

Monday Morning Email
November 17, 2008
Professional Tools
Doug Lawrence



Quote (read this, memorize it, and use it)

“It’s not about pop culture, and it’s not about fooling people, and it’s not about convincing people that they want something they don’t. We figure out what we [God —Ed.] want[s]. And I think we’re pretty good at having the right discipline to think through whether a lot of other people are going to want it, too. That’s what we get paid to do.” —Steve Jobs

Scripture

“Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on your heights.
How the mighty have fallen!” —2 Samuel 1:19

Prayer

Lord, in our effort to seek you, we, instead, often turn toward each other. We make idols of the successes we see around us where we ought to seek Your counsel on everything. What’s with us? Have we forgotten that you are the fount of knowledge, wisdom, and grace? Let us lead lives and encourage others by demonstrating our dependence on You instead of our own cleverness. Oh, and forgive us when we get these things a little mixed up. Amen

Leadership

Heads up...

My friend and colleague, Vern Sanders is writing a book about the worship wars and you’ll hear a lot more about it in coming iterations of the MME. The topic is fascinating and discouraging by turns. How many endless hours have we all spent pondering the subject instead of passionately pursuing meaningful experiences of worship for our congregations? How many millions (yes, millions) of dollars have been spent on conferences trying to get everyone up to speed on the subject? How many cycles of endless surveys, focus groups, and bitter splits in congregations have defined this most recent flurry of debates on the issue?

At the end of the day (or in this case, two or three decades of conversation) have we really made any progress? Hardly, is my respectful but dismissive answer. I, like you, am mostly tired—no, exhausted—at the running in place that has by-in-large defined this wasted motion. I’ve cajoled, debated, had endless lunches, and golf outings, to the point of dismay, over the fruitless discussion of an issue that was often mindless and pedantic to a fault. Will Vern’s book end the debate? No, but I guarantee there will be, at the very least, a ripple of sadness that spreads across the worship landscape as we see ourselves as part of the problem rather than part of the answer. I leave it to Vern’s considerable writing skill to speak for itself when the time comes for his book’s release.

What Mac is teaching PC and maybe the church...

I just finished three days of intensive learning about the mobile PC computer industry. My func-

tion at the event in Northern California was “host/facilitator.” The role was given to me because I often coach high-level executives in the tech world on their presentation skills. I love working with people who know a lot more stuff than I do, but who also desperately need help communicating what they know! For me, it’s like being a kid in a candy shop, getting to hear and see all of the wahoo wonders of modern (or post-modern) gadgetry—it’s very cool. I’m an old guy, and old guys like to think of themselves as cool.

Having signed a NDA (non-disclosure agreement) I can’t give you much information but, I’ll tell you what I can. First, we all need to be ready for some huge shifts in the way the computer industry markets their wares to us. The PC world, for example, is feeling mildly threatened by the Apple© explosion of new toys that have created almost all the buzz in the mobile computing industry. So, look for PC manufacturers to try harder to sell the sizzle of the snazzy little net-books that are sneaking into dorm rooms and soccer-mom kitchens (recipes on a 5-inch screen are hard to read, but they sure make an impression sitting on the breakfast bar). Since Apple© started bringing their prices down in some sectors of the market, look for the little PC based net-books to start selling for outrageously low price points. Well, much to tell you, no time to do it...

What does this have to do with church music leadership? It seems to me, plenty! Competition seems to be at the heart of innovation in the techie world and so, too, in the church world.

It seems that every church of any size in America (oh, yes, and even in Europe, Asia, and Africa) has, at the very least, spent considerable time on thinking about marketing practices. This is not news to you I’m sure, but we need to pay attention to how this trend is playing out in the churches we know and love. I’ve created this little table to give you some fodder for thought.

Well, o.k., maybe I exaggerated a little! Still, if you just look around, you will see variations on the above themes. Are we getting a little cookie cutterish? Unfortunately, the evidence seems to point to an affirmative answer. We’re good mimics at the very least, and it’s starting to show. Here’s what the Silicon Valley folks taught me over the last few days.

Really? That’s all there is to it? Well, not quite. The marketing people at major PC firms are trying to help their engineers deliberately concentrate on the message of the inherent product attractiveness rather than the “gee wiz” factor that only people with 170 IQ can understand. So, again, what does this have to do with church leadership? See if the next table helps.

As always, I ask you to forgive me for any pretense that I might display for easy answers. I am a church observer/consumer, too. I want to encourage, not hinder the Kingdom of God. I, like you, want God’s best for our churches. Let’s keep talking, searching, and most of all, praying for the renewal we all seek without falling victim to Guruism. God loves our desire to follow Him, but arbors our tendency to blindly follow each other. “There, I said it again,” to almost quote one of the most successful marketers of our time—Britney (what’s-her-name).

Doug Lawrence

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Doug has been a consultant to church leaders for 35 years and is anxious to be helpful to you in leadership, musical, and staffing considerations. Please click on his name above and email him. He’s available to consult on the phone as well.