
Is it Time to Restructure Your Church Staff?

If you could go back and structure your church differently, what would you do? Are there some positions that you would hire that weren't on your radar then?

Not long ago, a pastor texted me those questions. A month later, a small group of leaders gathered at an informal round table meeting to discuss.

Twelve of us met in Charlotte to talk staff structure, org charts, and the next hires.

As we talked through church growth and leadership issues and worked on specific situations, I was reminded about the importance of gatherings like this. There was a lot of collective wisdom in the room from people who have been there. Honestly, I was happy to listen and learn, much less contribute a little bit to the discussion.

I took a lot of notes.

Though we talked about specific situations and shared specific answers, I took away five principles about setting up a church staff for success and restructuring a staff for growth.

Principle #1: The structure that got you here won't get you there.

This principle comes from a [book with a similar title](#) (it's worth reading), but it's so true for pastors leading growing churches. Your church staff is likely structured perfectly for your current size and influence. It's been good enough

to get you this far, but if you want to push through the next growth barrier, it's probably going to need to change.

Growth just doesn't affect service times, facilities and ministries. Those obvious changes are often the result of growth. Adjusting your leadership could actually **facilitate** growth.

For example, when you develop a leadership team and push decision-making and ministry oversight to a small group of people (rather than reserving it exclusively to yourself), you will empower more people and stir growth.

Principle #2: As culture changes, new roles are needed.

One of the issues we discussed at the roundtable gathering was what kind of roles could be useful today. Maybe these roles weren't around twenty years ago. Maybe they aren't common roles now. But maybe they are necessary.

We were lucky to have a few business owners join the discussion. This made our conversations much better. The church is often resistant to what works in business because the church is not a business. But, we can learn so much from successful organizations.

What if your church should hire a Chief Marketing Officer? You could call it something else, but this person could oversee digital outreach and engagement.

What if your church needs a CFO? Not someone to count the money or make sure it's handled correctly, but someone to actually grow revenue and find alternate revenue streams?

What if you had an Event Planner? Or a Social Media Wizard? Or a Communications Director?

New roles don't need to be limited to their business-world counterparts, either. What if your team needs a resident theologian or a prayer coordinator?

Don't limit your thinking by trying to fill existing or traditional roles. Think about what your church really needs.

Principle #3: Change before you need it.

Most people don't like change. Even leaders are more uncomfortable with change than they let on. Don't believe me? Try sleeping on the other side of the bed tonight or put your wallet in your other back pocket.

Change isn't comfortable, but it's necessary for healthy growth.

The systems and structures that work for a church plant don't usually work once the church grows beyond 200. And the church that's staffed perfectly to accommodate 500 attendees is going to have to change in order to accommodate 1,000.

When is the right time to restructure your staff? BEFORE you need it.

It might be a little awkward to have a senior leadership team meeting with three people who are really the only paid staff, but creating this leadership level in the organization might be the change you need to start thinking bigger.

Principle #4: Watch for bottlenecks.

In a church under 200, it's likely the pastor is a bottleneck. Between preaching, leading, meeting, and deciding, you can be stretched pretty thin.

If you plant a tree in a small container, the tree will stay small. But plant that tree in the ground, and it will grow to full height. Church structure is a lot like this. And the senior pastor might be the container keeping the church from reaching her full potential. A structure where the pastor has to decide everything, lead everything and communicate everything is not good for growth.

One of the common staff changes is to hire an administrative, associate, or executive pastor – someone who can shoulder the load of running the organization or leading the team. This often frees the pastor up to focus on preaching and maybe one other thing.

Then as the church grows, the Executive Pastor becomes the bottleneck. The very role created to allow people to do their jobs becomes too much for churches to manage. So we're seeing churches who struggle with this move more to a leadership team approach rather than just one administrative leader.

In a smaller church, the pastor oversees all of the full-time, part-time, and volunteer staff. This could be 10-12 people. In a larger church, the pastor could create a new leadership level and install 3-4 pastors or leaders to help lead the church. They don't just get a title – they get responsibility. Staff meetings get smaller and begin to focus on the mission, vision, values and strategy of the church. This leadership team actually works ON the church, not just on individual ministries.

For what it's worth, if your church is under 200 people, we talk a great deal about restructuring and creating a leadership team in the Breaking 200 course. We've got org charts, new job description and a communication plan for you on this very topic.

Principle #5: Work hard on the church.

My biggest takeaway from this informal pastors roundtable was how important it is to take time away from the ordinary and work ON the church.

Each of the pastors (and business owners) were very busy. They were leading growing churches and had a lot of responsibilities. They all have families. Yet here they were, spending two days talking about church and how to get better.

It's a huge myth that pastors with large teams have lots of free time. More staff and a bigger budget will not create more margin in your schedule. You're the

only one that can do that, and you can do it now. You must make time for the things that are truly important.

If you want to lead your church to healthy growth, it's going to take a lot of prayer and a lot of hard work. You're going to have to work on yourself as much as you work on the ministry. You're going to have to lead yourself more than you lead your team.

Leading the Church

You're supposed to lead your staff and develop leaders in your church, but where do you start?

To make it simple we created a FREE resourced called the Senior Pastor's Guide to Leading a Staff. This simple guide will help you with practical ideas and resources on leading a staff intentionally and consistently.

Get your FREE copy of the Senior Pastor's Guide to Leading a Staff today.

[Download the guide](#)