

Sizing Up the “Corporate” Church: Three New Classifications

Churches previously known as “corporate-sized” churches—those with between 400 and 2,000 in weekly worship attendance—are not all the same (see story, page 6). The chart below offers three new subcategories of corporate churches, each with its own organizing concept, growth issues, and leadership challenges.

Church Size <i>Attendance</i> <i>Annual Operating Budget</i>	The Multi-Celled Church <i>250–400</i> <i>\$400,000–\$1,000,000</i>	The Professional Church <i>400–800</i> <i>\$1,000,000–\$2,000,000</i>	The Strategic Church <i>800–1,200</i> <i>\$2,000,000–\$4,000,000</i>
ORGANIZING CONCEPT/THEME	LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	PROFESSIONALIZATION	ALIGNMENT
Growth Challenges	<p>Assumptions about growth must be examined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth in this size congregation is primarily a leadership and vision issue. • The congregation must come to terms with how it understands and defines growth, whether or not it desires growth, and whether the culture will accommodate growth. 	<p>Growth is related to capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas to generate growth abound but are limited by the capacity of the staff team and limitations in the facility. • The church’s capacity for growth is largely a function of the size of its budget. 	<p>Growth is assumed and planned, but is not the missional center of the church:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This size church understands that a lack of growth will lead to stagnation and ultimately to decline. Growth is an ongoing management issue. The nature and direction of growth have to be continually negotiated and planned.
Pastoral Challenges	<p>Vision-Driven Leadership. The pastor must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discern and articulate an energizing vision for the congregation, translate vision into specific goals to be accomplished, and be able to clearly describe who the congregation is and is not, and what its mission is and what it is not. • Communicate a caring presence in the congregation while reducing the level of one-on-one care provided to congregation members. 	<p>Managerial Leadership. The pastor must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let go of a purely relational style of leadership and engage the congregation from a managerial perspective. • Shift the care focus from the congregation at large to the staff team and key lay leaders. • Manage the collective performance of the staff team. • Maintain a vision focus while providing managerial focus. 	<p>Strategic Leadership. The head of staff must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn to focus on the right things, say no to the wrong things, and spend time on the important things. • Let go of day-to-day management decisions, find ways to pull back and see the big picture, and learn to lead through the projection of a public persona. • Crystallize the vision of the church into clear sound bytes that keep the staff team and board in alignment.
Staff Team Challenges	<p>Learning to embrace staff identity as a team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding some specialized program staff to grow the church when the budget may not be fully ready to support staff additions. • Learning to balance the work of the generalist with the work of the specialist. 	<p>Professionalization of the church:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteerism can no longer keep pace with the leadership needs of the church, so the staff team must take over many functions previously performed by volunteers. • The staff must find new ways to engage volunteers. • The staff has moved away from a generalist orientation to distinct areas of specialization. • The executive leadership team emerges. It may consist of staff members or a combination of staff and lay leaders. 	<p>Aligning the work of multiple staff subteams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoiding a silo mentality and getting the entire system moving forward together. • Program staff are challenged to maintain a relational focus in ministry as the administrative components of their jobs grow. • The administrative support team grows in size until it is equal to or larger than the program team. • The role of the executive pastor emerges as the senior pastor focuses more time on strategic leadership and teaching.
Board Challenges	<p>Organizing its work around the mission/vision of the congregation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating the work of a variety of committees and groups. • Learning to say yes to ideas and activities that support the mission and no to ideas that distract the congregation from its mission. • Developing new lay leadership. 	<p>Remaining focused on creating policy and systems for performance management, maintaining accountability, and preventing vision drift:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The governing board relinquishes the daily management of the church to the staff team. 	<p>Board grows smaller and operates from a strategic and generative mindset:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board provides strong support and an accountability system to the head of staff. • Other leaders learn to trust the decision-making lead of a smaller group.
Assimilation Challenges	<p>Continually expanding venues for entry into the congregation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding new worship venues, small group ministries, etc. • Meeting the standards of excellence that people expect from the larger church. 	<p>Watching the back door:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing the anonymity that occurs in the large church. • Finding new ways to keep track of members and to get members engaged. • The staff team plays an intentional role in identifying and developing potential lay leadership. 	<p>Creating a seamless system of membership and assimilation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking membership, discipleship, gift discovery, etc. through a fully formed network of classes or small groups. • Adding a staff member who focuses entirely on membership and assimilation.