

Ten Practical



By Tony Guerrero

I spent some time considering what the main tips are that I not only recommend to people in classes I teach and articles I write, but that I also use in my own weekly ministry. I have a hard time calling these my Top 10, since at various times, other tips not mentioned here could be extremely important, but these were the ones that I tend to rely on frequently.

These aren't in any order...

1. DON'T BE LATE

There is simply, in my opinion, no excuse for being chronically late. Lateness happens occasionally to all of us, but chronic lateness is a sign that something is out of order in someone's life—either pride, organization, priorities, over-commitment... something. Whatever the reason, it does not honor God to hold everyone else up on a regular basis. If you struggle with this, make it a top priority to deal with it.

2. LEAD INDIVIDUALLY

There are no catchall rules for dealing with people. The way you deal with one singer on your team may not work for another singer. Get to know your team members individually—what makes them tick, what they love, the dynamics their families and jobs bring to the equation. Give extra time and grace to those who need it. Your expectations and methods should be flexible enough to allow many types of personalities to co-exist in your ministry.

3. IT'S BETTER TO STOP A SONG

Guitar horribly out of tune? Stop. Did the drummer start playing in 3/4 instead of 4/4? Stop. Are the singers singing a different song than the band is playing? Stop. Too often, our performance mentality dictates that we're supposed to pretend that nothing is going wrong so the audience won't notice. They notice. Just stop and fix it. I don't have perfect pitch, so one time when my keyboard accidentally got transposed, I didn't realize right away. Until the singer started to sing and couldn't reach the notes. I should have stopped and fixed it, but my inexperience told me to keep going and pretend nothing was wrong. I think that singer has just now almost recovered from his head-explosion.

Tips

4. GIVE CREATIVE AUTHORITY AWAY

Are you the only person on your team making creative decisions? Shame on you. Start giving your team members creative input and authority. They have a responsibility to work within the parameters you set, but ultimately, they will shine when given ownership over some of the creative expression. My pastor, Rick Warren, wrote: “When you give authority with responsibility, you’ll be amazed at the creativity of your people.”

5. DON'T LET THE TRENDS DICTATE DIRECTION

Just because the latest and greatest worship song is a rocker doesn't mean your congregation can no longer worship God with a favorite hymn. It is our human economy that lets us believe God cares at all about trends—He doesn't. He's already heard the latest fad long before it came out. And besides, fads are based on generalities that are often easily disproved. For example: modern worship, which is arguably most heavily influenced by U2's music, tends to be marketed towards the 18-30 crowd. But U2 came out in the early 80s, which means their music is just as relevant to people in their 40s and 50s. Age, styles, tempos, volumes, instruments—it's all up for grabs. Don't get pigeonholed by trends. Authenticity beats hipness any day.

6. IDENTIFY YOUR LEFT-BRAINED AND RIGHT-BRAINED TEAM MEMBERS

Creative people tend to be bad administrators, and administrators aren't always the best songwriters. Your methods of working (both how you work and what you expect from your team members) need to be based on these strengths and weaknesses. If you're creative, get administrative help, rather than let your team suffer under your bad organizational skills.

7. TO FEED OR BE FED

If you are in ministry, always remember that you have a responsibility to serve others. Sunday mornings are often chaotic and full of tasks, details, conflicts, etc. We can come home drained and feeling like we never “got anything out of church.” But the times when you're serving aren't always the best times for you to also be served. I tend to operate under the idea that on Sunday mornings I am there to serve others, not to be served. It is up to me to be sure that I am getting fed spiritually during the week. Too often, we confuse “service” with “serve us.”

8. TEAM DEVOTIONALS SHOULD BE FOCUSED

Devotionals times, while valuable for team building, can be misused. Team devotionals should either be related to the task at hand (worship, music, fellowship) or be related to the current teaching series of the pastor. They should not be used as your personal opportunity to preach or show off your biblical wisdom. Remember, many church members hear a message on Sunday mornings, a different message or two on the radio during the week, a bible study in their small groups, a different study in their personal time, and then your weekly devotional. How are they expected to retain all these different messages? They can't. Make this time count.

9. DON'T GET SIDETRACKED

(A) Rehearsal time is for rehearsing. When people give up their weeknight to come rehearse, it is important that you don't monopolize their time with stories about your kids. And you should always strive to be the most prepared person in the room. There is a big difference between rehearsing and practicing. Practice at home, then rehearse what you practiced with the team. (B) Fellowship time is about fellowship. Using social time to discuss “work” can be annoying. Use that time to just get to know about your people. Have fun—it's not a meeting. (C) Worship times are for worship. Once the service starts, allow that things will go wrong. At this point, you either believe it is in God's hands or not. You stay focused on God. If you focus on the problems, so, too, will your congregation.

10. STAY CONNECTED TO GOD

This sounds easier than it often is for people in ministry. I constantly struggle with getting so busy doing “God's work” that I forget to check in with God in my own life. Daily time with God is the most valuable thing we can do, and how often do we simply see it crowded out of our schedule? If you get one thing from this list, I hope it's this one. For me, too.

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