

Deepening Teamwork between Pastors and Worship Leaders

Dave Hershberger & Layne Lebo

The relationship between a pastor and a worship leader can be a powerful partnership, but one that requires cultivation and care. What does a worship leader need from a senior pastor? How can the pastor support worship from the front pew? How can the two navigate difficult decisions and interpersonal conflicts?

Intro: In many churches, The WL (Worship Leader) and LP (Lead Pastor) relationship MIGHT be the most important working relationship in the church ministry. Both have a great deal of public visibility, yet often they are quite different as people, even if they do have shared ministry goals. When it is strained, it can impact the whole church. In an interview by Brian Doerkson on the WT.com site, it is said that there are “glory stories” and “gory stories”. (-: Resource: All About Worship

Take time to consider mutual goals:

For Worship Leaders/Teams: What are YOU hoping to accomplish? Does it jive with a broader ministry vision? Are YOU in line with the overall mission? Can you get in line? Moving beyond semantics and terminology into actions that communicate shared vision!

Both Pastors have to know the congregation they are leading. What is the personality of the congregation. How would you describe it to someone? This foundational question helps formulate your beginning point and identifies strengths and weaknesses in order to set vision/goals that is/are meaningful and reachable. Are you trying to make a worshipping community be something they are not? I consider the LP as the Lead Worship Pastor also. So, while my gifts and calling matter greatly....they are also in proper perspective and they are submitted to my “LWP”. And therefore, I am not carrying the total weight of what happens in worship at McBiC. (-:

Picking songs and setting time allotment; Two problems can occur. One, the WL doesn't want direction or even song suggestions and 2) the LP wants to tell the WL what songs to do or not to do. Since crafting the worship experience is a core piece of the planning, it becomes problematic when the LP is too directive or micro manages the role of the WL. Since the LP is the shepherd of many and diverse people, he/she needs to have a say in the process of addressing concerns related to songs, etc. Could be related to theology of the song, wanting to support an atmosphere of celebration or prayer, or it could be related to volume levels or even style. Remember as worship leaders, we are supporting and enhancing vision, NOT re-defining it. Be careful not to abuse delegated authority. You will not always get it right...just increase your awareness of the potential of moving outside of delegated authority.

I consider the LP as the “Lead Worship Pastor” also. Usually, it works best when the LP shares vision/goals/topics in advance and releases the WL to use their gift of creativity to prepare this portion(s) of the service. Then it would not be at all out of bounds for the WL to need to submit it back to the LP for comment/suggestion/“green” (discuss)

Be careful not to get into “**protection mode**” with what you have been entrusted. Meaning, recognize that you are called to serve as a Worship Leader.

The Worship Leader needs to keep communicating with the LP. Most conflicts arise because both parties assume the others’ motives or focus points are out of sync. It is amazing how we think our focus and hearing God’s direction is usually good (even if our actions plans are not together) and the others’ motives should be in question...(-: (Discuss) What about talking to others in your enthusiasm about things not discussed with the LP?

Our calling is to love God and one another:

Our **primary goal is to “serve”**...as a worship expression (as much as putting a great song to a fantastic arrangement) (-:

Expression without service is as much off base as going through the motions of worship song without letting it touch you in any other way.

Set a turtle (marathon) pace, but with focus, vision and evaluation (internal). Set a 5 year vision with your LP.....While we might evaluate week to week what is happening.....much better to evaluate every year as to what is happening.

Be concerned about the following voices: God’s, your LP’s and your own, other staff team-mates if you have them, your leaders if you have a “leadership team” in worship ministry. Beyond the above, appreciate the others (both good and bad)....but do NOT weigh them too heavily. You must let people say what they need to say, and it helpful for your hear, if you put them in proper perspective. **Don’t let “personal strokes” lead you off path of the voices you need to pay attention to.** Stay focused on the goals set before you, that support top level vision/guidance. All About Worship states that there are 4 “Audiences”. 1) the Holy Spirit, 2) The Pastor, 3) The Worship Band, and 4) the Congregation. I think this is proper perspective and order.

Commit to make the other succeed! There are plenty of natural and spiritual reasons/causes of a breakdown in this relationship. Both should commit to help the other be successful by sharing goals and values, by making time to connect, by genuine affirmation of gifts (personally and publicly). What other ways can we create a great working relationship? What works in your church setting? (Discussion)

Resources: Worship Training.com, *All About Worship*