Manners 101 For Worship Teams (Or 5 Ways Your Attitude Changes Everyone's Sunday Morning)

Many of us have been part of a worship community where worship leaders, musicians, sound techs, and visual techs have interacted for years. Every worship community has a "relational climate," a tone of interacting that (eventually) dramatically influences both the worship experience of the church and the Body Life of the worship community. From my experience, especially during rehearsals, we could all use a Manners 101 course. When Susie has stress in her eyes, and JimBob is wrestling with some hidden anger, it changes the music.



Having watched some great teams in relational motion for years (and enjoying the dynamics of our own worship community) here are 5 ways we can show some manners – and lift our church's worship experience.

1. Be Polite In The Middle Of The Task – Literally, Watch Your Mouth.

Speaking with "please" and "thank you" and not assuming on relationship is important. How many sound techs, there to serve, get nothing more than requests or demands from the band? A simple smile, a "Thanks for turning that up, my friend," or "Could you please give me more of my voice in my monitor? Thanks."

Honoring one another, while still handling our division of labor is important. As a worship leader, there are times I need something to be done that someone may not agree with me about. I must take leadership in those moments, but do so in a spirit of friendship. If you're asking for something of your drummer, respect who they are as you describe what you're after.

We should be the most polite to those closest to us that we see all the time. On Sunday, it affects people and their contribution. Keep the environment dignifying, valuing, and more. If you're blunt, soften your edge. If you're timid, take chances on encouraging another. If you're an encourager – roll with it.

2. Laugh Through The Rehearsal – Without Hijacking It.

One of my favorite things about rehearsals (even the potentially stressful, pre-service rehearsals), is when we laugh as we go. If I jump in on vocals, and take away the part the other vocalist was singing, we look at each other, laugh, and then defer. One says, "No, you take that harmony, Mr. SnatchMyPartLikeAThief." We laugh.

It's hard enough coming in on a Sunday am early to rehearse, especially on peoples' precious weekends off. *Honor* that. Make it as light and fun as possible, while still staying on task. People *choose* to be there for a reason.

Some of my more naturally playful musicians over the years can humor a bit far, and distract people from the task on which I'm trying to keep us focused. In that case, I give them a stern look, then we laugh again. Or, I just call us to attention. Over time the "less socially aware" become aware the task matters to me because they sense I'm leading both with confidence – and grace for the play.

Note: I've often worked with a fair amount of sarcastic band mates, and can get caught up in that slice of humor myself. But sarcastic humor, in my experience, actually lowers our sense of connection, and raises a hyper-awareness of our personal idiosyncrasies (that's what sarcasm often plays on). I usually don't have to ask them to tone down their cutting humor, if I myself model a different approach.

3. Encourage Each Other – Till You're Just Shy Of Sick Of It.

Voicing encouragements to one another, about the little things we do, creates a worship team culture people like being a part of. For those who aren't by nature encouragers, I encourage you to think about what you can appreciate in each person with whom you work on a Sunday morning. Work at it. It's worth it.

Make eye contact. Be sincere. Pray for one another on the side. Email or text words of encouragement to the others on your team. We have a Voxer group and a private Facebook group for our leaders and team members that makes this even easier. No one can ever be "too" encouraged (unless you're encouraging the wrong thing!).

After a set, encourage others in what worked that morning. Thank them. You'll get more of the same in the future, and you'll want to give more of the same when others encourage you.

Make it real. For some, this takes more effort than others. But try – and work to sustain the encouragement.

4. Fight For Love On Sunday – And All Week Long.

This is simple. Push gossip, competitive words, grumbling, complaining, and side conversations away from you. It's not an option for us to entertain divisive actions. We're called to be Jesus to each other, full stop.

When I hear gossip or whining, I say, "Pray more than you say," or, if they say they have prayed, "Then go to them with love and kindness, and share your concern. Or ask Jesus to create the best moment for you to talk."

Long emails about our feelings do not work, in my experience, unless there is clear permission between two people to share that way (a fellow writer friend and I have that unspoken permission, as writing is one of our ways of solid communicating).

Do small acts of kindness for each other, and lead a generous, giving culture where the people are difficult to offend. That starts with you. This starts with being difficult to offend yourself. Ask Jesus for help if you've gone through rejection in your life and you're more sensitive to criticism or redirection than you might be otherwise. If you are easy to offend, tell others that, and get them to pray for you. We all have our stuff Jesus is using each other to heal. We don't want to keep carrying it with us through life.

5. Be One Of The Best Parts Of Your Team's Worship Experience – Consistently.

If my drummer decides to lead the way in encouraging others, it makes me as a worship leader want to do the same – and have them play with me more often. Become the best part of everyone's worship rehearsal, worship set, and church life.

Just being aware that the way you speak to others, and handle them carefully even when you're stressed, matters in a big way when it comes to the worship experience of the whole church. Stay in tune with your own heart, be a part of raising the bar.

These are just a few "manners" that I've seen deeply impact a worship culture over time, and strengthen the best of what we are together – a vibrant worship community creating a space for God's people to meet with Him, and He with us.

::

Question: How does your team encourage one another?

Resource: The Team To Tribe: The Heart Values Of A Worship Team – Video and PDF covers much of this ground, and works through the fruits of the Spirit from Galatians 5 with your team.

Bio: Dan Wilt, M.Min. is the creator of the Essentials In Worship Video Training Course for worship leaders and teams, and is the Founder of WorshipTraining.com, a media-training network of over 31K worship leaders and musicians. He serves as a worship leader in Franklin, TN, and has taught in Worship & Arts programs (for schools like St. Stephen's University and Indiana Wesleyan University). Dan is a songwriter, hymn writer, and author, and has served as a conference speaker in the UK, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, North America, Central, and South America. Dan works with his church family at Vineyard USA and Vineyard Worship in various support roles, and he, his wife Anita, and 3 young adult children live in Thompson's Station, TN. His ancient-future worship leadership blog offers weekly tools and team encouragements at DanWilt.com.