
Why People Don't Love Working at Your Church

In 2005, Zappos relocated their call center from San Francisco to Las Vegas. 80% of their employees chose to relocate with them.

Just think about that for a moment.

4 out of 5 people moved more than 500 miles to keep a \$13/hour job.

Amazing.

And question-begging.

If your church relocated to a town 500 miles away, how many of your staff members would make the move?

Do your staff members love their jobs so much that they would move their families and change their kid's schools so they could remain a part of what God was doing at your local church?

The local church should have the happiest employees on the planet. It should concisely land on the best places to work list. And people should stay for a really, really long time.

So why do you struggle to attract and keep top talent? Why don't people absolutely love their job at the church?

Here are seven possible reasons people don't love their church job.

1. They aren't given freedom.

Nobody likes it when someone is constantly looking over their shoulder. So when you get people on your team, you need to give them a certain amount of freedom to do their job.

Don't make all the decisions and then ask them to execute. Let them decide.

I was talking to a pastor friend from South Carolina the other day and he told me this was the biggest shift he's made in his own leadership over the last couple of years. He told me pride kept him involved in all the decisions and when he shifted to a team approach and gave people freedom to lead, *his church started growing*.

If you want to build a great team and make sure they are happy in their jobs, give them the freedom to do their jobs.

All staff members need a certain amount of freedom (in line with accountability and expectations of course), but leaders especially need it. There's no way you're going to keep high-capacity leaders on your team if you don't let them lead. Micromanagers will never attract or keep leaders around. They will leave because they know they are capable of more.

2. They aren't given recognition.

Your staff needs to know when they do a good job. They need to hear "well done." They need that encouragement.

Too many pastors and leaders fall into this dangerous thought that doing the Lord's work is reward enough. I know church boards who overwork pastors and leaders and think it's okay because the job comes with an eternal mission. I know pastors who think it's okay for part-time staff members to put in full-time hours with little recognition because it's in greater service of the mission of the church. This is downright dangerous.

Being a pastor or a church leader is a high calling. But that doesn't mean we are absolved from being good bosses. We've let "your reward is in heaven" become an excuse for using people on earth and that needs to stop.

When you see someone doing a great job, give praise immediately. Make sure your feedback is timely, specific, appropriate, and authentic.

If you want to keep people engaged and happy on your team, make sure you recognize hard work, accomplishments and good leadership.

3. They aren't allowed to lead.

There's a big difference between a doer and a leader. A doer will move stuff around, but a leader will move stuff forward. Take a look at your team.

Is it full of doers or do you have some leaders in the mix? If your team is made up of mostly doers, you've got a big problem. You've fallen into the "[genius with a thousand helpers](#)" mentality and that's not a good thing.

Leaders are only going to be happy in their job when they have the ability to lead. They need the freedom to create, the ability to make decisions, and a platform to communicate. They need permission to make changes and the freedom to fail. If you have leaders on your team, you need to ask for their opinion, because they value being heard. If you have leaders on your staff, you must give away more than you think in order to empower them.

Too many times, people with the gift of leadership often find the local church a cold working environment, full of policies and procedures. "Plan it this way," "Lead this song," or "Execute this checklist" isn't going to inspire a leader.

This is one of the big reasons [51% of Americans are disinterested in their jobs](#).

4. The goalposts keep moving.

Great organizations, and particularly churches, work hard to define what a win looks like in the context of the mission and vision.

Granted, lots of good things happen in church, but everyone needs to know the ultimate point and the ultimate win. Clear goals and desired outcomes are necessary to keep everyone on the same page.

And teams are easily frustrated when the win changes often. It's stressful when you think you're going in the right direction and someone changes the destination.

I got this wrong a lot when I was pastoring a church in Atlanta. We were a young, growing church and I was a young leader. I'd hear a new idea at a conference and try to implement it right away. I'd hear about something that was working in another church and push our team to do something similar.

Big mistake.

Instead of inspiring people with fresh ideas, I kept changing the definition of a win. Too many ministry ideas led to a lack of clarity. And if you're on the receiving end of those changes, it's more than annoying. So don't go to a conference and return home with a brand new strategy or focus.

Stop reading leadership books and changing the direction of your church.

When the definition of winning keeps changing, it's just demotivating.

5. They aren't encouraged to pursue their dreams.

I hope your team absolutely loves working at the church. It really should be the best job in the world. This might come as a newsflash, but people have dreams outside of the church.

Sure, they have work goals and love the church. But they also have families and hobbies and dreams that don't fit nicely into a box.

Great leaders understand this and don't try to limit people's excitement to the church. Great pastors understand that personal dreams are healthy. And they do all they can to help people see their dreams come to reality.

Kaylie Astin says, "The best employees don't work because they love their company or boss – they do it to advance personal goals. BY helping them do so, you create driven, loyal teams that will go the extra mile to help your company succeed." She says [employees' big dreams should be one of your top priorities.](#)

In our company, we use a software tool called InfusionSoft to help us do business online. I've been to their headquarters in Arizona several times for meetings and conferences. And each time I'm there, I'm reminded how important this is.

A few years ago, Infusionsoft hired a full-time person on their staff in the role of "Dream Manager." Donovan (a former youth pastor!) helps Infusionsoft employees articulate and achieve their personal dreams. Talk about a company investing in their people!

Other companies do this too. Zappos employs a full-time career coach, and there's a waiting list to set up a 30-minute appointment.

Your church might not need to hire a dream manager, but you can start taking an interest in people's dreams outside of the church.

6. They aren't given time off.

Being a Christian is a 24/7 thing, but working at a church needs to come with some time off.

Just like we think the importance of the mission should compensate for poor pay and a lack of recognition, we also talk ourselves into the fact that we need to be available all the time because the ministry never stops. We place too a high value on non-stop ministry.

Jesus retreated from people into the hills to be alone with the Father. Even though there were people clamoring for his teaching and healing, he left needy people behind in search of solitude. Not in an arrogant or flashy way. Not in a way that drew attention to his absence, but out of necessity.

If you value your people, you'll help them understand the Sabbath is Biblical, time away is crucial and vacations are spiritual.

If you're a senior pastor, your church doesn't own you. It's okay for you to be gone. It's okay for you to say no to that appointment or dropping in on that meeting. And make sure everyone that works there knows it's okay, too.

7. They don't have friends at work.

Forbes reports [most people are really unhappy with their jobs](#). I don't know if the statistics on church jobs would be exactly the same, but I bet they are close.

But those that do find satisfaction in their jobs say "the people at work" make a huge difference. It turns out, if people like the people they work with, they like work a lot more. They will even go as far as taking a job that pays less money in order to be a part of a great team full of people they like.

When you like the people in the meetings, the meetings are better. When you share a space with people you like, the environment is better. When there are real relationships, not just work relationships, life in and out of the office is better.

The local church should have the happiest employees of any organization. Your church should be the best place to work in your city.

Yes, your mission is compelling. Yes, the vision is important, but your culture goes a long way toward reaching and keeping great employees.

Free Church Growth Resource

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.

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