

# 7 REASONS WHY MID-SIZE CHURCHES GET STUCK

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We'll assume for this discussion that mid-size churches are between 200 and 800 in attendance. By the way, before the pandemic 60% of churches in America were already under 100 in attendance, so churches in this mid-size range are in reality relatively large. Here are some of their most common challenges:

### **1) They are governed by large boards and many committees.**

As an example, we once worked with a mid-size church that had more than 50 people on its board and more than a dozen different committees. Their structure for decision-making was so complex that they had a committee for finding people to serve on committees.

We try to help churches shift to only one board that includes seven to nine people. The goal is to get everyone else serving on a ministry team rather than participating in committee meetings.

### **2) They don't leverage volunteers.**

The first goal is to get staff leading ministry teams rather than reporting to committees (see above). Once that shift happens, the next goal is get staff to start building volunteer teams to do the ministry.

It's not unusual, though, for staff to hold on to doing all the ministry in mid-size churches. Think children's ministry. Think pastoral care. Staff need to equip God's people to do the work of God.

### **3) They're unwilling to address facility constraints.**

Sometimes those constraints happen because of limited seating for adults. More oftentimes, though, the constraints aren't as visible because they impact guests more than they do people already connected to the church. Those hidden constraints may include a lack of parking, welcoming and obvious entrances, children's ministry space, adequate lobby space, clear directional signage, etc.

The key question should be, "How is the guest experience impacted by our facility?"

#### **4) Children's ministry doesn't become a priority.**

Ironically, churches tend to hire a youth pastor before they hire a children's ministry pastor. Part of the reason why is that they're really only focused on babysitting kids. The better space and the stronger leaders are focused on adults and students. The challenge is that unless churches give their best to children's ministry, they'll never reach their parents. That's one reason why some churches have a chasm of missing 25-to 35-year-old adults.

#### **5) They haven't identified their primary purpose and distinctives.**

Once you start reaching hundreds of people, it's very easy to continue adding programming. Before you know it, things become very complex with multiple ministries competing for volunteers, leaders, money, space, promotions, etc.

Mid-size churches need to define their mission, vision and strategy to be in a better position to focus resources on the areas of ministry that define who they are as a church. It will create a filter for leaders to say no more often. This focus increases ministry effectiveness and leverages resources for greater impact.

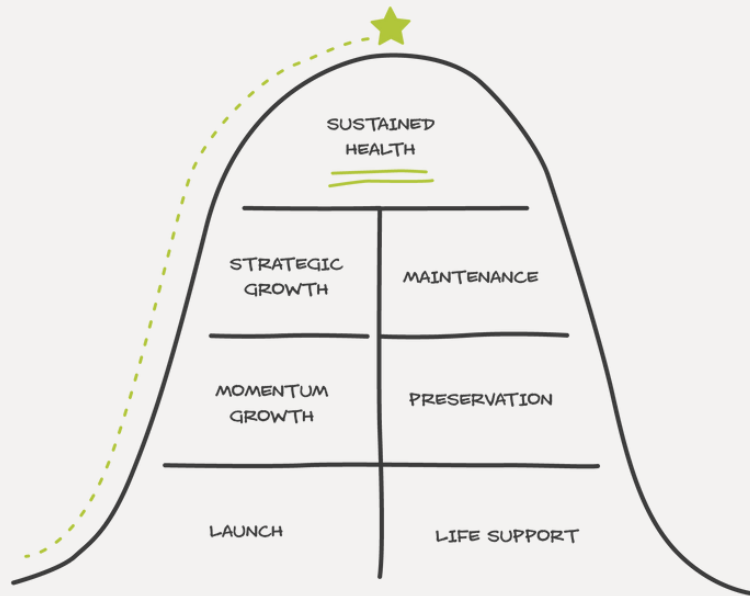
#### **6) The quality of weekend environments doesn't reflect the church's size.**

For good or bad, as the size of the environment grows, so do quality expectations. Of course, the primary place this will be felt is with the worship service environment for adults, but the same principle will apply in every environment, including children's ministry, students, guest experiences, classes and so on. With worship, though, there needs to be more intentionality around planning, preparation and execution. That includes not only the teaching, but everything else that happens during the service.

#### **7) They don't hire leaders.**

At this stage, it becomes more and more important for churches to hire leaders rather than doers. You'll need to focus on staff who can grow ministries and reach more people. That means support roles (assistants, custodian, bookkeepers, associate pastors, etc.) may have to wait. Those roles become great opportunities for volunteer engagement or outsourcing.

The priority needs to be on finding staff leaders who can build volunteer teams, build healthy ministries and build a strategy to reach new people.



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## ABOUT TONY MORGAN:



Tony is the Founder and Lead Strategist of The Unstuck Group. Started in 2009, The Unstuck Group has served 500 churches throughout the United States and several countries around the world. Previously, Tony served on the senior leadership teams of three rapidly growing churches including NewSpring Church in South Carolina. He has five published books including, *The Unstuck Church*, and, with Amy Anderson, he hosts the The Unstuck Church Podcast which has thousands of listeners each month.