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Sound Sanctuary

When Things Go Right

by Richard Rutherford

There are certainly plenty of times when clients behave badly, when products don't ship on time, technicians have fights with their spouses and disappear for three days, when electrical contractors forget about those last 40 circuits—and we have all been there. But once in a while, the clouds part and the sun shines through and God's grace touches a project. This happens now and then.... even at churches.

Houses of worship are notoriously wanting for cost-effective (if not completely free—read, volunteer) technical staff. It's rarely a lack of talent, but rather limited talent combined with a servant's heart (and some free time during the week) that make AV team building a challenge. At a recent project, however, such a person showed up a day before system training, proclaimed his willingness despite his lack of experience and promptly *took all the manuals* for every piece of equipment in the facility. And...*he read them all*, and showed up for training the next day! The factory rep almost fainted as he spent time training a *willing and enthusiastically- prepared* church volunteer.

The very next day, the rep called just to tell me, "It is so rare that those church clients actually read the manuals and have any kind of real understanding about the product. It was a real pleasure to give my time to a person like that." I wonder how many factory specialists walk away feeling just the opposite.

If you are a technical pastor at a growing church and you would like to know how to get the most out of equipment manufacturers and contractors, have truly interested people show up for those training seminars! If you are giving of yourself to be of service for some higher purpose, then give like you mean it! I never once heard anything in church about doing things half-heartedly or second-rate.

A day or so later, the FOH person calls me up from the very same church and wants to know some details about the DSP. (Normally, this sends chills down my spine and I start thinking about the "voided warranty" clause in the installation agreement.) But this person had good questions and was discussing his findings in the manual (somewhere around pg. 104) about creative functions they may need in the future, and would it be OK to check it out by himself? How did one facility get so blessed with two AV staff people that could read? I thought perhaps the Holy Grail may actually show up via FedEx at any moment!

I cannot express my joy enough about this sort of process going on! I have said many times that while most churches are willing to *pay* for a new AV system, so few are actually willing to *own* one.

The tools for worship are only as good as the people running them. Technical knowledge can

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be taught, but instilling desire and a thirst to be of service through excellence is all too often left out of the equation in education. It is rarely the size of a budget, but a willingness to settle for less than the best possible results that render many budgets ultimately impotent.

In this church facility, they did a few things right.

1. They have a team and an organized hierarchy defined by technical tasks.
2. They are willing to spend time and some money on technical training.
3. They allow a lot of input from paid staff and volunteers to determine realistic technical needs.
4. They stretch every dollar and get the best they can possibly afford.
5. They discuss their needs in detail with vendors/contractors.
6. They are realistic about their time frame during major renovations.
7. They *plan* maintenance for all the equipment.
8. They infuse Biblical excellence into the training process.
9. They rehearse.
10. They rehearse again.

Professional results can only be had with a professional state of mind. It doesn't really matter how much you get paid. When things go right, there's a good reason for it.

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