



**The Four Core Process
&
Staffing
For the Small Church**

**Excerpt from
Effective Staffing for Vital Churches**

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Introducing Four Core Processes for the Small Church

(From Effective Staffing for Vital Churches)

Staffing the Effective Church is different than staffing an Attractional Church. The key difference is simple. In the Effective Church *every* staff person, including office and custodial personnel, has but one goal in mind: the transformation of individuals, the community, and the world. And yes, we can hear church members everywhere crying, “What about us?” We want to be clear. Effective Churches take care of their own, but the care is at a different level. In Mark 1:30–31 Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law. But notice what happens:

So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

Although she was healed, it wasn’t so she could return to her once-a-week Sabbath Worship Service. She immediately began to serve. In an Effective Church every member is expected to be busy with Kingdom work. Sure, the elderly are cared for, but taking care of them is not the primary thrust of the church, as shown in Acts 6.

Every Effective Church has Four Core Processes that fuel its passion for transformation: (1) Bringing people to Christ and into the Kingdom; (2) Retaining them; (3) Discipling them; and (4) Sending them back out into society. (See Diagram 1.)



Diagram 1 Four Core Processes

Each of these Core Processes has specific staffing needs, even in the smallest church. As we will show, the pastor alone may have the responsibility for all four processes or it might be the pastor with either unpaid or paid staff. Regardless of the configuration, each process must be covered. Everything else the church does is insignificant. Yet we find few churches effectively staffing these four processes.

Most Effective Churches have multiple layers of staff. The first layer is the Peter, James, and John of the staff. These are the people who oversee the Four Core Processes and meet with the Lead Pastor on a regular basis. The additional layers include the rest of the staff who are ultimately responsible to the four core staff.

Introducing Fractals

The staffing of the Core Processes structure can be seen graphically in Diagram 2. This organizational structure is based on the biological phenomenon called fractaling. Fractals are naturally occurring repeated patterns such as found in a leaf (the stem and veins in the leaf reflect the pattern of the trunk and branches, etc.). To understand this paradigm, consider the Lead Pastor. The Lead Pastor is ultimately responsible for the accomplishment of the church's mission, viz, to make effective disciples of Jesus Christ. As we established earlier, mission-fulfillment hinges on the effective accomplishment of the Four Core Processes. In a church plant or in a very small church, the Lead Pastor is, for all practical purposes, solely responsible for all four processes. However, as the church grows, the Core Processes are handed off to gifted, called, and skilled staff members. This

“handing off” process varies depending on context, but by the time a church reaches around 500 all Four Core Processes should be in the hands of four staff members. In turn, each staff member “replicates” themselves based on the mission of their particular Core Process, just as the Lead Pastor has done.

There is a distinct difference between Process and Staff. Processes become to do’s and since one of the key points we’re making is that leaders are not doers, we want to keep the lines of separation clear. Therefore we’ve named the staff positions



Diagram 2 Staffing Fractal

for each Core Process as shown in the table as an example.

TABLE

<u>Process</u>	<u>Staff Position</u>
Bring Them in	Invite Key Leader
Retain Them	Connect Key Leader
Disciple Them	Apprenticeship Key Leader
Send Them Out	Send Key Leader

As we intimated earlier, the Key Leader for each Core Process is responsible for any and all processes and programs that contribute to the success of their Core Process. To best accomplish their mission, each key Leader develops the processes necessary to accomplish their particular mission and raises up leaders who are called, gifted, and skilled. Diagram 3 illustrates an example of the fractalizations of the Lead Pastor and of each Key Leader

(more on this in Chapter 7). The strength of this model is that it is both flexible and scalable to any sized church (we'll talk more about that in a moment). The larger a church becomes, the more prolific the fractalization and the wider the reach of leadership as additional layers of fractals and leaders are added. The beauty of this model is that no one person ever "supervises" or is responsible for more than four leaders.

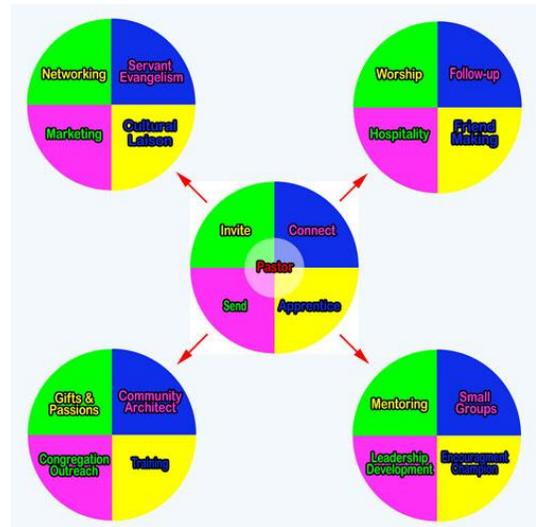


Diagram 3 Example Fractals

The Four Key Processes and Key Leaders

Since the configuration of the additional layers varies from church to church based on the context, we will focus primarily on the four staff positions overseeing the Four Core Processes. We are not going to debate which process comes first – bringing in or sending out. Like the chicken and the egg it's impossible to tell which comes first.

Each of these descriptions has two sections. There's an overview of the Core Process followed by a Best Practices description for each of the Key Leaders. These descriptions reflect how a full-time staff member would focus their time and attention in order to ensure their Core Process was addressed.

We realize that your church may not yet have 500 or more in worship. No worries. Chapter 9 deals with how to adopt and adapt what you're going to learn in the next few chapters ... plus how staff should be added as the church grows.

Staffing the Four Processes in Any Sized Church

For the would-be Twenty-Percenter, the leadership journey begins with the commitment to break the brick ceiling, but it also takes seriously the Four Core Processes and staffing for growth. We realize that the average church in North America has fewer than sixty people in worship each week, so after reading the previous chapters you may be feeling a bit overwhelmed. After all, we've told you that the Four Processes are at the core of an effective Church and we've made it abundantly clear that asking volunteers to be the primary person responsible for *any* of them is foolish ... and then we turned around and told you that the pastor's primary responsibility is inviting new folks and letting go of almost everything else. So that begs the question: "How do you get everything covered?"

The following section illustrates how a small church of under 200 in worship can staff for growth and navigate the transitions. Keep in mind that growing a church from less than 50 in attendance to over 500 is not as easy as we're going to make it sound – there's that brick ceiling between here and there. But let us assure you that it is a very *simple* process ... and it's a process that has been tested and proved again and again and again.

Staffing Under 100

In churches with less than a hundred in average worship, the Solo Pastor is responsible for the Four Core Processes, but not in equal proportions. We realize that's a lot of responsibility and we don't want to minimize the load this puts on the pastor. Indeed, this is the precise reason most churches never get beyond one hundred in worship. It's not because the responsibility of the Core Processes is too much ... that particular load, though heavy, is quite bearable.

It's all the other expectations and responsibilities that church members pile onto their pastor that make the Core Processes unbearable.

If your church is serious about reaching the community for Jesus Christ then it will have to release the pastor to devote their attention to the Core Processes, with the majority of their energy and time devoted to Inviting and Connecting, and to stop doing almost everything else. This means someone else will have to create the bulletin, write the newsletter, and make most of the hospital and membership visits. It means that the pastor's "office" hours are replaced with "out in the community connecting with the unchurched" hours. Monthly committee meetings may need to become quarterly, semi-annual, annual meetings ... or cancelled altogether.ⁱ As we've already said, the most important thing a pastor does at this size church is bring people through the front door of the church and then following up with every guest. The most important thing a church does at this size is to support their pastor's efforts. The second most important thing it does is following the pastor's lead to create an inviting culture. But all of that will be wasted unless the church is committed to welcoming and adopting all those new people into the congregation.

Staffing For Growth: The First Hire

One of the axioms to growing a church is that creating space for growth always *precedes* significant growth. In other words, you have to be ready for growth before it will happen. For instance, if you want to attract young families you'll need to get your nursery up to snuff *before* they visit – it's too late if they show up and your nursery is filled with leftover toys and recalled cribs.

The same is true for staffing your church. You'll need to invest in your first hire *before* you can comfortably afford it. If you're a leader in a small church, you might as well start preparing your congregation to get used to that kind of stretch ... it's going to be this way for the rest of time. Effective staffing is an investment that's paid off in the future, not in the present. With that said, when your congregation passes the 100–125 in average worship it's time to become a multi-staff church.

The first hire is where the vast majority of small churches shoot themselves in the foot. At the one hundred level you're bound to hear "We need a youth leader because the youth are the future of our church." There's nothing further from the truth. Consider:

- No unchurched self-respecting fourteen-year-old wants their parents to attend *anything* they're involved in, let alone their church.
- Youth grow up and the vast majority not only move away from the community, they leave the church. And it's not only your church they leave. Recent studies have shown that even youth raised in the church leave when they become young adults and don't return to church even after they're married and have children.ⁱⁱ
- Even with a full-time youth pastor, a small church cannot effectively "compete" with the youth programming of the "big church" up the street, whether that's a church of 300 or 3000. If a family is church shopping for a church based on youth programming, the small church doesn't stand a chance.

The fact is parents bring youth to church, not the other way around. So if you want to grow your church the first hire you must make is one that will both attract and retain your mission target (your “audience”). We *always* recommend that a church’s first hire be a Worship Pastor/Leader.

Hiring a good Worship Pastor/Leader does four things for the church. First, it expands the possibility of indigenous services for multiple target audiences (a must for most small churches that are committed to sustainable church growth). Second, it increases the level of excellence of all the services, which pays off in increased excitement in the congregation. Increased excitement increases invitations to friends, relatives, acquaintances, neighbors, co-workers, and everyone else. And of course increased invitations increases the number of first-time guests. Third, as new indigenous services increase, so does the retention rate of first-time guests who hang around long enough to become effective disciples of Jesus Christ. And finally, it frees up the Lead Pastor to spend less time in worship development and more time in networking with the unchurched and helping them find connections within the congregation.

Staffing For the Next Level

There are only two ministries that virtually guarantee church growth for the smaller church: indigenously targeted quality worship that reaches younger adults and excellent children’s ministry. The axiom that “Momma decides where the family will go to church and the kids decide if they go back” is as true today as it was in the ‘50s when the phrase was coined. Get the family in by great worship. Keep them coming back by great children’s programming.

As a church grows towards 200 in average worship it's time to staff for the next level, which means hiring a Children's Pastor/Leader. The key to this hire is to make sure you're hiring a leader, not a doer.ⁱⁱⁱ The Children's Pastor's job is to create high quality, fun, disciple-making ministries that children can't wait to return to. Their job isn't to lead a Sunday school class, bring a Children's sermon during worship, or to chaperone the kids at an all-church picnic. In fact, if either of us came across our Children's Pastor leading a Sunday school class they'd better have a really good reason why there wasn't an adult volunteer leading the class or else they'd be looking for another job. The Children's Pastor must be a leader of leaders who accomplishes ministry through the hands and feet of committed servants and volunteers. By so doing, the Children's Pastor will have the ability to remain effective regardless of the church's size.

With just three ministry staff members (Lead Pastor, Worship Pastor, and Children's Pastor) the church should expect to see sustainable growth through 300. Of course there are many factors that can stymie a church's sustained growth, but almost all of them are internal issues. Very rarely do external issues such as a declining community, eroding economics, persecution, or cultural apathy keep churches from growing. In fact, we know of churches located where towns "used to be" that are not only sustainable, but experiencing significant growth. There are churches in city centers standing toe-to-toe with urban blight that continue to break attendance barriers. And there are churches in every other nook-and-cranny of North America that are experiencing growth. Almost every church that complains that there are

outside reasons why they aren't growing are making excuses for their less-than-effective behaviors. When a mission-focused congregation follows committed, well-trained, mentored and coached staff, there's no reason a church can't move through the "next level" and into sustainable effectiveness.

Staffing for Sustainable Effectiveness

You may notice that up until this point we've tasked the Lead Pastor with primarily gathering new folks. Indeed, we maintain that until a church breaks 500 in average worship the Lead Pastor's first priority is (1) meet new people; (2) build initial relationships with them; (3) get them into the church for worship or an event; (4) follow-up with them; (5) help them connect with a small group; (6) hand off their care to the small group leader; (7) repeat.

However, at the 350–500 level it's time for the Lead Pastor to let go of one of the Four Core Processes by hiring the first Key Leader. Although each of the Core Processes are important, the Connecting Key Leader is generally the most effective first Key Leader hire. The reason for this is simple. Since both worship and small groups (including children's ministry) fall within the Retaining Process, the Connecting Key Leader will bring some immediate relief to an over-worked Lead Pastor. Not that the Lead Pastor suddenly gets a break. From here on out the Lead Pastor must radically begin shifting practices and priorities from doing to leading. Which is the focus of the rest of this book.

After the Connecting Key Leader, the next three hires are based on need. It's important that the Lead Pastor hires around their weakness. If the Lead Pastor has been exceptional at apprenticing new leaders, but not too good in marketing, then the next Key Leader could be the Invite Key Leader. On the

other hand, if the church has a budding signature outreach ministry, then it might be wise to hire the Send Key Leader. During this season, it is often particularly helpful to seek wise counsel and many churches that successfully navigate this important transition do so with the guidance of a seasoned consultant and coach.

ⁱ See Chapter 3 in our *Ministry in Hard Times*, Abingdon, 2010.

ⁱⁱ See Ken Ham, et al, *Already Gone: Why Your Kids Will Leave Church and What You Can Do to Stop It*, New Leaf Publishing, 2009.

ⁱⁱⁱ See the Player Coach Dilemma chapter for more information.