

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

Signs You Need to Restructure: Overstaffing - Episode 252

Signs You Need to Restructure Your Staff (Part 1)

There are some staffing strategies that tend to produce health and growth for churches. There are also some staffing strategies that, more often than not, are part of the reason why churches get stuck.

Staffing is typically the biggest financial investment that churches make to accomplish their mission. So, as the reality of our post-pandemic world has come into focus, many pastors are revisiting their staffing and structure—and this *should* be a concern for every church right now... even if you've come out of the last couple of years in a relatively healthy financial position. In this podcast series, we'll unpack a number of early warning signs that it's time to address staffing issues and restructure your ministry team.

3 Signs You Need to Restructure

SIGN #1: You haven't right-sized your team to reflect the current size of your church.

The data from our recent [Unstuck Church Report](#) confirms that many churches are overstaffed right now. In fact, our last report indicates that churches on average currently employ one full-time equivalent staff person for every 34 people in attendance—which is well below the target we recommended: one FTE for every 75 people in attendance. (*Before* the pandemic, the healthiest churches commonly had one FTE for every 100 people in attendance or better).

If you haven't right-sized your staff team to fit the current size of your church, *now* is the time to do that. We know from previous research that stuck churches have 50% more staff than growing, healthy churches. For whatever reason, the financial discipline required to right-size the staff team pushes us to hire the right leaders, engage the right ministry strategies, and develop the right culture that ultimately leads to health and growth in the church.

SIGN #2: You haven't right-sized your staffing budget to create financial margin to fund your church's mission.

We recommend that churches maintain a staffing budget between 45% and 55% of their overall general ministry budget—including wages, benefits, taxes, staff development, etc. But we know

from the data that churches on average **haven't** right-sized their staffing budgets. Q2 2022 was the first time that the average percentage churches are spending on their staffing budget was *higher* than our recommended range (55% of the total budget). In fact, more than half of the churches who participated in the most recent report are spending more than 55% of their budget on staff expenses.

It's time for churches to right-size their staffing budget to create an appropriate financial margin that allows them to fund the church's mission. If anything, the investment of a lower percentage for staffing is better than spending too much.

SIGN #3: You have too many staff to pay your high-capacity staff well.

Healthy churches hire fewer staff and pay those staff well. By doing so, they are better positioned to retain key leaders and prevent them from pursuing other opportunities in organizations that are also looking for high-capacity leaders. Stuck churches, on the other hand, tend to hire more staff and pay everyone less. These churches tend to hire many more people to *do* ministry rather than hiring leaders who empower lay people to engage in the ministry. This leads to larger staff teams and makes it difficult to compensate everyone appropriately... especially their best staff leaders. Unfortunately, when this happens, the best staff tend to find other opportunities inside and outside of ministry that leverage their gifts and have better compensation—and the church is left with the staff who aren't as capable or experienced in ministry as a result.

Final Thoughts

When you hire fewer, higher-capacity staff on your team, they have a *bias towards developing leaders and building volunteer teams*. They know that the only way they are going to carry out their ministry responsibilities is to learn how to give ministry away. And when you hire fewer people, you are in a better financial position to pay them well.

Stuck churches tend to hire more staff. When you have more staff, there's less ministry to go around for both the staff and for volunteers... so staff start creating new ministries, events, and programs to justify their positions. (This is why many stuck churches also become over-programmed and have many events). As the ministry demand continues to grow, the staff in stuck churches tend to have a *bias towards hiring more staff* rather than *engaging more volunteers*. This leads to larger staff teams in the long run—and when you hire more people, it's much harder to compensate everyone well.

Free Webinar: How to Restructure Your Church Staff

Of all the areas of a ministry that can be difficult to sort out on your own, staffing and structure is probably the hardest—but it's too important to the health of your church to delay. If you're ready to get started moving back to health in this area, [join us for this free webinar](#) on July 28.

Listen to the full episode on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or at theunstuckgroup.com/episode252.

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