

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



5 Functions Your Church Needs to Outsource This Year

(PLUS 27 TIPS ON HOW TO HELP YOU DO IT WELL!)

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On a recent episode of Thom Rainer's leadership podcast, he reflected on "[SIX FUTURE PROJECTIONS ABOUT CHURCHES THAT ARE BECOMING REALITY](#)". He identified a number of trends that are impacting churches across the country. **While each of the trends he highlighted is worth considering I was struck by the fact that "virtual staff is becoming more common" in churches.** On the podcast, Thom gave a few examples of how churches could leverage outsourcing and virtual staff to help make their ministry more effective. In an effort to support churches, I've provided the following examples of more areas that churches are successfully outsourcing today.

Your church needs to be actively considering which parts of its operations should be outsourced to remote and virtual teams. Below are just a few examples of functions that many churches today are already handing off to people outside their walls.

If you are looking for a deeper dive into the "why" and "how" of building a virtual team, I would strongly recommend the book "[Virtual Culture: The Way We Work Doesn't Work Anymore](#)" by Bryan Miles. This book is a great conversation driver around this topic and includes a great look at what Thom Rainer's organization, LifeWay, has done to become more virtual too!

Clear Bookkeeping

Your church is a business after all, and you need to deal with the financial and operations side of what you do with excellence. At the core of that is having solid financial reporting that can support the church going forward. Clear financial reporting helps your church make critical decisions today as well as when it faces future direction decisions.

The paradox here is that this area is really important to your church but it's not a core ministry function at all. Many ministry leaders struggle with the basic requirements of financial reporting like collecting receipts. Outsourcing this by hiring a bookkeeper to focus on this function can free the ministry staff to work with people and not be bogged down by these requirements.

4 Groups of People Looking for Excellent Financial Reporting from Your Church

- **Donors Demand It** // Discerning donors are going to be looking for clear financial reporting as a sign of good stewardship. They won't want (or need) to dive into the details but they do need to see that you have your financial house in order.

- **Third Party Requirements** // Most churches have some other organizations that they have some level of financial accountability to. Whether it's your denomination or even a loose coaching network, having solid numbers helps others to get a sense of what is happening at your church.
- **Lending Institutions** // Banks or other lenders are going to want to look into your financial track record before they extend financial help. You need a long track record of organizing books for them to examine. If you wait until the time you need their help to put together these reports you'll be too late. You need to start when you don't need their help in anticipation of a future where you'll be passing this information over.
- **Decision Makers** // Down the road your leadership team will need clear financial reporting to help them make decisions about where they should go next. Clear financials move the conversation beyond just how people "feel" about how things are progressing at the church.

Churches of all sizes should consider outsourcing their bookkeeping functions to help their ministry function more smoothly. This isn't just restricted to older churches with larger budgets. In fact, it makes even more sense when a church is smaller or newer. I know of a church planter who, right from the beginning of his church starting to meet, has used [a virtual bookkeeper from Belay](#). This company has worked with lots of churches across the country and are set up and ready to offload this work from your team to theirs!

Systematic Graphic Design

The graphic design needs of a modern church are increasing. Some studies show that as many as 65% of people are visual learners, meaning that you need to communicate with them through compelling imagery. [ref] On top of that, the communities we're serving are looking for even more visually stimulating images across various platforms on which we communicate with them.

Your church needs better graphics but most likely won't be in a position to hire a full time graphic designer. Even if your church has been able to hire a graphic designer, that person has probably been unable to keep up with all the demands that your team is generating for them. Outsourcing this work to a graphic designer

will take some of the production or systematic graphic design workload off your team and will help you to communicate well visually without overtaxing your team.



5 Design Projects Your Church Should Outsource Every Week

- **Quote Squares** // Did your pastor say something particularly profound or "sticky" on Sunday? Make a graphic of that and share it across all the various social media platforms.
- **Invite Graphics** // When you launch a new series, your church should generate graphics that your people can use to invite their friends to join you (including invite cards they can hand out!). [Here are some more ideas on this.](#)
- **Volunteer of the Week** // Your church exists because volunteers serve tirelessly. Take time to highlight a different volunteer on your social media channels to say thank you!
- **Slides** // If you are using the standard "black background with white text" slides during your message, you are missing out! Send your slides to a designer to make them pop!
- **Social Media Content** // Follow any church that is making an impression through its social media channels and you'll notice a lot of graphics. ([Here are 10 examples to check out!](#)) These channels are hungry for compelling imagery to draw people in.

The folks at [Design Pickle](#) are working with dozens and dozens of churches right now to help them through their outsourced design services. It's a flat rate, low cost, low ego, and a super helpful service! (Hint: Use the code CHURCHGROWTH when you sign up to save off your first month.)

Capital Fundraising Guidance

Growing churches are faced with the reality that their physical infrastructure needs to grow ahead of their attendance numbers. We have to create spaces for people to experience what our church offers before those people will start to attend. This need often creates the necessity to raise significant capital resources.

Too many church leaders have botched this process over the years. They become too heavy-handed and people suffer from never-ending fundraising. Or the leaders don't execute a well-designed campaign and the church isn't able to fund what they need to fund. Most churches facing this should bring in strategic outsiders to help through this transition.

Practically speaking, there is enough financial risk involved with a campaign like this that your church would be poor stewards to not bring in help with it. These services typically cost around 3-5% of the total campaign and so it's worth having this help on the table.

4 Resources for Churches Considering Capital Campaigns

- **6 Things Consultants Won't Tell you about Capital Campaigns** // Keep an eye out for these dynamics from within your upcoming campaign.
- **60 Page Digital Magazine on Generosity** // Dive deep into articles from various thought leaders on helping increase generosity at your church.
- **8 Phases of Effective Christmas Giving Campaigns** // Many churches start with an annual "year-end campaign" first before jumping to a full capital campaign.
- **Offering Talk 201 - An Advanced Strategy for Encouraging Generosity at Your Church** // A way to help focus your people on how their giving is making a difference in the church and beyond.

I dig the guys over at Injoy Stewardship Solutions. I think Joe and team have done a great job helping find so many solutions. If you are thinking about a campaign like this in the next 12-18 months then [you should schedule a free call with them today.](#)

Administrative Support

You only have 24 hours in a day. Your job is not to check email, update your Facebook status, send out newsletters, or proofread the program. We want you to connect with people, not spend all your time booking appointments to connect with people. The church needs to help people get into small groups, not invest hours updating lists of people's names. There are people in your church that want to volunteer and are waiting for you to ask them for help; they don't care how much time you spent ordering books off of Amazon for the next sermon.



Did you know that there is a whole world of people waiting to serve you and your church virtually? For a fraction of the cost of hiring administrative help to work in your office, you can outsource any task that is repetitive, easy to delegate, and still sitting on your to-do list (maybe still there from last year?).

Churches are increasingly using Virtual Assistants (VA) to help add more administrative muscle to what they do. These team members work remotely, often on a part-time basis and most likely for far less than hiring a team member to sit in the office. On top of that, these team members are admin ninjas that will push your ministry forward.

9 Tasks You Should Send to a Virtual Assistant Today

- **Overnight Illustration Research** // We've all been there . . . the crunch is on for this weekend. You're halfway through your prep for Sunday. You have the scriptures pulled together for the message. You know some personal stories that will add some flavor. But you'd love just a little more content to round out the message. Why not send the data to a research assistant who can work overnight and comb the internet

for some spice to add to the message. Here are the types of tasks you could send to your VA and have them ready for you when you return to the office the next morning.

- “I’m looking for 3 examples of YouTube videos that show funny moments around the home with families at Christmas dinner.”
 - “Can you find 5 news stories from this week that talk about adoption?”
 - “I need 10 stats about infidelity. I also need a link to the studies where you find the information. I’m trying to illustrate the level of infidelity in our culture today.”
- **Deal with the “DMs”** // Log into my social networks and check that there are no messages waiting for me there. If there are, forward them on to me. Respond to all “friend requests”.
 - **Repost my quotes** // Take a quote or scripture verse from my message on the weekend . . . and post them on the various channels; a different one every day.
 - **Leverage Social Media for Follow Ups** // Scan each network and find two or three high leverage action steps for me to take every day. (Have these waiting for me in my email first thing in the morning.)
 - Whose birthday is coming up that I need to email or call? (Have their email address or phone number in my email ready to respond.)
 - A person “sharing” data that I should loopback on to check with (Broken relationships, job stress, etc.)
 - Something that seems to be getting traction from my messages that I need to take note of.
 - **Proactively Book Some Meetings** // At the beginning of the month, you give your VA a list of 15 people, their email addresses, and phone numbers. You give them 20 open time slots in your calendar and two coffee shops that you would like to meet at. With a bit of “template writing” you empower the VA to contact the people and slot them into the spots.

- **Book a Coffee or Two!** // When someone emails you looking for a meeting you simply reply to them and your VA explaining that they are helping find a time that works best for you. The VA takes over with the “back and forth” to slot them into your calendar.
- **Follow Up with People** // How many times have you come out of a meeting with a “follow up step” but you are driving to the next meeting? Set up a voicemail box that your VA will check every day and leave the follow-up items with them. “Order a copy of Andy Stanley’s latest book and send it to Bill from me with a note that says ...”



If you are looking to add a Virtual Assistant to the team at your church there are two broad categories to think about:

- **North America Based** // The leader in this category is [Belay](#). They provide high-quality executive virtual assistants for leaders. One of the advantages of working with [Belay](#) is that included in the hourly cost for your assistant is a customer care representative who is there to help you ensure that you are leveraging your executive assistant for maximum value.
- **International** // There is literally a world of people who would be willing to work for your church as a virtual assistant. One of the leaders in finding an assistant abroad is [Virtual Staff Finder](#). This is a “matchmaking service” that helps source Philippines-based virtual assistants to work for you directly. They provide some light training and support in order to help you start this new relationship.

Organization Development

Your church is coming up against a critical juncture in its history and you need help. You sense that you need to bring in some outside help to navigate the increasingly complex future you anticipate ahead. Rather than going it alone, wise churches bring in coaches and consultants to help them think through these junctures.

Don't think of this as just hiring an "advice dispenser" but really adding high powered leadership to your team. When you see these people as an extension of your leadership team you get maximum value out of them connecting with your church.

5 Times Your Church Should Bring in a Coach

- **Growth Spurt** // If your church is experiencing a season of growth it might be wise to bring in a leader from a church who has led at the next "level" to help your team work through how they should change their approaches to adapt.
- **Team Crisis** // Sometimes churches come to a stage where something goes wrong with the team and this is a good time to reach out and get some help.
- **Stuck** // Are things just stuck? Does it appear like everything is healthy but things aren't getting traction as much as you'd like? Get outside help to move things along.
- **Team Audit** // Does your team sense that everyone isn't on the "right seat on the bus"? Bringing in outside help to work through processes can be invaluable.
- **Succession Planning** // Many churches are facing an impending transition of a key leader within the organization. Bringing in outside help can enable both the church and the leader to walk through this transition in a healthy way.

I would highly recommend that your church talks with [Jenni Catron](#) if you are facing any of the above issues. She is a smart leader with keen insights that has helped lots of churches like yours through key moments of organizational change and growth.

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