

HCI Coaching Guides

Worship Strategy

Dan Riemenschneider
Healthy Church Initiative
Missionary Church, Inc

Advance Preparation:

1. Spend a significant amount of time in prayer for the pastor and the people you will be coaching. Ask for God's wisdom as you prepare for this session.
2. Download materials you need for this session from the Missionary Church coaching website: Worship Bible study—one for participants and a leader's guide; Thoughts to Ponder About Worship; Our Experience of Worship.
3. Have a marker board or flip chart available.

Coaching Session:

1. Remind the task force where the worship strategy fits in the becoming a healthy church process: prayer, love and discipleship should all be in place. Working with worship will help give an expression to our growing love for God and His people. It is critical to realize that worship is a lifestyle, not just something we do on Sunday morning. The aspect of worship as a lifestyle is part of the discipleship process and thus the church should be addressing this as part of that phase. This module works with the worship service itself.
2. Remind people what the worship strategy is not: Changing worship styles or adding second services are phase 4 outreach strategies. These should not be attempted until all the prior building blocks are in place: prayer, love, discipleship, worship, mission and vision. Once these are in place and the church has done a demographic study of their church and the surrounding community you can then tackle the issues of changing worship styles to fit who you are trying to reach and adding second services. The church needs to understand worship and make what they are currently doing glorifying to God before trying to change styles.
3. The coaching times will focus on five areas:
 - looking at worship through the Bible;
 - looking at worship insights from three authors;
 - looking at areas of our worship service that can distract people and fixing those;
 - looking at our overall worship service experience and finding ways to improve from what we are currently doing; and
 - pointing the task force and pastor to some resources that can help them improve their worship service experience.
4. Lead the task force through the worship Bible study. Take your time working through this. Allow plenty of discussion. It is critical that task force members begin to understand what worship is and is not. The Bible study is an introduction to this topic. Feel free to add in other scriptures you feel are important to help the task force get a better understanding.
5. Hand out "Thoughts to Ponder about Worship." After the people have read the statements, have a brief discussion about any insights they picked up from these four authors.

6. Lead the group in a discussion of areas that can distract from worship. You can use a lead-in such as, “Tim Keller, on the handout we just discussed, mentions that bad aesthetics can distract people from worshipping God. What are some areas in our worship services that can distract us?” List these on the marker board or flip chart. Add some of the following if the task force has not mentioned these areas yet: leaders or worship team not prepared, dead space, sound system problems, long announcements, abrupt transitions, jerky flow of service, and environmental issues (too cold or too hot).
7. Go back over the items listed on the marker board or flip chart and ask the group to identify the area or areas that they feel they need to improve in their own worship experience. Once these are identified, let the group pick one to begin working on. List ways the problem can be resolved. Let the group pick one or two ideas for the church to try. Be sure to assign who is responsible and when the steps will be completed. Continue working through the list until all the areas are covered. As discussion starters here are a few ideas to consider...
 - Leaders or worship team not prepared: set regular meetings for the leaders to meet and pray together. At these meetings go over the sermon topic and theme of the service. Brainstorm different ways to get the congregation involved through drama, music, arts, scripture reading, etc. When you have decided on different elements to include in the service plan the flow of the service and for smooth transitions. Have a brief meeting prior to the start of services to pray together and go over the details of the service.
 - Dead space: the next section of the service should be ready to go as soon as the current section is over. If different people are involved, inform everyone at the pre-service meeting when these transitions will take place so they can be ready. Have the group think in terms of “being on the radio.” Dead space on a radio program is “deadly.”
 - Sound system issues: train the technicians if they need it, get the system fixed if it needs it, include the sound system people in the pre-service meeting so they know when transitions will happen.
 - Long announcements: put announcements in a bulletin and projected on a screen. Use an insert in the bulletin if necessary. Only make announcements that affect everyone and keep these brief. Use drama or humor to keep announcements interesting.
 - Abrupt transitions: think through how you can move smoothly from one area of the service to the other (offering, special music, scripture reading, singing, sermon, drama, etc). Have a theme and show how the different parts of the service reflect the theme.
 - Flow of service: One issue here is moving back and forth between “right brain” (scripture reading, sermon) and “left brain” (music, drama) functions. The other issue is moving back and forth between standing and sitting. The more back and forth movement between these areas the more disjointed the flow of the service. So put pieces together. Scripture reading during a section of songs is okay if related to the theme and people continue in the posture they are currently in (sitting or standing).
 - Environmental issues: assign an usher to monitor the worship center and adjust temperature as needed. Assign someone from the properties team to be sure the worship center is ready for the service by turning on heat or air as appropriate early enough to make a difference. Get the system fixed if needed.
8. Have the group complete the handout “Our Worship Service Experience.” When all are finished, have each task force member share how they rated each area. List these on the marker board or flip chart. When all have finished sharing, ask the group if they see any surprises and talk about why they might be surprises.
9. Have the group pick one area on which to begin working—probably the lowest rated item. List ways this area could be strengthened. Let the group pick one or two ideas for the church to try. Be sure to assign who is responsible and when the steps will be completed.