Key Processes for Your Church Health
10 Things You Need to Know About Process
by Allen Ratta

Foreword From Bobby Hill, Vanguard Ministries, International Director

Allen Ratta takes a studied approach to the critical issues surrounding processes and how they impact the work of ministry. Please note that the signs of church health listed below are not intended to be all inclusive but specifically address church health as it is impacted by healthy ministry processes. This is good reading for any church worker and, of course, pastors!

5 Signs of Good Church Health

- They Understand Their Purposes
- They Understand Ministry Processes
- They Achieve Purposes Through Processes
- They Know How to Develop and Implement Good Processes
- They Know How to Troubleshoot and Improve Ministry Processes

Understanding Ministry Processes

The gap between great dreams and great achievements are a series of well designed and well executed processes. **Definition**: Ministry processes are a collection of formal and informal policies, procedures and established practices that determine the manner in which a church conducts ministry.

10 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PROCESSES

1. Every Church Has a Ministry Process

You have more than one. This is true whether or not anyone is looking. The only question is whether they are healthy or unhealthy. Many church ministry processes are ad hoc collections of polices and procedures that are the result of de facto absentee management that are there and running-producing predictably dismal results year after year.

**Definition**: Healthy ministry processes are those which are consistently effective at helping a church to obtain its ministry objectives and purposes.


Processes are the domain of tradition. Paul Wolfowitz in Heritage Lecture #831, shares a World War II example of how processes can be incredibly resistant to change, even when common sense would dictate otherwise.

"It involved the effort to look at how to increase the rate of artillery fire in the British army. The British called in a time-motion expert to study the gun crews at work. He took slow motion pictures of the soldiers as they loaded, aimed, and fired, and he discovered that just a moment before firing, two members of the gun crew would
cease all activity and come to attention for a period of three seconds. Then the gun would be fired. He was puzzled by this, as was an old artillery colonel with whom he shared the film. All at once the old colonel brightened up, and he said, "I have it. They're holding the horses."

Twenty five years later, they were still following the process when horses had hauled their artillery pieces to the battlefront. They no longer needed to wait and settle the horses before re-firing. There were no horses! Their process was entrenched by tradition even though it was severely flawed and lacked common sense. Call it the WHADITWay disease, "we have always done it that way." Many churches today are afflicted with its debilitating effects.

3. All Church Processes Are Not Necessarily Ministry Processes

As amazing as the above story sounds, we often see churches engaged in processes that do absolutely nothing. They serve no purpose. Countless hours are spent by church staffs maintaining labor intensive databases that have no direct correlation to the ministry objectives of the church. There are some important questions to ask here. What is actually being done with the information? What processes are engaged after the information is entered? Do the data entry and/or processes have a proven return relative to the investment of human resources? This is one huge way that ConnectionPower solutions are different from traditional church management software. We drive real ministry processes instead of wasting countless Kingdom resources forcing churches to maintain electronic filing cabinets that serve little or no practical value.

4. Ministry Processes are Interrelated Systems.

A ministry process achieves its greatest effectiveness ONLY within the context of other highly effective ministry processes. For instance, a church that has a highly effective process for involving newcomers into active service will never attain its potential without effective systems that connect newcomers in the first place. We encourage you to study our ministry process map where you can see both the order and the cyclical nature of several key processes involved in church health.

After reviewing the process map, it might be helpful to ask, which of the above processes can be safely eliminated if one is going to fulfill the purposes of the church? Or, which processes does your church excel at and which ones represent areas for growth?

5. Effectiveness Is More Important than Efficiency in Ministry Processes

It is possible for a church to have highly efficient processes of distributing and capturing visitor cards that are not necessarily effective at connecting people to the church. One example that comes to mind is the practice of making visitors stand up to identify themselves in front of the congregation. Granted, this may be a highly efficient process to distribute visitor cards. However, a more relational process, that might not be as efficient, will be far more effective at helping the church to obtain one of its key purpose: to reach and keep a lost world for Christ.

6. Ministry Processes are Not Spiritual they are Practical
The devil is in the smallest of details, as Solomon keenly observed, it is, "The little foxes that are ruining the vineyards." Songs 2.15 It is often the little things that make the difference between a highly effective process and one that is fatally flawed. Do not look for huge revelations look for little malformations.

7. Every Church Can Learn And Improve Their Ministry Processes.

The good news is that ministry processes are comprised of concrete skill sets that can be learned and mastered by any church over time. Purposes are transcendent by nature so they can feel difficult if not impossible to attain. Processes operate in the ordinary day-to-day world in which we live. In short, they are attainable. McDonalds pioneered a franchise concept and built an empire on the simple fact that processes can be learned, mastered and replicated in any cultural setting around the world.


Very few churches do every aspect of the church’s mission well. Some are widely recognized for their community outreach while others are effective at service (mobilizing their congregants). Still others have great success in the area of small groups, while others excel at pastoral care and then there are those whose focus is on developing the inner life. To attain competence in these areas of ministry it will require solid and reliable ministry processes that run in the background.

9. Ministry Processes Are the Key to a Church Fulfilling All of Its Purposes

Is it possible for a church to equally excel in multiple areas of ministry proficiency? Yes! Some ask, "Are churches better off pursuing a specialty area of ministry competency?" Should they discover their natural niche and market themselves accordingly? God has not called His church to be a niche player. He designed His Church with purpose and created her to fulfill all of His purposes.

10. Ministry Processes Can Be Measured

Processes can be measured and benchmarks that define success can be codified. ConnectionPower has provided an online connection assessment for the ministry process of Connection. It is not inspired nor is it all inclusive but it should help you to more fully grasp the elements in this critical process and to evaluate your performance.

Conclusion

Those in ministry, who would be most effective, must gain the skills required to master the processes that ultimately determine the effectiveness of ministry. To this end I have posted a subscription only article titled 7 Ways to Improve Your Ministry Processes. This article will not only give you helpful and practical keys to improvement, it provides guidance for four critical staff training/brainstorming sessions as well as seven questions on church health that every church needs to ask.

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