

Need more musicians?

What REALLY causes the “not enough musicians” syndrome?

So, are you trying to figure out how to add more musicians to your teams? “We just don't have any in our church.” Really? The super-common problem of “We just don't have enough musicians” seems to have a simple cause, but let's look deeper. What might REALLY be causing the shortage?

Here are **10 causes for a lack of musicians**: [I'll include both singers and instrumentalists when referring to “musicians” here.]

1. **Musicians attract musicians** [perhaps there's just not critical mass – not a talent issue, just a sheer lack of numbers]
2. **A bad sound mix** [when certain musicians aren't heard in the mix, this causes potential musicians to say “Why would I want to play or sing if I might not even be heard?”]
3. **There is no perceived need for more musicians** [does your talented worship leader fill in all the missing gaps so the congregation never feels the pain of the need OR do you ever ask for more musicians – either by announcement, special event, or shoulder-tap? And do I smell burnout?]
4. **Insecure musicians** [potential musicians don't feel that they have the necessary talent to play or sing with the band]
5. **There is a negative or closed band culture** [it doesn't look like the band is enjoying serving together OR the relationships are so tight that they feel exclusive or like a clique]
6. **There is no mentoring** [there's no way to ease into playing, no culture of co-leading, no “backup, unamplified second keyboard or guitar” and there's no training to get new musicians up to speed]
7. **There are no non-rehearsal or non-performance gatherings** [are the only playing opportunities at rehearsals and services? There are no monthly or quarterly gatherings to play and experiment with different musicians and different combinations of bands without the pressure of preparing for or playing in a service?]
8. **Different or New vision** [sometimes a worship leader's vision for style (which dictates band makeup) is different than the senior pastor's or perhaps it's just new to the church and they don't know that their accordion, I mean, electric guitar has a place in the band]
9. **Minimal performance space** [your stage is full or the way you are set up makes it feel like there's no room for anyone to join]
10. **Too many hoops to join or unclear expectations** [What happens when a potential musician expresses interest in serving? Is your process cumbersome, unclear, lengthy, daunting, or nonexistent? People like to be a part of something well organized. How many embers of hope never became flames of service because of an inefficient process?]

So, now that you see some of the “hidden” reasons that you don't have enough musicians, here are some solutions for each:

1. Invite musician friends that you have from outside your church to help. Cross-pollinating is great for your church and the musicians visiting. It creates more of a felt need once people enjoy the energy of the drums or the fullness of a keyboard. Also, quality attracts quality [you are what you attract – gulp!] so invest in yourself and in your team. Get lessons, work hard, be students of your craft, grow!
2. Train you tech arts crew to be musical in their mixing. Teach them how songs are built, how and why you arrange songs like you do, and how to create a mix that supports the intended result.
3. Let certain roles go unfilled sometimes...create the need. And when you do, it would be a great week to intentionally make an announcement that makes the opportunity to serve known [without sounding desperate!] Remember to use all available media – live, bulletin, e-bulletin, website, etc. Also, keep you ears open and invite the people who may be interested – never underestimate the power of the shoulder-tap!

4. Each church has [whether written or not] a ground floor for what is acceptable quality level for weekend worship gatherings. But make sure you communicate that excellence [doing your personal best] is the requirement, not being perfect. You might also help less-experienced musicians serve in lower-pressure environments like children's church, small groups, youth group, or midweek meetings. They can provide wonderful training ground where confidence can grow.
5. When a band is enjoying each other as they play, you can totally feel it! Work hard, be diligent, flow together, but don't take yourselves so da'gum seriously! "Be excellent at what is good, be innocent of perfection." [oh snap, he didn't just paraphrase it that way, did he?!] I know that sometimes, when you are concentrating on what you're playing, you can have a serious look or scowl on your face, but try to remember what you're singing about and Who you're singing to. God cancelled His frown toward you when you said yes to Him...reflect His smile! Also, when you have [or potentially have] someone new, go the extra mile to be interested, welcoming, genuine, and considerate. Help breakdown the certain apprehension that a new musician has. And share food, experiences, and honest moments with each other. Be a community.
6. Establish a culture of training, of opportunity, of team. Regularly offer musical training for your musicians. Always look for ways to be raising up new leaders and musicians. Have your background singers lead songs, have your electric guitar player start off a song, and bring a duplicate musician on stage unplugged just to build their confidence. Work hard not to be a "one man show" – empower musicians on your team to have important musical [solo, lead, arrangement, etc.] and non-musical [prayer, scripture reading, administrative, etc.] responsibilities.
7. Call it a Jam Session, a Worship Jam, Zamar [instrumental worship] Night, or "And the Kitchen Sink" but you've gotta have times when your current and potential new musicians can play and experiment with different musicians and different combinations of bands *without the pressure* of preparing for or playing in a service. There is just a different level of creativity when you take that pressure away. And it's a great way to get to know new musicians without having to formally audition them [shhhhh...I know!] in an artificial environment.
8. It's super important for your team to be able to articulate your senior pastor's vision for the weekend worship gatherings. There are so many decisions that must flow from this vision. If you're playing modern worship songs [think Chris Tomlin, Hillsongs, Passion, etc.], I believe it's nearly impossible to consistently lead worship encounters with the LORD without energy in the music – especially in the "up" songs. [energy and volume are related, but are not the same] Once you decide to do a certain kind of song, there are requirements for it to actually "work" and certain instruments and a certain sound mix are needed.
9. It might be a good idea to clear the stage [at least in your mind's eye] and make sure they you're using your space most effectively. Did you just keep adding instruments without a comprehensive plan? Can everyone see each other? Do you look cramped? Are you using stands with a tripod base in a small area? Ever lead from behind a wooden choir "wall" while the piano soundboard [that also separates you from the congregation] blares into your face? Well, sometimes you have to challenge tradition in order to move forward. I know, I know, you feel the feathers ruffling already, and that's okay. You're in a community, so it's way-important to take your people along with you, but don't let their comfort stand in the way of the building on God's Kingdom [He doesn't in *your* life, does He?] Do what it takes to use the space so that your band feels comfortable playing and so that the congregation doesn't mistake you for sardines.
10. It's important to have a clear, well-organized process that minimizes wait time [read: keeps momentum alive], yet allows for accountability, common guidelines, and verbalized expectations. It's fine to have a 6 month process before a new musician can serve, but it's not okay for the process to take 3 months before it begins. Make it easy to serve. Sure you have requirements, but remove any unnecessary roadblocks.

We hope you're encouraged by the Worship Fertilizer, a free resource from Ad Lib Music, *"in simple love and pure devotion to Jesus, we are eradicating isolation and burnout so that leaders bear much fruit!"*