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Internship – NewPointe Community Church

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Dr. Quinn
My internship experience has truly been an experience that I will never forget. As an intern at Newpointe Community Church this summer, I worked, learned and grew in ways I would have never expected to. It has altered my perspective of the professional work-world, and as a result, stirred a passion in my heart to pursue working as a worship leader with a focus on creative communication through creative arts as my goal for my professional career.

NewPointe Community Church in Dover, Ohio was founded in 2006 after existing as a Free Methodist church originally located in Sugarcreek, Ohio for many years (which was known as Sugarcreek Free Methodist Church). Due to tremendous growth, it outgrew the facility, making a larger, more relevant facility a priority to provide the space needed to continue its appeal to and reach spiritually lost people in the surrounding community.

Since 2006, NewPointe’s membership exploded to over 3,500 people a week attending two large services on Sunday mornings. This growth created the need to develop two additional campuses within the region, including one in Millersburg, and one in Canton, Ohio. Plans are to continue to sprout branch campuses all over Northeast Ohio in order to meet the demand for all these people seeking an in-depth relationship with Jesus Christ. The long-term goal over the next 10 years is to have a total of 9 campuses throughout the region.

With this explosive and massive expansion, the constant hiring of new staff is a giant part of what NewPointe must focus on to reach all these people. With only a few full-time staff originally, NewPointe’s staff could only spread themselves so far. Currently, with over 30 full-time staff, Newpointe is able to reach a much broader audience. As time goes on, and as additional campuses are added, more and more staff will be hired to meet the needs of this ever-growing body of believers. Not only will new faces continue to be the norm, but also in
order to support and follow the vision of NewPointe, the work environment will obviously need to continue to change. The “way church is done” will constantly be tweaked and refined based on the demographics, attendance numbers, cultural shifts, and other variables.

What exactly is this vision, you ask? Why is all of this effort and planning necessary? NewPointe exists simply to lead people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. With this mission set in place, NewPointe spends significant time and money to put their vision into action by creating relevant environments that are designed to encourage and equip people to pursue these three clear and concise things: intimacy with God, involvement in community and influence in the world.

Reading through these goals, almost everyone can now see that this church is not the average, boring, typical “plain-Jane” kind of institution. This is a place of relevancy that places an emphasis on inviting people to come as they are: broken, lost, and in need of love that lasts; promoting a love that only a perfect, sovereign, gracious God could ever offer. This love is contagious. Based on the results so far, it is easy to conclude that NewPointe is a place where people want to be involved. This mission clearly makes the need of hiring a well-equipped flexible and professional staff crucial.

The department I am working in at NewPointe is called the Service Programming/Creative Arts Department. The objective of this department is to plan every detail for upcoming services, including music, all creative elements, and everything else that would occur during the services on any given weekend. In short, this department is responsible for actually implementing each week’s new and creative church service. The Service
Programming Department is broken up in two smaller groups: one known as the Technical team and the other is the Worship team.

My actual job title at NewPointe was “Worship Intern,” so my attention was fully aimed at all aspects of meeting the Sunday morning “front stage” communication objectives. I worked under Danny Bunnelle, the Music Director, and enjoyed every opportunity I had to work alongside him. I have heard plenty of horror stories involving interns fearing their boss, but this was not the case for me. When I had a question, (believe me, there were plenty of questions during my nine weeks at NewPointe), I never felt uncomfortable or threatened when I needed to ask a question or needed useful input. Danny gave me plenty of things to work on throughout the week, and he showed me what it takes to manage a music ministry effectively. Looking back, we not only worked well together during my weeks interning, but we also became good friends along the way.

A description of NewPointe’s main expectations of me would be to work with Danny and the Weekend Design Team, to prepare for each week. For example, part of my role is to chart music. This is a very labor-intensive job that has little to do with my main focus of being an effective communicator, but it is a requirement. My primary responsibility is participating in and helping to lead the Sunday worship services at either the main campus where over 1,500 people attend each service, or at one of the other campuses where 200-450 people attend. Other responsibilities include being a part of Brainstorming and Creative Team meetings, rehearsing with the bands on Wednesday evenings, providing hands-on staging and production needs, researching songs and videos, attending the weekly Service Programming meetings, learning how to use administrative software like ProTools (A program used during each song to
create a click track and background, “filler” music), and assisting in set-up or tear-down of
sound equipment and instruments for rehearsals, worship services or special events.

My job has a clear, specific goal in mind, and that is to lead people into the transforming
presence of God through relevant worship music. Sunday morning worship and Wednesday
evening rehearsals are when this goal is either met or not met. These two days are absolutely
vital for me if I want to effectively communicate the Gospel not only through music, but also
through the ways I lead through public speaking. If I do a poor job of leading band rehearsal on
Wednesdays, the band becomes lost, without a leader to guide them through each song. Also,
if I am not focused and organized for the actual service on each Sunday morning, my mission of
effectively leading the audience with my words and through the music into the presence of God
is obviously impossible to achieve.

How do I prevent myself from being a poor leader, unorganized and not focused? Of
course, the most important thing I do at NewPointe is lead the music on Sunday mornings and
rehearse on Wednesday evenings, but the real effort goes into the extensive planning in order
to be successful on stage. In short, Sundays and Wednesdays are what I spend the rest of the
week preparing for. My main responsibilities during the week include rehearsing the band,
thorough learning and practicing with regards to the songs for that week, charting and marking
music to make the teaching of each song as efficient as it can be, and participating during
planning meetings to ensure we are doing our job of communicating the Gospel as effective as
possible.

What makes this job interesting is that I do not always have the 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
work schedule. At NewPointe, I spend as much time as needed to prepare emotionally and
spiritually for the intense responsibility of leading a worship team on Wednesdays and three thousand people on Sunday mornings.

A big reason students complete internships is to see how much they can learn (then apply on the job), and what kind of progress they have made during the internship process. A giant outcome I have noticed during my internship is that I am growing as a leader. Newpointe is a very special place because it allows me to be myself by welcoming my creativity. Yes, I work full time during the week charting songs, participating in meetings, and playing worship music for a few thousand people on a given weekend, but my main responsibility and hopeful outcome is to, in all these circumstances, be an effective leader, using my creative thoughts to connect with, then lead whoever I am with or around.

With the huge responsibility of connecting and relating to staff during weekly meetings, then to thousands of people during Sunday services, I have no choice but to grow as a leader if I am to be successful. I am learning what it takes to manage a group by leading and rehearsing with an entire band, what it takes to get the church’s message across through worship, and how important it is to continue that leadership in my daily, personal life.

Another outcome I have noticed is that I am learning the value of teamwork and how an organization can only run smoothly if everyone is on board with the mission and vision of those in charge. Here is an example to paint a picture of a specific thought. Just recently, I was participating in a Creative Arts/Planning meeting, which is our weekly department meeting with the purpose of planning for future services from a technical/production standpoint. This meeting was an extremely interesting and at times, awkward experience simply because we were really behind on our planning schedule. The goal was to be planning at least a month
ahead, but the team was so far behind that we were scrambling just to get that week’s details and schedule nailed down. Since this was the case, attitudes started flaring and the meeting became a very uncomfortable place to be. Tempers began to rise because each person wanted to solve the problem his or her way, without consideration to what thoughts others may have.

Dave DeAngelo, who is in charge of this entire department at NewPointe, was also in charge of this meeting. He is the boss and he clearly communicates his expectations and what he feels needs to be done to make the Creative Team at NewPointe successful.

At this point, others in this meeting were not following his lead.

Because everyone in the room wanted to run the show, no progress was being made. The pressure was on to get things done, so an attitude change was necessary to ensure our success. Dave expressed his concern that our communication was lacking between the Creative Arts and Technical teams and that we needed to write down specific plans ahead of time to guarantee this miscommunication between teams would not happen again.

Slowly but surely, the issue was resolved and the department began working as a team. For a second though, I thought feathers were going to be flying. The lesson here is simple: communication and teamwork is key, not just during the services, but between planning staff as well. This was my first experience participating a meeting at Newpointe where teamwork was lacking, and the meeting’s facilitator had to respectfully and strategically shift the negative environment into a favorable and productive one. Once those in the meeting understood the goal and why it was necessary, they began to work together to achieve it. It was a great lesson that showed me how to handle these types of situations in any organization I may work with in the future.
Perhaps more than any other thing that I have learned and improved upon here at Newpointe is becoming a better communicator; not just on the stage, but just as importantly off the stage. When it comes right down to it, communication is king. Regardless of what anyone wants to achieve, there must be effective communication involved, and the best communication is *intentional communication*. A few months ago, I was really challenged to be an intentional communicator when a volunteer guitar player tried calling the church to reach me. The secretary took his call because I was not in the office at the time. The reason this gentleman called was because he was unclear on which versions of a specific song we were doing that weekend. The initial reaction in my head when I received the message was, “he should know which version we are doing because he has done it before and it is online for him to see.” Since I had this attitude, I didn’t return the phone call. I know; what a horrible thing to do, right?

A few days passed when he called again after I had left the office. The secretary emailed me pleading that I respond to this guy so that he would stop bothering her with phone calls! It finally hit me: not only was I being extremely selfish by ignoring this man’s need, but also, I was not being *intentional* about communicating with my team effectively. I thought to myself, “How can I lead a group of thousands when I am afraid to lead a small group of musicians?” This lesson is one I learned from very quickly. By simply returning this phone call, I cleared up his uncertainty as well as my heavy guilt of not responding. That may have been the defining moment in my internship when I decided to be open to improvement. What a great choice that ended up being!
Some may wonder how I possibly managed to land an internship with such an amazing organization, and even get paid doing it. I do not know how to answer this question other than to say I was extremely fortunate and blessed beyond belief to be a part of leading thousands to a relationship with Christ. It was a life-changing experience that has altered my life. Working with NewPointe has shown me a new perspective regarding my values and what I think I would like to do for the rest of my life. I treasure and appreciate the opportunity I had to serve at such an influential organization.