

HOW TO: USE TECHNOLOGY TO AID YOU AS A WORSHIP LEADER

For many worship leaders, technology is either a necessary evil or too much of a good thing. Kim Gentes, founder of www.WorshipMusic.com, has been working with technology both inside and outside of the worship leading field for many years. His insights here on using technology to aid the worship encounter are insightful and invaluable.

1. SOLVE PROBLEMS & MEET NEEDS WITH TECHNOLOGY.

The importance of any technology is found in its utility. This is especially true in our worship communities and events. What can it do to solve a problem or meet a need? If you have technology being used without this focus, you have given way to gadgetry. Don't look to technology, and then try to find an application – look at your local church's needs to see if there are technology tools that can help.

2. CREATE SPACE WITH TECHNOLOGY.

Use technology to open up more opportunities for people to engage their hearts in worship. Podcasting services, video-enabled lyric presentation, uplifting loops for certain songs, even expressions of worship via modern digital art can be ways that worshiping space is created through technology. Each of these types of tools can open more avenues for different kinds of people to engage their hearts with God.

3. HUMANIZE WITH TECHNOLOGY.

As with most technology, process and production will always move us toward "warehousing" (industrialization). This always leads us to produce things based on the most common denominator, which is inevitably more generic and less human. Hundreds of websites exist that are filled with projection backgrounds for lyrics – most of which contain images of vast oceans, scenic vistas and morphing fractal graphs. These certainly express a picture consistent with our "God of Wonders," but remove our humanity (and Christ's), our brokenness (and His), and our needs from the visuals with which we are working.

The driving change of technology has left so many people feeling isolated, inside and outside of our churches, we must look for ways of using technology that approves and supports our humanity. For example, instead of reading the next letter (or email) from your missionaries, try setting up a webcam interview direct from them, projected live on your church video screen for Sunday morning. No one (even your more technology-resistant members) will object to seeing loved ones speak live as the church community engages with them.

4. BE AUTHENTIC TO YOUR COMMUNITY WITH TECHNOLOGY.

As a leader, be careful to use technology that really is genuine, i.e. reflective of both your personality and of the ethos of your local ministry. This may mean deferring to the local congregation's personality above your own tastes. This happened to me recently. When I recently led worship with David Ruis, I was inspired by his seamless integration of loops and technology throughout his worship leading. Being a technologist by profession, learning and using soft-

ware is no different to me than doing an oil change is for a mechanic. I was already arranging loops for a selection of my songs fairly soon afterward, and began using them in worship. What I didn't account for was resistance from some members of my worship team, and some of the other leaders. They weren't ready for adding loops to the worship, even if I was. Once I realized this, I stepped back from using loops. As the community changes, and that use of technology becomes more authentic for us, using it will be more natural, and more helpful.

5. INVEST WISELY IN TECHNOLOGY.

Once you know you are going to use a technology, don't cut corners. When I say this, I don't just mean spending money on a technology. The most important money will be spent on knowledge and learning, not products. What good is a brand new sound system if you don't have a true expert in live sound, who can set it up properly, and who can put your sound crew through an extensive (multi-session) training to properly use it? One of the most common failures of companies/groups who use technology is that they fail to actually train people to use the new tool in a helpful way. As a general rule of thumb, good companies spend another 33% (at least) of the cost of a technology on training and consultation.

Buying new solutions with technology and not training people properly is like handing the keys to a formula one race car to your teenager – they may think they know how to use it, but it is more likely to cause problems than to solve them.



Kim Gentes is the founder of www.WorshipMusic.com, and the founder of the new online technology for worship team administration, www.WorshipTeam.com. He is one of the worship leaders at the Gilbert Vineyard in Arizona, and talks about family, learning, technology, life and more at his blog: www.thinkjump.blogspot.com.



VARIETAL RECORDS™

INTRODUCING: VARIETAL RECORDS

AN INTERVIEW WITH BILLY SOMERVILLE

IW: What is* Varietal *Records?

Billy: *Varietal Records* is a new label imprint we are launching in 2007. *Varietal Records* will be an organic part of the Vineyard Music family, but with a few new distinctives. The first *Varietal* project will be Jeremy Riddle's *Full Attention*, releasing in March 2007. The word *Varietal* describes wines made from a single-named grape variety, and in the spirit of this definition *Varietal* will primarily be a place to express the work of individual worship leaders, bands, and/or churches. We felt it was a necessary next step to properly serve Vineyard Music's mandate to steward the things that God is birthing in local Vineyard churches; both in new songs and in the people who write the songs.

IW: Why does Vineyard Music need another label?

Billy: Launching this new *Varietal* "imprint" will allow us to stay true to what Vineyard Music has always been, but also make room for new worship expressions as they happen. *Varietal* will allow releases on the Vineyard Music side of things to remain true to its song-driven focus. Yet *Varietal* will also provide an alternate avenue for those worship leaders with a unique and dynamic worship expression both in the songs they write and in their worship leadership. On the flip side, *Varietal* should also allow room for worship leaders like Jeremy Riddle to have a larger voice both inside and outside their wider Vineyard Music family.

IW: What are the future plans for* Varietal*?

Billy: Our desire is for *Varietal* to grow organically. We plan on taking our time and letting things naturally develop. The bottom line is that we are trying to best respond to, and reflect, the ever-changing nature of worship within the Vineyard Movement. We'll see what happens as time goes on. Our hope would be that with *Varietal* we can move further beyond a "one-size-fits-all" approach to our typical Vineyard Music releases.

IW: Who will distribute* Varietal *product?

Billy: *Varietal* will be distributed in the US by the same channels that already serve Vineyard Music, namely our VM sales company for direct-to-church sales, and Word Distribution for the CBA and general market.