



July 21, 2008

Professional Tools

Doug Lawrence

Quote

"Never move so far from home that you lose your ability to make good friends." —Connell James

Scripture

"But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. —2 Peter 3:13-14

Prayer

Lord, here we are in a new place. Forge the way for truth to prevail and harmony to reign. Show us You in all that we do so that we will never feel lonely or unattached. Yet again, our lives are in Your hands! Amen

Leadership

Well, we've moved to Kansas!
Lawrence, Kansas to be precise—in Douglas County!! We had to do it—after all, the town was named for me—NOT! The real truth is that after my eldest daughter died from ovarian cancer 3 years ago, our son-in-law moved to Lawrence to be nearer his parents and to partner with them in raising our two beautiful grandchildren (6 and 10). We decided to join the family and be a more vital part of their lives as well. It was the right move at the right time!

Along with my writing, consulting, and coaching of business and church professionals in leadership and presentation matters, I will continue my new role as Artistic Director of [ChoirFest, International](#) (click to discover all the wonderful things happening there!!).

Here are some things I did to prepare for “The Big Move.”

First—Prepare, prepare, prepare.

I spent months planning every detail of our move from California where I have lived all my life. I mapped the details of our new home with the care a designer might give to a major remodeling project. I worked at my computer until 3 AM some nights trying to plan where every piece of furniture would go and even plotted where each electrical socket, cable connection, and phone jack was located. We bought new furniture online to fill the gaps in our new place.

Second—I looked for goods and services that we would need when we made the switch to a new city.

There were vets to find, doctors and hospitals to locate, BBQ restaurants and other fine dining establishments to identify to make sure our weight didn't drop even a pound (gotta keep your strength up), Target stores for life's essentials, gyms, service people (especially air conditioning specialists), churches (more later), and ways to connect with people.

Third—I carefully planned how to say goodbye.

Closure is a good thing, but you can't always have good closure with everyone. Where possible, though, gather as many people at one time in one place to say “adieu.” Email and endless long distance minutes make it less necessary to really say goodbye these days—that's a good thing. For people who have had major impact on our family, we reserved special time and energy. We told each of them the profound impression their lives had made on ours. Thankfulness is a great way to let go OR to keep alive important relationships. I ended up enjoying the “goodbye” parts!

Fourth—I tried to figure out what I would have to sell or hock to pay for the gas to drive two cars 1800 miles.

Moving is a great time to examine your spending priorities—you know—figure out what you absolutely need to go forward. It's like budget time at the church (always my favorite part of the job for over 40 years ☺).

Fifth—I threw a lot of stuff away (not quite enough, I'm afraid) in order to acquire new stuff in Kansas.

I was surprised how rarely I had ever used some of my stuff. There were clothes I hadn't worn since Don Moen had un-spiked hair. There were scores from old Ralph Carmichael musicals that even Ralph had forgotten he wrote! There were notes that never even mentioned how loud the drums were (I actually kept all of those). There were tools that I'm sure were very handy for removing or adding something important, but, for the life of me, I couldn't remember what. There were endless stacks of CDs that inspired me with awe at one time (Sara Groves—I kept all of hers—Dianna Krall too!) There were notes from my wife saying how wonderful and handsome I am (I had those all framed).

Well...throwing away and keeping stuff is a good to time for values clarification. Clean your office—you'll see what I mean.

Sixth—I started thinking in the new time zone.

Mid-America is not troubled by not being first with the news! They are not troubled by always trying to keep up with the right coast just because they're on the left coast. Nope, they just live in the middle with a content resignation. I like that. I set my clock to their time two months before I made the move just to start the adjustment.

Seventh—I made peace with change.

Looking for your "[cheese](#)" is part of any move. Everything you knew for sure now has some doubts and confusion mixed in with it. I needed to define the good parts of why we were moving. I searched for hidden meaning in everything as a way of undoing the stress of such a draconic decision. Moving, as you probably know, is one of life's major stressors and can lead to all kinds of anxiety.

One of the things I came up with was the joy of exploring new places and relationships (I'm having lunch with Kevin Gibson of [First Baptist Church, North Kansas City, Missouri](#) today for starters). It's fun to start new acquaintances and enjoy new landmarks. I loved the Lawrence Band Concert in South Park last Thursday night for example. It felt great to be part of a town that still likes Sousa marches and fireworks with their 1812 Overture (even with saxophones!).





Life is sweet right now in the Midwest. I'll check back in with you in the winter.

What does all this have to do with worship leadership?

1. Prepare, prepare, prepare.

There's nothing like preparation to undo the pitfalls of facing new challenges. It calms the soul and allows for considering all the possibilities available.

2. Always keep your eyes open for new resources.

There's nothing wrong with old resources, but if you're not always looking for new ones you'll go stale and be less prepared for a constantly changing world. This is probably one of the biggest challenges for every church musician.

3. Find ways to say goodbye to things in order to say hello to new things.

It's O.K. to part company with ideas, dearly held, in order to embrace new ideas, which will define your future. Avoid doing this at your own risk, I remember a dear friend of mine (no names please) who swore an oath that his church would never do any of "those new praise songs," because his church had "better taste than that!" He was wrong and even admitted it to me finally.

4. Redefining what you have to have vs. what you think you must have is a good process for anyone, but it is most assuredly good for people who are spending church resources.

When I first started in church music the rule was simple—try to increase your budget a little each year in order to build your stockpile of ministry tools. About 20 years into my career, I learned that some years I just didn't need as much money. Nobody punished me for decreasing my wish list. As a matter of fact, I found myself being rewarded with additional funds because I was a good steward of the money I had!

5. Getting rid of things you don't need any longer is a wonderful way to examine the changes your program has slowly (or rapidly) undergone.

Keep stuff hanging around for years and years without using it and someone is going to accuse you of hoarding—bad thing! If you can't use it, give it to someone across town who can use it! Storing it makes you look like an "empire builder" and that's not a pretty thing.

6. Don't limit yourself to one time zone!

One of the things I find most distasteful in the modern church is the need to be, think, do, and act in only one way. Yuk! Look back and look forward all the time! There's is much to savor from other times and places—don't get locked in sameness—it'll kill you.

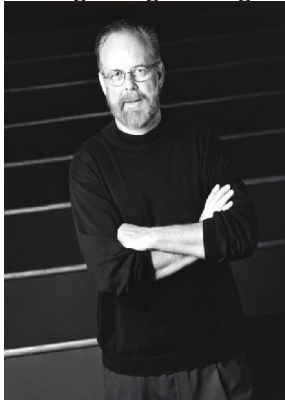
[BUT, at the same time, learn to be content with the wonder of your local church culture. You don't have to be the First Church of Big Ideas and Wild Extravagance! You're you—enjoy!]

7. Make peace with change.

It's not the worse thing in the world to change. However, it IS the worst thing to make changes just because you think you should always be changing. Here's a classic example...

I know of one church that capitalized on the success of the wonderful "Forty Days of Purpose" program, and then repeated it every year for three years. It nearly killed their attendance. In some churches that might have been a great idea, but in this particular one they desperately needed to find some other program to explore. Know where you are and with whom you're dealing and act accordingly.

Change is good—give it a try. All kinds of good comes from all kinds of hard!



[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.