

Peace on a Platform: Managing Worship Team Conflicts

By Joe Pace

Looking for the perfect worship team? You might as well stop looking. You should accept and even embrace the fact that at times there will be differences of opinion (yes, conflict) on your team. Such is the nature of leading people. Such is the nature of every family. Remember that there are often different cultures, backgrounds, denominations, personalities and experiences all coming together to try to form a cohesive unit. Now while fundamentally this is indeed a powerful representation of God's Kingdom, if not managed effectively, it can also be fertile ground for conflict. The question is: Will the conflict be managed in a way that engenders growth or destruction?

PERSONNEL EVALUATION

There must be a mechanism in place to evaluate whether or not you have people in the right place. Some of the conflicts you may be having could be simply because people are out of position. Here are some questions to evaluate your team members: Are you called to this area of the ministry? Are you, in fact, a worshiper? Are you qualified, from both a spiritual and skill level to operate in this area of the ministry? All are important questions. Those who are called normally have a different posture or disposition. They are usually not easily offended, and are usually quick to try to find resolution when a conflict does arise. Those who are not called become easily disenchanted and often times are quickly confrontational over the littlest of things.

SOLID STRUCTURE IS CRITICAL

Someone must be in charge. Who does everyone look to when there is an issue on the platform? Is everyone trying to give instructions? Worship Leader, Lead Musician, Choir Director, Sound Personnel, who is responsible for what? Rules, job descriptions, expectations, established levels of authority. Write them down, make sure they meet with the Pastor's approval, make sure everyone on your team gets them and understands what is required of them, and then make sure you are consistent in your implementation. It will save you later!

EVERYONE MUST UNDERSTAND PURPOSE

Every rehearsal, at every opportunity, teach and instill purpose. Why do we do what we do? There should be a written mission or purpose statement that aligns itself with the overall mission of the church, while specifically speaking to the unique mission of the worship ministry. There can be but one agenda, one focus, and one goal. Where there is a mixture of different agendas, conflict will surely ensue. Remember: Where purpose is not known, abuse is inevitable.

PREPARATION IS CRUCIAL

The more prepared you are, the easier it is to flow. A smooth flow further enables God to move freely throughout the congregation and manifest His presence. Preparation liberates, while not being prepared is confining and unstable and will lead to confusion. Everyone must be comfortable and confident with what they are doing on the platform. Prepare more than enough music, just in case. Prepare contingencies in the event an issue arises and always remind your team that talent does not supersede preparation. Rehearsals should not be optional.

WHAT A FELLOWSHIP

Rehearsal should not just be a time of music preparation, but also a time of

fellowship and team building. There must be unity. The more time we can spend together...the more we learn about one another and are praying for one another...the stronger our relationships...the more harmonious the environment and the less conflict there will be. I would also suggest that you occasionally schedule times of fellowship away from the church. This will help to further strengthen the bond between team members. NOTE: Remember to include the sound personnel in your fellowships! Trust me. It will help make things run more smoothly.

THE SUBMISSION FACTOR

First, the ability to stay under authority, even when there are decisions made that you don't necessarily agree with, it is not only a sign of maturity, but also the way to secure God's blessing and covering over yourself and your team. I assure you that things will run much more smoothly for the entire team when everything and everyone stays in divine order. Secondly, from a leadership perspective, great leaders are also great followers. If you expect the team to be submitted to authority, then the leader must too be submitted. Be what you expect.

THE STAR MENTALITY

You know the mentality... The one that treats worship service like an episode of American Idol! You know the one that feels there is no worship unless he/she leads worship. The one that feels he/she is so talented that he/she has no need for rehearsals or to follow the rules. Sadly, some of the "monsters" we have on our teams are ones we created! You must be careful to make sure that no one is allowed to become (or think they have become) bigger than the worship. Also, resist the temptation to build something solely around someone's talent because that's a sure set-up for disaster! Make sure the foundation and focus always remains Christ. One method I have used is to teach the lead to a song to 2 or 3 different people right from the beginning. This prevents anyone from saying it's "his/her" song thereby minimizing the "star" effect.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

When conflict does arise, open and honest dialogue and communication is essential. Move swiftly to tackle issues head-on and don't allow matters to just sit and fester. An established comment/grievance policy that gives people a forum to voice their opinions will also help to minimize conflict. Make sure communication is clear with the pastor as well, so that it is clear what issues you have the authority to handle and what issues they need to get involved with. Two houses may look alike, but it is the storm that determines what a house is really made of. Manage conflict effectively, and your team will grow. Not just higher...they will also grow deeper.

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