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A church's success or failure hinges on properly administering the business and organizational aspects of ministry.

Administration in the 21st-century church is critical for doing effective ministry. I have asked the administrator of The Potter's House, Nathaniel Tate, to define the role of church administration today. He has recently authored, *Strategies for Twenty-First Century Leadership*. I know you will find these insights relevant to your ministry. They have certainly blessed our growing ministry at The Potter's House.

--T. D. Jakes

You don't have to travel too far back in time to identify what would have been considered a typical church. It was small in numbers and size and limited to spiritual functions. That was fine, and it met the needs of that day.

However, today is a new day. The needs that are brought to the church are complex and varied. The church has to offer more than a sanctuary and a sermon.

The 21st-century church has been catapulted into arenas that were hardly accessed a few years ago. It now offers so much more than just a sanctuary and a sermon. The 21st-century church is now a conglomerate, offering all the spiritual help it should and so much more. Examples include day care centers, grade schools, high schools, training institutes, youth organizations, senior citizen programs, help for coping with divorce, drug rehabilitation, vocational training, ministry to the incarcerated, anger management, ministering to those with HIV/AIDS, economic development, working with the homeless or business incubators, just to mention a few.

All of these facets require qualified personnel to run them; qualified personnel require human resources and business management; and human resources and business management require the application of state and federal rules and regulations. Someone has to be a steward of the interest of the church and its leadership. In growing churches, it often becomes important that someone other than the pastor be able to respond to the many issues that occur on a daily basis.

This person ensures that the direction set by the pastor is implemented, and that there is accountability. The pastor certainly cannot do it all. This is where the role of church administrator becomes so important. He or she is the valuable liaison between the pastor, the staff and the membership.

A CORPORATE MIND-SET

The administrator has to have a corporate view and treat the church like a Fortune 500 company, no matter what the church's size. For so long, the local church has been run in a haphazard manner. Often, the leadership tries to avoid becoming worldly, or losing spirituality. Those left in charge shy away from any practices that appear too businesslike. But this mind-set is extremely detrimental to the growth and success of the church as well as its varied outreaches and programs.

The church administrator has to understand that the church must be run like an efficient organization. While the church is an organism--a living, breathing thing established by God and left to affect this world--it still must be organized in order to be completely effective and maintain integrity in business. The administrator should have the business savvy to deal with the complex nature of the 21st-century church.

A church administrator has to have a well-rounded business background on one hand, yet have a strong ability to integrate that information into the uniqueness of the church environment. He or she should have experience dealing with human resource management, risk management, budgeting, purchasing, local government issues, land acquisition and building programs, to name a few.

The administrator acts as a liaison between the pastor, the congregation and the staff. Because of this, he or she should have excellent communication skills. Many churches have experienced devastating events, all due to a lack of people-to-people communication. Not letting the congregation or the staff know what is going on, or not listening to the church people and staff, only leads to problems.

Church administrators must be excellent communicators and listeners. Misinformation, inappropriate information, or even too much information, can be a hindrance to the development and functioning of the organization. If a church administrator follows the biblical principles that have been laid out for us in the Word of God, there will be less communication problems, less time wasted and less money spent when money is not the answer.

KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL ADMINISTRATION

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"And in the church God has appointed...those with gifts of administration" (1 Cor. 12:28, NIV).

There are many responsibilities that belong to the administrator. Sadly, we are living in a time when people are targeting ministries for litigation. In years gone by, this would not be an issue. But today there are many instances in which the church needs someone watching the business while the pastor is watching the sheep.

The administrator is the business version of the biblical "watchman on the wall." Listed below are some of the key roles and functions of a successful administrator:

1. The administrator protects the ministry. He or she protects the church by making sure there is fiscal accountability. There should never be a question about how money is handled. He or she also protects the church by training the staff in how to handle the congregation and their peers.
2. The administrator protects the pastor. Most pastors do not have a person they can talk with who will keep their conversations confidential. Loose lips have destroyed many churches. The administrator will see and hear things that are to be kept to himself or herself, as well as in prayer. Being a pastor's confidant is one of the best services that an administrator can provide.
3. The administrator is not called to be a pastor or preacher. Those

functions are left to others. If an administrator is inspired to be a preacher, let him do that instead.

4. The administrator represents the church to the general public. Most churches will find themselves dealing with politicians, city council members and outside institutions. The church administrator should be well versed in these areas so that he or she can properly represent the church.

5. The administrator must be spiritually mature and walk in integrity and honesty. The Bible says, "The integrity of the upright will guide them" (Prov. 11:3, NKJV). The Lord will guide the administrator who walks in integrity and honesty.

6. The administrator is always looking for areas of risk and liability. To do this, the administrator must be aware of any problems or foul play that could occur. Today, there are people who look for ways to use the church as a prime target for forced litigation.

7. The administrator is always doing his or her job, even when the congregation is worshiping. Even when you are having a service, and the congregation is in the midst of praise and worship, the church administrator is constantly looking out into the congregation for any problems or unusual actions that may create a disturbance.

For example, let's say a lady is raising her hands and is about to trip over a camera cable. The administrator would immediately contact the usher to assist. Constantly watching over the congregation during a service may not be a spiritual role, but it is truly an important role.

8. The administrator lifts the weight of the organization off the shoulders of the pastor so he or she can minister to the people. For example, the administrator interviews and screens new employees prior to referring them to the pastor for consideration. The administrator also takes care of facilities management, to ascertain that the building is being maintained efficiently.

He or she also oversees the volunteer auxiliary department. The administrator deals with conflict resolution when there is an issue between staff members that affects job performance. The

administrator also takes care of all bank negotiations when dealing with new acquisitions, loans and other services.

The role of an administrator in today's church is important and essential, whether it's on a volunteer, part-time or full-time basis. As a pastor, when choosing an administrator, you must ask the question, "Can this person make a contribution to the ministry and get positive results?" If the answer is yes, then you have chosen a person who will be a real asset to the church.

The administrator may not have all the educational credentials or many years of experience; however, if he or she is people-oriented, loves the church and is a loyal, committed, servant-leader to the pastor, then you have a true church administrator.

The church administrator's job is a tremendous task, and it should be taken on by someone who is willing to make sacrifices for the success of the ministry.

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