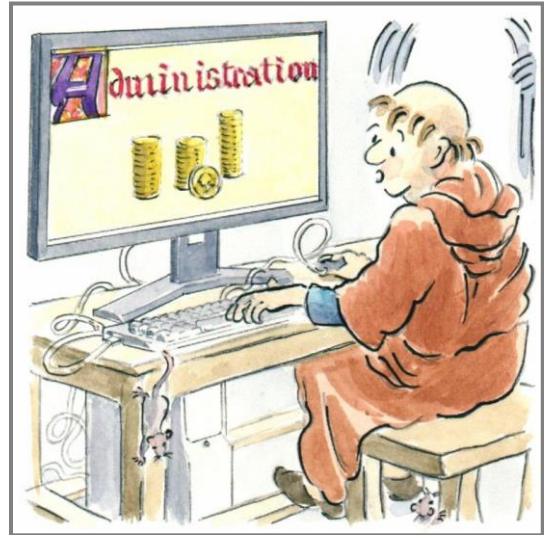


Church administration explained *part 2*

TN73 Training Notes series: Administration



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Here is the second part of a short introduction to church administration under five headings. It is written for those whose gifts lie elsewhere but who want to understand why some people, well this author at least, get so excited about this topic.

It should also prove useful to organisers, office secretaries, finance teams and a host of other behind-the-scene workers in churches who need reminding that what they do is so vital for the health of their church.

The five headings are:

1: The image 2: The scope 3: The gift 4: The motivation 5: The impact

Some ideas for group discussion and further thought have been added. Headings 1 to 3 were covered in part 1 in **TN72**. These notes continue with headings 4 and 5.

4: The motivation

Humans need motivation – that's the way we are made. Here we hit a problem with administration because it's a beautiful, unobtrusive, shunning-the-limelight kind of ministry. So where's the motivation to get on with the job?

I suggest there are two powerful but unusual motivators.

First there is the satisfaction of doing something really well for Jesus Christ. Quality in administration is crucially important. Good administrators try to deliver quality in the following ways.

- 1 We want to get the details 100% correct. Take a church notice-sheet: we want the dates and times to be spot on, to have spelt everyone's name correctly, to have the print straight on the page and the fold exactly where it ought to be. And that is because we don't want people to be diverted from the message of the notice-sheet to the mistakes they can see on it.
- 2 We want to be proved to be utterly reliable. If we say we'll phone back at 3.00 pm. we phone back at 3.00 pm. If we say we'll do the agendas we do them; we don't have to be reminded or chased. We try not to lose things, or forget messages.
- 3 We want to be creative in the way we do things. We like to think of better ways of achieving the right end, saving money, saving time and getting a better product as well. This means we ask annoying questions. 'Why don't we outsource that piece of work?' 'Why do we think we save money by buying second hand?' 'Why not organise the annual fun-day in a different way this year?'

Yes, of course, we are far from perfect. But we aim high.

Secondly, we want to enable other people to shine in their gift area if that is what will build the Kingdom. I call this 'the principle of release'. Can our work release gifted speakers, carers and leaders to do their God-ordained work better and to have time to pray and to think?

So if we sort out all our pastors' monthly expenses (and get them right!), that will release them to spend more time preparing their next teaching sessions, or to have longer with people where their gifts can be fully used.

If we organise the away-day really well, everyone can relax and drink in the Bible teaching or simply have fun with each other, while we worry about the transport, or the sound levels, or the liaison with the conference centre.

I sometimes suggest to a church that the result of having gifted administrators in the right roles will be better sermons (work it out!). They'll support that one!

The administrators have the deep satisfaction of knowing that they enabled that, even if no one else in the church has any idea about that, and even if there is a queue of people to thank the speaker afterwards but no one to thank the behind-the-scenes workers.

Yes, it's tough. But someone knows, someone understands and someone says 'Well done, good and faithful servant'.

5: The impact

Administration serves all other ministries, which makes it the servant of the servants, if you follow me. Under this fifth and final heading, I consider its potential impact. So what does good administration do for churches? Here are three ideas for starters.

It enables churches to comply with legislation

Over the past few years there has been a significant increase in the requirements that society places upon every organisation. You may bemoan this, you may see it as necessary in an increasingly complex world, but Christians need to show that they respect the law of the land.

One obvious example is the whole area of safeguarding. Churches have, on the whole, been good to see the importance of proper policies and practices here. But that adds a significant amount of work to even a small church – it is vital that you administer such schemes well both in terms of full compliance but also to avoid wasted effort.

Another example would include health and safety where the law is not so straightforward but where gifted administrators are needed to ensure churches do not make dangerous mistakes. A third is employment legislation now that churches are employing many more lay staff than in the past.

It makes churches credible

We live in an age of professionalism – where standards matter. No longer can any institution get away with an approach that is below par. Take issues such as multi-media presentations, social networking and the wider use of IT, and the quality of printed products. If those who have no church connections are to take us seriously we have to be credible.

There is of course a balance here: some things can be so slick that we squeeze all reality out of them. Some approaches so technological that the human element is lost. Christians need to be counter-cultural, just like Jesus was. But standards need to be high.

Under an earlier heading I suggested that administrators need to be people who get the details spot on, who are utterly reliable, and who are creative in their approach. These are three vital requirements if we are to be in a position to present the story of salvation to a world that has put its trust in professionalism. We have a different message from that of the world, but it needs a platform where at least people will be prepared to listen.

It releases the other gifts

I have already referred to ‘the principle of release’, where gifted administrators release Christian leaders to utilise their own gifts to the full, unencumbered as far as is possible by the demands of daily organisation. The story of salvation will only be told, the good news will only be proclaimed and the church will only grow when we release gifted leaders, evangelists, pioneers and teachers to employ their gifts.

How often we ‘ordain’ or ‘call’ a gospel worker and then saddle him or her with a ton of administration in this complex world of today! More than ever we need to appreciate this gift of administration, to seek out those who may have it, to train them and to mobilise them so that those who have the privilege of leading and speaking for Christ can be freed up to use their gifts to the full.

So what about your church? How about some Bible teaching on administration? How about investing in this God-given gift? We minimise its vital importance at our peril.

Questions and actions to ponder and discuss

- 1 Is your church helping its various types of administrator to be motivated for their work in the kind of ways described here? Whether they are paid or voluntary, do those who manage them understand these points sufficiently well to encourage and support those they are responsible for? If not, what could you do to improve the situation?
- 2 Test your church on each of the three headings under No. 5 above. For example, for the second of these, how credible are you as a church to those who do not yet belong because they can see that you do things well? Which areas do you need to work at (and how?) to improve each of these, if necessary?

- 3 Over all five headings, how might your church take a more enlightened view of the subject of church administration? What one or two practical actions could be agreed and implemented that would make a real difference?
- 4 How might these notes be applied at an area or regional level rather than just within one local church? And at a national level? Do you have any leverage to recommend action here?

These notes are a continuation from part 1 at [**TN72**](#).

These notes were first published (without the questions and actions) as blogs on the Willow Creek website. They are available here at <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/Training-Notes-index> then TN73. See also Articles A15, *Christian administration?*, and A 42, *What do Church Administrators do?*, plus Training Notes TN21, *Ideas for a sermon on administration*, TN40, *Appointing an Administrator*, TN60, *Administrator types*, TN112, *Set my leaders free!*, TN115, *Identifying gifts of administration*, and TN126, *The small-church administrator*.

Contact John if you would like to enquire about any form of administrative training or assessment.

Cartoons are by Micki Hounslow for filing categories of Leadership, Management, Structures, Planning, Communication and Administration. File TN72 and TN73 under Administration.

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