



STAFF MEETINGS UNSTUCK

Breaking 7 Barriers *for* Mid-Size Churches

THE UNSTUCK GROUP[®]

— WE HELP CHURCHES GET UNSTUCK. —

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

Staff meetings can be full of incredibly valuable moments for a team. Yet, the unpredictability of ministry along with the constant preparation for weekend services can quickly overwhelm an agenda. With all of these urgent items, how can your team look beyond the immediate to focus on the important? It takes intentionality and well-planned conversations. That's the purpose of Staff Meetings Unstuck: to help you start an actionable conversation about a core principle that impacts the health and growth of your entire church.

Start your staff meeting by reading the article together. Then spend a few minutes discussing the questions provided. You'll likely want to print just the article and discussion questions for your team. Finally, lead your team through the whiteboard framework to visualize your thoughts and turn ideas into action!



CORE QUESTION

How might our church be held back from reaching more people?



READ

For the sake of this discussion, we'll assume that mid-size churches are between 200 and 800 in attendance. By the way, 60% of churches in America are under 100 in attendance, so these churches are actually relatively very large. That said, their challenges still look different than churches reaching thousands. I'm not suggesting that all churches between 200 and 800 in attendance are stuck. I just acknowledged these churches are actually reaching far more people than the vast majority of churches in the country. "Stuck" means different things for different churches. Some are not seeing new people, particularly young adults. Some are not seeing people accept Christ and begin their faith journey. Some are not seeing disciples become disciple-makers. Some are not experiencing growth as expected. Though every church is unique, these are some common barriers we see in mid-size churches:

1. THEY ARE GOVERNED BY LARGE BOARDS AND SEVERAL COMMITTEES

For example, we worked with a mid-size church that had over 50 people on its board and more than a dozen different committees. Their structure for decision-making was so complex they had a committee for finding people to serve on committees. We encourage churches to move to only one board with seven to nine people. The goal is to get everyone else serving on a ministry team rather than participating in committee meetings.

Unstuck Step: Establish a single board of 7 - 9 individuals.

2. THEY DON'T LEVERAGE VOLUNTEERS

The first goal is to get staff leading ministry teams rather than reporting to committees (see above). Once that shift happens, the next goal is to get the staff building their volunteer teams to do the ministry. It's not unusual, though, for staff to hold on to all the ministry in mid-size churches. Think children's ministry. Think pastoral care. However, staff need to begin equipping God's people to do the work of God.

Unstuck Step: Communicate a pathway for people to discover their gifts and serve.

3. THEY ARE UNWILLING TO ADDRESS FACILITY CONSTRAINTS

Sometimes these constraints happen because of limited seating for adults. More oftentimes, though, the constraints aren't as visible because they impact guests more than those already connected to the church. Hidden constraints may include a lack of parking, welcoming and obvious entrances, children's ministry space, adequate lobby space, clear directional signage and so on. Consider this key question, "how is the guest experience impacted by our facility?"

Unstuck Step: Expand your facility or add a service.

4. THEY DON'T PRIORITIZE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Ironically, churches tend to hire a youth pastor before a children's ministry pastor. Partly because they're really only focused on babysitting kids. The better space and stronger leaders are focused on adults and students. The challenge is, unless churches give their best to children's ministry, they'll

never reach their parents. That's one of the reasons why some churches have a chasm of missing 25 to 35-year-old adults. By the way, if you offer adult classes on Sunday morning, your best leaders will always choose to attend worship and class on Sundays, and the children's ministry will get the leftovers.

Unstuck Step: Establish the right children's ministry leaders and resource them well.

5. THEY HAVEN'T IDENTIFIED THEIR PRIMARY PURPOSE AND DISTINCTIVES

Here's the challenge: Once you start reaching hundreds of people, it's very easy to continue adding programming. Before you know it, things become very complex with multiple ministries competing for volunteers, leaders, money, space, promotions, etc. Mid-size churches need to define their mission, vision and strategy. By doing this, they'll be in a better position to begin focusing resources on the areas of ministry that define who they are as a church. It will create a filter for leaders to begin saying "no" more often. That focus will increase ministry effectiveness and leverage resources for greater impact.

Unstuck Step: Clearly define mission, vision, and strategy.

6. THE QUALITY OF THEIR WEEKEND ENVIRONMENTS DOESN'T REFLECT THE SIZE OF THE CHURCH

For good or bad, as the size of the environment grows, so do quality expectations. Of course, the primary place this will be felt is the worship service environment for adults, but the same principle applies in every environment including children's ministry, students, guest experiences, classes and so on. With worship, though, there needs to be intentional planning, preparation and execution. That includes not only the teaching but everything else that happens during the service.

Unstuck Step: Design and implement an intentional creative planning process.

7. THEY DON'T HIRE LEADERS

I alluded to this earlier, but churches don't often staff proactively. At this stage, it becomes more and more important that churches hire leaders rather than doers. You'll need to focus on staff who can grow ministries and reach

more people. That means support roles (assistants, custodians, bookkeepers, associate pastors, etc.) may have to wait. These become great opportunities for volunteer engagement or outsourcing. The priority needs to be finding staff leaders who can build volunteer teams, healthy ministries and a strategy to reach new people.

Unstuck Step: Define the staff leadership roles needed and a plan to onboard them.

This list is not meant to pick your church apart but give clarity around which problems to address. Take some time with your team to discuss them along with anything else that may be holding you back. Then take the steps required to move beyond these barriers and more effectively lead your community toward Jesus.



DISCUSS

1. Tony started by saying that “stuck” can mean different things for different churches. What does the term “stuck church” mean to you?
2. Which of the barriers listed have you experienced first-hand? Think about your experiences here and with other churches.
3. Of the seven barriers listed, are there any you disagree with?
4. This list of seven is certainly not exhaustive. Where else have you seen churches get stuck? What would you add to this list?
5. Where have you seen these barriers at work in our church? Use the Whiteboard Framework to explore this question deeply.



VISUALIZE

- 1. DRAW THE FRAMEWORK:** Start by drawing the whiteboard framework below. If possible, do so before your meeting. Then work through the following items as a team.
- 2. BARRIERS & EVIDENCE:** Discuss each of the Barriers using the questions below. With each one, ask, “Where have you seen this barrier at work in our church?” Write the answers for each in the Evidence column.
 - ▲ Large Boards: Is our staff stalled by complex boards/committees?
 - ▲ Lack of Volunteers: Does our staff feel the weight of “doing ministry?”
 - ▲ Facility Constraints: Does our environment inhibit a great guest experience?
 - ▲ Children’s Ministry: Are other ministries given priority over children?
 - ▲ Lack of Purpose: Do we filter everything through our mission, vision, and strategy?
 - ▲ Weekend Environments: Do our services meet or exceed expectations?
 - ▲ Lack of Staff Leaders: Are we hiring team-builders or task-managers?
- 3. VOTE:** With your Barriers discussed, ask each person to vote on which ones are most holding back the health and growth of your church. Give each person two votes. Based on the votes, identify the Top 3 Barriers for your church.
- 4. UNSTUCK STEP:** With your Top 3 Barriers identified, discuss and decide the steps you must take to address them. Start with the Unstuck Steps recommended throughout the article and build from there. Based on your situation, you will likely identify more and/or different steps needed for your specific church to make progress.
- 5. WHO?:** For each step, it is important to assign an owner. Also establish a deadline by when the steps should be taken.

6. TAKE ACTION: It is time to get serious about furthering the health of your church! Now that you've identified the areas in which you are stuck, take the steps required to lead more people to Jesus.

- ▲ Dedicate regular time in your meetings to discuss updates and challenges associated with the steps you've just established.
- ▲ Provide owners with the time, resources, and communication they need to move forward.



WHITEBOARD FRAMEWORK

MID-SIZE CHURCH BARRIERS				
BARRIERS	EVIDENCE	VOTES	UNSTUCK STEP	WHO?
① LARGE BOARDS				
② LACK OF VOLUNTEERS				
③ FACILITY CONSTRAINTS				
④ CHILDREN'S MINISTRY				
⑤ LACK OF PURPOSE				
⑥ WEEKEND ENVIRONMENT				
⑦ LACK OF LEADERS				



ABOUT THE UNSTUCK GROUP®

Tony Morgan is founder and lead strategist of The Unstuck Group, a company that helps churches get unstuck through consulting and coaching experiences designed to focus vision, strategy, and action. He's written several books, including *The Unstuck Church: Equipping Churches to Experience Sustained Health*, published by Thomas Nelson, as well as articles that have been featured with the Willow Creek Association, Catalyst, and Pastors.com. He writes about leadership and strategy regularly at tonymorganlive.com. Prior to starting The Unstuck Group, Tony was a pastor and served on the senior leadership teams at West Ridge Church in Georgia, NewSpring Church in South Carolina, and Granger Community Church in Indiana. Before full-time ministry, he served for approximately ten years in various local government roles. Tony lives near Atlanta, though his heart is still in Cleveland, Ohio, where his family has its roots. He's been married to Emily for more than twenty-five years, and they have four kids: Kayla, Jacob, Abby, and Brooke. To learn more about Tony and The Unstuck Group, visit theunstuckgroup.com.