insiders can understand the lingo?** Cool names can be confusing to newcomers. When communicating, always use a clarifying header that states "Children's Ministry" or "Family Ministry." If you title an event something catchy or whimsical, include a subhead that clearly describes what it is and what its purpose is.

- **Do you provide regular communication in a recognizable format that people anticipate?** Consider having a weekly email or monthly newsletter that consistently communicates upcoming events and updates. Use your ministry logo or a regular email subject line so recipients will know that the email or snail mail contains information they need. Consider using a resource such as The Parent Link (group.com) to provide a professional, helpful newsletter.

- **Do you count on children to communicate or deliver important information?** Hopefully this isn't your primary source of getting the word out. While announcements to children are another means of communication, the information must also be directly placed into the hands of parents and caregivers to assure accuracy and delivery.

- **Do you use multiple forms of communication to get your message across?** Bulletin announcements, bulletin boards, the church website, parent mailings, pulpit announcements, email blasts, phone calls, voicemail, postcards, calendars, take-home fliers, banners, posters, restroom signs, drinking fountain signs, and windshield fliers—you get the idea! Use creative and multiple forms of communication so your message is heard.

- **Are you doing so many activities and events that overwhelmed families stop attending?** You've heard it said, "Too much of a good thing, isn't a good thing." Less can be more, especially when it comes to church activities. What your ministry offers communicates what it values, so look at what's most beneficial and

will grow your ministry rather than cause it to wither.

• **Is the quality of what you're doing worth attending?** Look at your programming this way—would you want to bring your own family? Offer programs that are worthwhile to families and that they look forward to. Quality programs themselves can be your most effective form of communication.

Here's the bottom line: People read what's important to them and what they deem as valuable. Your challenge is to make all your communications matter.

Karl Bastian, the Kidologist, is the founder of Kidology.org and provides a free children's ministry podcast at kidology.org/podcast.

It's a Choice

Perry Noble, senior pastor at New Spring Church in South Carolina, recently blogged about the top 10 choices leaders need to make about their staff. Whether you oversee a paid or volunteer ministry staff, these are valuable choices to make as a leader and as someone working for the good of your ministry in a larger organization.

1. Choose to believe the best in your staff rather than the worst.
2. Choose to trust them in making decisions rather than acting as a watchdog over every minor detail.
3. Choose to believe that questions they ask are for clarification purposes and not because they're being disloyal.
4. Choose to believe they love the church and want to see it succeed and thrive.
5. Choose to lead through inspiration and revelation, not by humiliation, intimidation, condemnation, and manipulation.
6. Choose to listen to their side before making a decision that directly affects them.
7. Choose to value them as human beings and not just as vessels for completing tasks.
8. Choose to take the time to coach them through the "why" on decisions so they're equipped and empowered to do it on their own the next time.
9. Choose to let them present solutions to the problems they're telling you about.
10. Choose to point out all the things they're doing well rather than focusing on what they do to mess up.

Source: perrynoble.com

Boost Your Bottom Line

When creating your ministry budget or unveiling your financials to your church board, include volunteer time to boost your bottom line. Unfortunately most volunteer time goes unrecorded and unreported. But tracking this valuable information can be a great asset to your ministry and church. Here's why.

• **It helps you recognize volunteer contribution.** When you recognize or offer appreciation for your volunteers, communicating their time calculated into a monetary investment communicates their value.

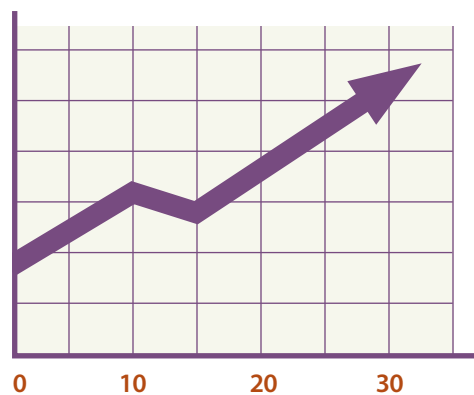
• **It helps you validate fundraising efforts.** Church members want to know how their tithes and offering are spent by church leadership. Reporting the contribution of volunteer hours and the monetary amount it equals is a great way to show that your leadership values the gifts given by church members—regardless of the form they come in.

• **It's a plus for grants.** If your ministry monitors grant contributions or if you're applying for a grant, volunteer hours can help you meet your requirements to receive matching funds or win new grants.

• **It protects your ministry and volunteers.** Logging and recording volunteer hours can protect volunteers and the church if allegations of misconduct arise.

• **It informs financial statements.** You can include volunteer hours on internal financial statements and budgets and various other budget reports. If you want to use volunteer hours for audit purposes, consult a certified public accountant for guidelines.

Source: blueavocado.org



Avoiding Layoffs

Churches are living within a tight financial budget these days and like the secular work world, layoffs become a reality when budgets shrink. That's not an easy decision for a church to make, especially when people are of high value and priority—whether they're on staff or not. Reducing your personnel costs doesn't always have to result in layoffs. Here are some creative ideas on how to cut costs without cutting jobs.

- Reduce work hours rather than personnel.
- Don't fill open positions.
- Freeze existing salaries.
- Ask employees to take unpaid time off for a specific length of time when you know their ministry season is slow.
- Move employees whose positions are being considered for downsizing to positions



that are vacant.

- Introduce job sharing—using two part-time employees to fill a full-time position.
- “Lend” employees out by potentially sharing them (and salaries) with another church.
- Create restrictions or eliminate overtime pay.

Source: “Lay Off the Layoffs” by Matt Branaugh (christianitytoday.com)

Riding Out the Economy

More than 800 churches responded to a late 2009 study by the National Association of Church Business Administration (NACBA) on how the economic recession is impacting churches. Here's what they shared:

- **36%** of churches report having difficulty with financial support “that's not common for our congregation this time of year”; another 24% report slowing of support but haven't determined whether it's the result of the economy or just a normal cycle

- **56%** of churches froze or reduced staff benefits (up from 18% in late 2008)

- **44%** have held staff salaries

- **19%** reported laying off staff

Other than reducing staff and benefits, churches have tried these cost-saving measures:

- **31%** have changed their thermostat settings

- **29%** postponed a major capital project

- **17%** reduced program offerings

- **14%** changed their landscape watering schedules

- **14%** reduced ministry services

- **5%** shifted to 4-day workweeks

Here are additional cost-saving actions from survey respondents (including measures designed to help church members with their finances):

- implementing the results of an energy audit

- entire staff taking 5% pay cut

- reducing cleaning and lawn care

- offering financial classes and mentoring to

church members

- doing Kingdom Projects (give families \$50 each and ask them to creatively multiply the money for the church)

- emailing quarterly giving statements and other communications (rather than mailing)

- having Sunday school classes assist families who are suffering financially

- working on being better stewards of God's provision

- facilitating “Week of Bounty” (families fill out a “need” card and others bring in their good, excess stuff, which is then redistributed based on need cards)

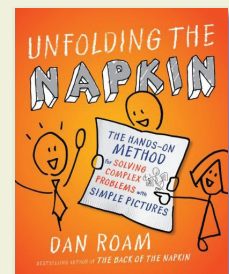
- using large group facilities for children's ministry to use heating/AC more efficiently

Source: nacba.net

Unfolding the Napkin

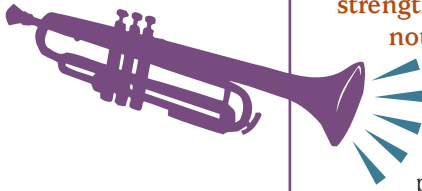
Author Dan Roam guides readers on the power of brainstorming and communicating with pictures. This book shows leaders how to draw pictures and call on their visual imagination to achieve success—while introducing creative brainstorming techniques to their teams and wider ministry partners. Roam provides a four-step visual process (look-see-imagine-show) to look at any situation and conclude the best solution.

\$20; Portfolio Trade



Toot Your Own Horn Effectively (Without Being Obnoxious)

Being a full-time ministry professional means that while you have both feet fully planted in God's service, you also wear a "career" cap. And sometimes that combination can feel a bit awkward. You often make concessions in your career, such as lower pay rate, longer hours, and a lack of a corporate ladder to climb. The benefits of having an eternal purpose are truly priceless. But how do you effectively gauge your performance, strengths, weaknesses, and growth as a ministry leader? Will your ministry supervisor notice what you're doing and not doing? Should you speak up? Try combining a few everyday practices to help you prepare for annual reviews or meetings with your leadership.



1. Set aside reservations. It's appropriate and healthy to have a realistic picture of your performance—and to talk about it with your supervisor. While talking about yourself (including your strengths) may make you uncomfortable, it's important to distinguish between "tooting your own horn" and having humility; taking a genuine and objective look at yourself isn't a contradiction to being humble. The Bible says, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you" (Romans 12:3, NIV). It's okay and appropriate to have a sober and realistic judgment of what you do well.

2. Ask for regular performance reviews. Like any operating organization, all churches should encourage and practice regular staff reviews at least annually if not semi-annually. Often seen as a simple housekeeping step, regular reviews actually provide church leadership and staff vital feedback for going forward in their God-given mission. Reviews also provide a natural forum in which to troubleshoot and remove obstacles preventing effective ministry. Use this time to bring up those instances where God gave you creativity, helped you quickly tackle an enormous challenge, or blessed your efforts with great successes for his kingdom. It's normal to be nervous. Try to make this interaction as much a casual conversation as possible. Take time to be prepared to give clear examples and also receive constructive criticism.

3. Pray about your motives. You know your heart and what God has called you to do. What do you want to gain: a higher pay rate, more responsibility, or professional growth? Honestly share what you have done, have failed at doing, and have learned. Most of all, share how God is using each of these experiences to strengthen and equip you for the future.

4. Keep a list throughout the year. List

extra or over-the-top accomplishments and ways God has caused you to grow. When you fail, jot down how you reacted and what you learned. Both formal and informal education is something to note on this list. Tell how God has blessed you and your ministry. Allow this simple list to tell your ministry story for the year. Familiarize yourself with the ups and downs of the year as you prepare for your review with your church leadership. Feel free to take the list with you to the meeting, but do your best to share instances from memory. During your review, use the list to jot constructive feedback and compliments.

5. Toot others' horns also. If you're always speaking up for yourself and no one else, you can come across as prideful. Toot the horns of others along the way. This can truly be the fun part. Imagine the joy of blessing others as you catch them doing great things. Write an email to senior leadership sharing your experience with another staff member. Brag on your co-workers at staff meetings or even as you're filling your cup at the coffee pot. Publicly (in front of the church) recognize how other ministries' efforts have affected you or your ministry. Include others' accolades in your reports to the church board. Update your social networking sites with the stellar instances of those going above and beyond. Make complimenting others a natural and genuine part of everyday conversation. Who knows? They may even return the favor.


Whether speaking up for yourself comes naturally or not, try putting these ideas into practice. It's a great benefit to you and your leadership staff. Enjoy shining the spotlight on others also. Allow the list you keep to not only prepare you to meet with church leadership but to also encourage you as you reflect over the year of ministry with which God has blessed you.

Janna Firestone is a communications director and fundraising event planner for a nonprofit organization.

View From a Blog

Ever stumble upon people's blogs and wonder where they find the time? And then maybe you find yourself pondering what you'd write about if you did start your own blog? Here are considerations for how to successfully blog as a Christian ministry professional...and why it might be worth your time.

REASONS TO BLOG

1. **Blogs give potential employers more information about you.**
 2. **Blogging helps you refine your writing skills.**
 3. **Like journaling, blogging can help you clarify your ideas and thoughts.**
 4. **Unlike journaling, others can provide feedback on your blog—kind of like brainstorming!**
 5. **Blogging allows you to share the message of Christ in a powerful way.**
- 

Suggestions for Success

1. Keep your entire audience in mind. Everything you write should be appropriate for all audiences. Honor your family, your friends, and God with all that you write. Let the Holy Spirit be your editor.

2. Invite a mentor or accountability partner to your blog. These added “audience” members can have valuable feedback for your career if they have this inside track on what you're thinking and where you're headed. Knowing they're out there will also keep you from wandering down strange paths in cyberspace.

3. Don't vent. A blog is not the place to discuss relationship problems or even complain about a bad driver.

4. Consider security. Be somewhat guarded with your personal information. While you don't want to use a false name, it's okay to use just your first name if that's more comfortable.

5. Include a value statement. Give your blog a name and then write a short definition of what you stand for. This will help draw in others who share your values and will help set expectations for your blog.

6. Choose photos with caution. Full body shots can be distracting; head shots are more professional and allow the reader to focus on your words.

7. Monitor frequency. Be fairly consistent with your pacing. Readers might come to expect something every Monday, for example. But don't let your blogs take over your life. If you need to take some time off, let your readers know.

8. Mix up your content. Keep your content “real” and write in a relatively informal voice about topics and ideas that are of current interest to you.

9. Use Scripture where appropriate. Maggie from the “Magnanimity” blog offers this advice: “Keep access to truth there as you think and consider. Show people how to use the Word and how God uses it...Don't use churchy language on every single post, just talk about your life, or problems, or interests.”

Sources: sologig.com and 5purpose driven.wordpress.com

Deliver the Goods

When you work with someone who's all talk but never delivers on promises, you know how frustrating it can be. And if you recognize that tendency in yourself, be warned. There are few other professional flaws that can put a dent in your reputation or career path more effectively. Avoid being a leader who's all talk and no walk by remembering these key pointers.

• **If you can't do it, don't promise it.** Stop yourself before you make a commitment to deliver something. If your promise is based more on hope than reality, you're setting up yourself—and others—for disappointment.

• **Be conservative in your promises.** Don't promise the moon and then deliver a moon rock. People will quickly learn that either you

don't mean what you say or that you're okay with shortcuts and less-than-quality results. Promise less than what you genuinely believe you can deliver, and when you come through with a five-star result people will be delighted.

• **Don't make promises that are contingent on people or situations over which you have no control.** If Sally's due to turn in her budget to you on Monday and you promise your leader to have it approved and incorporated into your budget by Tuesday, you've got a lot riding on Sally. Build in cushions so you have what you need in plenty of time to make good on your promises. Then be relentless about ensuring you do in fact get what you need.

—From the editors

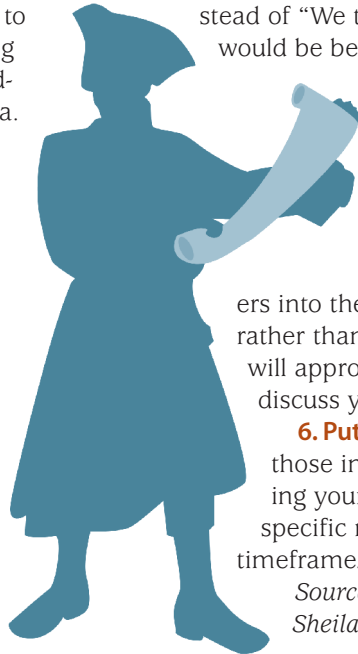
Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

If you've ever felt like you're being ignored (or someone else is getting credit for your great ideas) during meetings with executive staff and your church's board of directors, evaluate your delivery style. Try these methods for getting your message across.

1. Speak up. Are you "too polite" in meetings, waiting for someone to invite your idea? Do you fear being "pushy"? If you have an idea in advance, ask to be put on the agenda. If the idea strikes you during the meeting, assert yourself confidently.

2. Be clear about your purpose. Is your goal to inform? persuade? suggest? request? Know your purpose and use it in your opening statement. For example, "I'd like to keep you all informed about the latest in child development research" or "May I suggest we hire a professional driver for the retreat?"

3. Speak deliberately. A slower pace indicates a more thoughtful, confident speaker with



something of value to share. Rushing your words suggests you don't feel qualified to have the floor and you don't want to waste anyone's time.

4. Cut the clutter. Get to the point in a concise manner. Eliminate extra phrases, unnecessary explanations, and redundancies. Instead of "We took a vote and decided that it would be better to make phone calls due to the fact that it's significantly cheaper than doing a mailing survey," say, "We voted to save money by using a phone survey rather than a mailer."

5. Ask for feedback. Pull others into the conversation immediately rather than waiting and hoping someone will approach you after the meeting to discuss your idea.

6. Put it in writing. Follow up with those in the meeting by reiterating your idea in an email. Ask for a specific response—if called for—with a timeframe.

Sources: *Be Your Own Mentor* by Sheila Wellington and worktalk.com

Public Speaking Secrets

Public speaking can render many leaders weak in the knees, but there are some basic tricks you can rely on to ease your nerves—and engage your audience. Consider these pointers.

Know your goal beforehand. What is it you want people to walk away with for your speech to have been successful? In other words, what's your purpose? Boil down the point of your speech into one sentence and use that to keep you focused and to the point.

Limit examples and rabbit trails. It's great to illuminate your speech with real examples and stories that add meaning, but limit your stories so you're incorporating only those that add impact to your message.

Prepare in abundance. Don't wait until the night before—or even the day before—you're speaking to prepare. Create an outline and visual aids several days in advance, and then practice. The last thing your audience wants is to listen to you read your PowerPoint slides or watch you shuffle through your note cards

because you're unprepared.

Animate your style. People who speak professionally advise a vivid and animated style of message delivery. Aim to be about twice as animated as you are in normal conversation.

Adapted in part from "Better Public Speaking and Presentation" (mindtools.com)

How to Give Your Best Presentation Ever

Few things bring about sweaty palms more than public speaking. Author Greg Ferguson walks readers through the basics of what it takes to give a professional, organized presentation every time you're destined to be in front of an audience. This book is a plus for anyone who'd like to hone speaking skills or learn how to improve content delivery.

\$13.99; Booksurge Publishing



How to Affirm...When You Really Don't Feel Like It

All ministry leaders have experienced the *moment*. The moment you realize that smiling one more time will in fact reveal a noticeable grimace. The moment your hand cramps just at the thought of hand-written thank-you notes to the volunteers of a recent all-night event. The moment you'd like to blame feeling no desire to say "thank-you" on the fact that you're completely out of ideas for creative thank-yous.

First, give up the unrealistic expectation that just because you're in ministry you'll have a natural and consistent level of affirmation always within you. Whew. Feel better? Next, focus on implementing the following ideas to affirm your deserving volunteers—and ease your burden of continually thinking up new and creative ways to say thanks.

Don't Go It Alone

Rather than carrying the burden of affirming and appreciating volunteers by yourself, inspire a culture of affirmation throughout your ministry. Provide opportunities for parents, children, and other volunteers to say thank you. Your leadership team is a great place to start this. Let them help make affirmation a natural reaction to those involved in children's ministry. Ask them to catch a volunteer in action each Sunday—and either write a note or call the volunteer to say thank you that week. Once a quarter (or maybe even for the summer), ask parents to fill in for volunteers to give your regulars a break. As you implement this, communicate your appreciation to volunteers as you offer them the time off. In a culture of affirmation, volunteers will receive accolades from many sides—then your appreciation is icing on the cake.

Go Authentic

In that moment when you're feeling less-than-affirming, stop yourself. It's critical that you wait to affirm someone until you genuinely want to affirm that person. There are very few things worse than a fake act of appreciation. Give yourself time, even if you need to get away to a quiet place. A complacent spirit toward thanking and appreciating volunteers is often rooted in stress, an overloaded schedule, or a classic case of burn-out. Ask God to renew your spirit and create within you a genuine desire to affirm your volunteers. After prayer, a deep breath, and even a break, you'll be better able to communicate just how much you genuinely appreciate your volunteers and their vital role within your ministry.

Make a Plan

It's okay—and even wise—to schedule acts of affirmation. By the same token, it's a myth that affirmation should always come naturally. Some of the most affirming people depend on a schedule. Make affirmation a priority by dedicating one hour a week to thanking and appreciating volunteers. To catch everyone, you can group individuals by what they do within your ministry: teachers, assistants, special event staff, greeters, and so on. Put each group on your schedule and decide on an appropriate act, such as a phone call, hand-written note, or other appreciation. You can even enlist the help of retirees or others with lighter schedules for notes or deliveries.

Make It Fun and Creative

There are countless resources listing unique ways to affirm volunteers (check out childrensministry.com for starters). Search these resources for ways that fit you, your ministry style, and your volunteers. For instance, write the name of each volunteer within your ministry on a bright Post-It note. Arrange an array of these multi-colored notes on a large wall within your church spelling out "thank-you," "awesome," or "best." Next to this word, hang a quick note of explanation of how much you appreciate each person represented. Not only will volunteers enjoy finding their names, but other church attendees will notice the amazing number of individuals involved in your ministry.

Say It With Words

Don't underestimate the impact of a quick verbal "thank-you." Too often, leaders think that a thank-you must be a huge affair, a grand effort, or a nice gift to appropriately demonstrate how grateful you are. Reality is, the necessary chunk of time and funds to implement a grand gesture doesn't often exist. On Sunday mornings, you're often scurrying about making sure each teacher has arrived, checking that the animal crackers aren't past the expiration date, and troubleshooting the audio/visual equipment that worked just fine the night before. Imagine the surprise for that one volunteer when you take a quick second to turn

"Everybody has an invisible sign hanging around their neck saying, 'Make me feel important.'"

—Mary Kay Ash, businesswoman and founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics

and say “thank you” as you point out the specific thing you’re grateful for.

Thank, Don’t Coach

So, what if a volunteer has caused you trouble, interacted poorly with other volunteers, or even dropped the ball? This can be frustrating, but it’s important to keep affirmation and coaching separate when working with volunteers. Telling a volunteer, “Thank you for all your work on this, but...” completely negates the stated appreciation. Creatively find a way to affirm that volunteer just as you would others. When timing is appropriate, address the issues you’re facing in a

private manner. Keep your affirmation and your coaching separate.

Your children’s ministry couldn’t exist without the amazing volunteers who give their time and energy for the simple as well as the grand tasks. You want to affirm them. You want to thank them. You want to bless them. (And not just because you want them to help again.) When the *moment* strikes, you’ll be ready. You’ll already have ideas in place to keep affirmation a priority within your ministry.

Janna Firestone is a communications director and fundraising event planner for a nonprofit organization.



Keep It Clean

Flu season is almost past us, but health experts are predicting an uptick in the number of H1N1 illnesses this spring. You can help your teams minimize the spread of germs and sickness with these techniques.

- **Post helpful reminders.** Remind people to contain coughs effectively with the “Cover Your Cough” poster you can download free at www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm. Print enough of these posters to hang in restrooms, administration offices, and other places people congregate. Hang “How to Wash Your Hands” posters in restrooms and food or coffee preparation areas. Just go to olemiss.edu/depts/nfsmi/Information/handwashing/how_to_wash_eng070804.pdf to find a free poster.

- **Offer up sanitizer.** Place large bottles of hand sanitizer in high traffic areas, such as your ministry entry, coffee station, restrooms, and food prep areas. Don’t place it where young children can readily reach it, though. Post signs with the bottles that read, “Keep your hands clean and germ-free! Courtesy of (your ministry’s name). Parents, please assist children under 12 with hand sanitizer use.”

- **Remind your team.** Send a link to your team for a short podcast training on the importance of handwashing and the proper way to do it at youtube.com/watch?v=iBN3iAdt-lk. Remind your team about cleanliness policies in your ministry, such as washing hands after changing diapers, before food preparation, and before snacks for children. Hand-washing is the single most important way to combat the spread of germs, so make it a serious subject in your ministry.

- **Set model behavior.** Make a point to wash your own hands numerous times during the day. Not only will this keep you healthier, but it’ll also be a constant reminder to your team to do the same.

Source: Centers for Disease Control

Weather-Related Cancellations

Clear decision-making guidelines and communications procedures will make everyone’s life easier when severe weather forces potential cancellation or postponement of a children’s ministry event. If you don’t already have a protocol in place, consider these tips to get you started.

Policy: Draft a policy statement that clarifies the importance of safety in weather-related issues. This will likely include mention of overall safety as well as transportation issues. If your policy falls in line with the local public school policy, state that here also.

Guidelines: Determine the conditions in which a cancellation, delay, or recall would automatically occur. Include minimum or maximum temperatures, wind chill factors, storm conditions and watches, snowfall and/or predicted snowfall, and other emergency considerations common in your area.

If you’re using a local bus service, find out what their parameters are regarding weather cancellations.

Also clarify the person or position (Children’s Ministry Director or Assistant Pastor, for example) who makes the final determination regarding the cancellation.

Procedures: Clarify the steps that’ll be taken, beginning with the proper decision-making authority’s determination. State how cancellations and recalls will be communicated throughout the ministry and to affected families: phone trees (where volunteers and key parents call a set list of people), emails, local media outlets, text messages, or other forms of communication.

Share with parents in all pre-event communications about where cancellations will be posted. And be prepared to update your ministry’s voicemail and website with cancellation information immediately.

Making safety your top priority will be easier if you’re prepared for the possibility of such a scenario. Be proactive in considering the potential of a weather cancellation when planning each event, and have a backup plan or reschedule date in place.

—From the editors

Begin Again at Easter

Start planning now to have Easter services and Sunday school be your chance to begin again with local families that have left the church. Be intentional about inviting families back with these strategies in mind.

1. Plan for outreach. Brainstorm with your team and create a list of ideas that will speak to people in your area. You can even include kids in this discussion: What would be the best way to reach out to their friends? Check out the extensive list of fun Easter ideas at EasyTo-Evangelize.com, including Easter movies, ham giveaways to neighbors in need, organizing a Spring Farm with petting zoo, and lots more.

2. Spread the word. Communicate an open invitation to the community in as many ways as you can. Equip your congregation with postcard invitations, create welcoming signage, make a splash on your website's home page, and encourage kids to invite their friends. Press releases should be sent out three to four weeks

in advance.

3. Incorporate follow-up. Plan ahead for inviting children and families back to your church in the weeks that follow. Include a letter of invitation from the children's ministry director in your church bulletin, and include information about upcoming events—making sure you have something special just for kids in the week or two that follows. Or try this idea: Hand out plastic Easter eggs with treats and assign kids the task of finding an object that represents Jesus' love for them and returning it in their eggs the following week. It could be a symbol such as a small cross or heart, or it could be something from God's creation such as a rock, seashell, or food item.

Prepare for the extra children on Easter Sunday by having plenty of craft and snack supplies—and extra warm-hearted and enthusiastic volunteers.

—From the editors

Missed Days Add Up

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Common illness, such as sinusitis and bronchitis, accounts for more than 30 million missed work days each year in America.

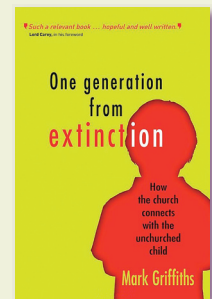
Source:
Science Daily



One Generation From Extinction

From theory to practice, this extensively researched new release by experienced outreach professional Mark Griffiths gives readers the tools and foundations for reaching children who do not live in a Christian environment. Griffiths considers how children “tick,” what basic theology is at work in children's outreach, and what constitutes best practices in child evangelism. This book is great food for thought as you begin planning outreach events and programming.

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