

Tune Up Your Train Time

By Steve Krenz



Rehearsals are the foundation upon which great services are made. Knowing how to cover the various musical needs of your church within the limited amount of rehearsal time can often be a challenge. But here are some simple ideas to help make your rehearsals productive and enjoyable.

Know what you want to cover

Preparation is the key to getting the most out of any rehearsal. Before the rehearsal, take a moment to identify the potential musical problem areas. Key changes, tempo changes, shifts in style, and transitions are always areas to keep in mind. Once rehearsal starts, focus your attention on these areas first.

Have everything prepared

How often is a musical rehearsal held up by a non-musical problem? You know how frustrating it can be as you and the entire team wait for the bass player to fumble through his music looking for the right song. Save yourself the headache and have copies of music available if they are going to be needed. In this you avoid a potentially negative situation and the rehearsal is able to continue. Address the disorganization problem with him or her privately after rehearsal.

If you are going to need to refer to a piece of music during a rehearsal, then make sure the worshiptech is given a CD or a cued-up tape of the music to be learned before rehearsal begins so that when it is needed it is ready to be played. If instrument or audio needs to be set up, do as much as possible before rehearsal starts. Have some people come early to help set up equipment.

Communicate with key leaders before rehearsal starts

Any communication between the worship leader, choir director, music director and worshiptech regarding issues that can be resolved between them should be done before everyone arrives. The entire worship team should not be waiting during a rehearsal for the worship leader and the music director to figure out how they are going to transition between songs.

Give your people the tools they need to be successful

Make it easy for people to get assimilated and do well on your team. Newsletters and calendars that detail special services, rehearsal times, dress needs (if appropriate), sound check times and the like are great ways to pass information to your team without having to devote precious rehearsal time to announcements. Always hand important information to your team in writing.

If there is new music that you would like the team to learn, give it to them ahead of time so that they can familiarize themselves with it before the entire team rehearses it together. Burn CD copies of new songs to be learned for the team members to take home and listen to. Also, sheet music copies should be given to learn the song and words. Give music to the team one or two weeks before you begin rehearsing the song, letting them know when you would like them to be prepared to rehearse this song, so that when the time for rehearsal comes everyone is ready to go.

Have guidelines written out of what you expect of the worship team members

A written guideline sheet can often clarify many questions that new and even long-time members might have of what you expect of them.

Have plenty of pencils available

This is a small point that can go a long way to helping musicians remember something tricky in the arrangement or singers with the order of verses and choruses. And if they say, "Don't worry, I'll remember, I don't need to write it down," then smile, throw a pencil their way and encourage them to humor you. Their chances of retaining the information go up dramatically when they write it down.

Be Punctual

Start on time. People will rise or fall to the level of the leader's expectations, particularly in this area. If rehearsal starts at 7:00 p.m., then at 7:00 p.m. you as the leader should begin rehearsal. If your team is used to a more relaxed start time it may take a few weeks for everyone to get used to the new idea, but it is well worth it. Do not allow latecomers to dictate when your rehearsal starts. Teach your team that you mean what you say.

End on time

Your team members will appreciate your attention to this matter. Everyone has lives, families and responsibilities outside the church. For you to end the rehearsal at the stated time shows the team that you respect their time and their other non-church responsibilities. If you expect your team to come to rehearsal at the proper time, then it is your responsibility to release them from rehearsal at the stated time. If you run out of time at a rehearsal, take look at where you could have streamlined rehearsal.

Be a steward of every minute

Don't waste time. Here are some examples of common church worship team rehearsal time wasters: going through songs that are already familiar and need no rehearsal just because they are on this week's list, going through every verse and every chorus of every song, losing precious music rehearsal time in audio/sound checking issues, too much non-productive chatter disguised as "fellowshipping."

Rehearsals should be and can be...

Positive and lighthearted

Egos, attitudes and stressful situations can be left at the door so that the volunteers, who are the lifeblood of your team, can come to a rehearsal after a hard day of work and enjoy being with other believers making music to the glory of God. No one likes to be a part of, much less volunteer for, something that is a downer. Encourage each other, laugh together and build one another up both musically and spiritually. Deal with negative people issues privately and discretely with an emphasis on restoration, not punishment.

Productive

The team should go away from the rehearsal feeling that new things were learned, their musical skills were nurtured, and that their souls were nourished by the camaraderie of worshiping in the house of God with other believers in joyful service of their King.

Purposeful

Reinforce with your team often the fact that they are a vital part of the ministry of this church and of God's kingdom. We are not just learning words and practicing chord changes, we are preparing to lead a portion of the body of Christ in worship of the everlasting God. It is a humbling and rewarding ministry that He has entrusted to us.

Meaningful

Pray for each other's needs. Let your teammates know that you sincerely care about them. How's work? How's the family? Is there anything that I can pray about with you? You, as the leader, are not just the steward of their musical talent, but also a steward of their overall Christian walk.

Sometimes the most spiritual things that we can do in our church involve the most practical issues. Be a steward of your worship team, not just of their abilities, but also of their lives. They are not merely human resources to serve you and the needs of your church's music ministry, but precious living stones planted by God and nourished by you and others to maturity in their service of Christ.

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