8 Ways A Worship Leader Can Be A Good Host At Rehearsal

By Dan Wilt

A worship rehearsal is about to happen. Band members begin to roll in, to get set up for downbeat time. As they come in the door, the worship leader is there, already set up and prepared, ready to help them bring in gear. Sounds crazy? Maybe.



Simple phrases like "Thanks for coming," "How was the zoo you call an office today?" and "Here are your (correct) charts… oh, and a bottle of water" are heard. The stage is generally cleaned up, and lights and sound are live. After a brief prayer, the rehearsal starts, and moves quickly with laughter and friendship. That's the first scenario. Maybe that sounds like overkill to you. Or maybe you relate more to the second (like I often do).

Here's another scenario. The same worship rehearsal is about to begin however, the worship leader hustles in right before downbeat time, harried and sweating, knowing they are late and semi-ready. A quick "Hey" and an apology is offered (jobs and dinner, you know). Charts are handed to people (with a few wrong chords on each), a quick "hi" is shared around, and the worship leader forgets to pray (no one says anything, as they are expecting the worship leader to lead). Rehearsal is now starting 20 minutes after downbeat time. They dive in. Working on songs is bumpy, some songs drag on way too long, some fun is had, and the rehearsal ends 20 minutes late. People finish feeling 80% prepared for Sunday, or that morning.

What is the difference between these two scenarios?

After 25 years of leading worship, I believe the difference is found in one simple word: "Hospitality." The effective Worship Leader understands that he or she is a *host*. And being a good host is being *others-absorbed* at a rehearsal – it is the opposite of being *self-absorbed*.

Scenario 1: The Worship Leader As Good Host

In this scenario, the worship leader is prepared, thinking ahead, and intentional about their task. They recognize the volunteer time offered by every musician and tech to put a rehearsal in their midweek calendar (or early Sunday am routine), and they honor that. There is a reason people are giving their time, and it's *not* just to express their skill or gift.

Attendances to a few simple details, like correct chord charts, a bottle of water, or a personal moment are viewed as vital rather than optional.

Band members feel like:

- Their time is valued by you
- They want to be prepared seeing how prepared you are
- It's good to be a part of something that isn't half-baked
- There is some professionalism in what is an informal system
- The rehearsal matters, and they're happy to have carved out the time when it's over

You feel like:

- You've connected with individual band mates
- You are ready to focus on song arrangements you previously considered in pre-prep
- You are not scattered; you remember to pray and make eye contact
- You're on target with your start time, honoring your time and everyone else's
- You can execute the songs on your own instrument well, as you've pre-practiced

[I will note here that professional musicians, or highly experienced ones, will like being a part of your worship community even if the musical ability of the team is limited.]

Scenario 2: The Worship Leader As (Mediocre Or) Bad Host

In this scenario, you're somewhat scattered. I've known this feeling many, many times. Maybe we're insecure in our abilities, and over-focusing on ourselves. Maybe we're just poor at managing time.

Internally, I believe we sense our frustration with ourselves, our handling of others, and our lack of planning – but in the hurry of life we don't attend to it. We internalize it and hope it all goes well.

I should note that even if I am late, or somewhat unprepared, I can remedy some of the silent fallout by being gracious, honest with my friends, and apologizing even if they don't think I need to.

But that's not a modus operandi for *every* time we lead a rehearsal or a set.

Band members feel like:

- Their time is not fully valued by you
- Your lack of preparation gives them a silent pass on their own
- The worship ministry culture is a bit half-hearted
- Informality equates to semi-sloppy, and the more organized people get cranky over time
- The rehearsal isn't so important, and they're less happy they carved out time

You feel like:

- You haven't connected with the band
- You don't really have the arrangements ready (flying by the seat of your pants)
- You're scattered (we often forget to pray and thank others in this mode)
- You're off target with your time, and the rehearsal feels rushed
- You may fumble with the songs yourself as you haven't pre-practiced

[I will note here that professional musicians, or highly experienced ones, will find it harder to be a part of your worship community as they are not accustomed to the homespun, in-house, "everybody-knows-it's-like-this" dynamic. They didn't become good at what they do not being prepared, and they're just not drawn to the fray that comes with lack of planning.]

Sooner or later a worship leader realizes that being a good host, intentionally thinking about the art of hospitality and the preparedness that comes with it, is vital to a thriving worship ministry culture.

The 8 Ways A Worship Leader Can Be A Good Host

Here's a check list to help you be the kind of Worship Leader Host your bandmates need:

1. **Arrive** at least 30 minutes prior to rehearsal to get set up (I work toward 45 minutes).
2. **Pre-practice** your songs on your instrument, and decide on basic arrangements (Verse, Chorus, Verse, Chorus, (Bridge), Double Chorus is a good default for many worship tunes).
3. **Do your best** to create/print proper, clean chord charts (I use WorshipTeam for this).
4. **Put out water** and occasionally bring snacks.
5. **Greet musicians/techs** as they arrive, say thanks for coming (sometimes), and help carry gear in.
6. **Be ready to roll** at downbeat time – it's modeling and changes the culture over time.
7. **Pray for the group**, their loved ones, and your church.
8. **Relax**, show grace, ask forgiveness – even if things aren't perfect.

When we practice becoming good hosts to our worship bands, techs, and community, we are more prepared to be good hosts (led by Jesus, the Great Host) to our congregation as worship leaders.

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