

These 5 Ideas Help Build Owners of Church Vision Instead of Renters

Every once in a while I get a fun, free rental-car upgrade in my travels serving churches. In case you didn't know, an upgrade is the chance to drive an expensive luxury or sports car that was rented at a stewardship-sized, boring-car rate. Usually, the upgrade process involves walking up to the rental car counter with low expectation and leaving with high exhilaration.

Sometimes though, it is a better idea to not take the upgrade. Many church leaders, especially those in charge of the money, do not like to see their consultant to roll up in a brand new Jaguar X7 or equivalent. You immediately lose a degree of trust when having to go out of the way to explain how upgrades work in defense of good stewarding or personal financial integrity.

However, I recently had no choice but to go ahead and take a brand new 50th Anniversary Camaro SS Convertible. I promise... I had no choice. The only other option was a two-door Kia shoebox of some sort. With a 6'-5" frame and two-hour drive ahead, the Camaro was easily the better option. That next morning at my South Mississippi Baptist Church, I parked my shiny silver convertible on the opposite side of the building from where everyone was meeting.

It wasn't fun hiding my rental car, but I had a pretty good time driving back and forth from the church to the airport. I really felt obligated to test that Camaro's zero-to-speed-limit acceleration capabilities... at every red light. I pitted its sports-car suspension against a few Target-parking-lot speed bumps. I even opened it up once on the interstate to get around some pesky traffic. I still grin a little when I think about the sound and feeling that a gentle little love tap on the accelerator produced.

It was easy to be rough with the Camaro because I had no accountability for its long-term care. All I had to do was get it back to the airport without wrecking or getting a ticket. I did not come close to either, but I did spill some coffee on the passenger seat... another accelerator love-tap as I recall. Oh, and I put regular gas instead of the recommended high-test, just to save a few bucks. You know, for stewardship reasons.

I was clearly a renter of that Camaro, not an owner.

There exists a stark difference in churches when the people, especially the lay leaders, **consider themselves owners of the vision, and not just renters.** You know the renter-types. They show up when it is convenient for their 9-year-old's seemingly professional baseball career. Or they serve for about 15 minutes then wander off. Better yet, renters are those people that sign up to serve, but never actually show up to serve.

We want owners, an ownership culture, in our churches, not just renters. But it is not just that an ownership culture sees a greater number of volunteers serving. **A church full of owners serves differently, with purpose, passion, and care.**

Some pastors find it easy, and even habitual, to criticize "those" vision renters in their church. What those leaders forget is that **the congregation is exactly where their leadership has led them to be.** If you have a congregation of renters, as the leader, you in some way have failed to sell the vision.

By the way, selling is not about making more announcements. You have likely plugged, emailed, cajoled, and announced events or next steps more than enough times. **Selling your vision involves the work of transferring ownership, not simply preaching another sermon or making another announcement.**

If the Pastor owns the vision and fails to transfer vision ownership, a church becomes a gathering of renters with no accountability for the long-term care of God's better future. **Renters simply show up on Sunday, drop their "rent" in the offering plate, and check-out as soon as their tires hit the driveway.** They might even go through the motions of cleaning up when they spill coffee on the worship center seat like I did.

To avoid another year as a congregational landlord, here are **five requirements for building owners of vision in your congregation, not renters:**

- **Confidence.** This may be the hardest requirement, and where the majority of leaders miss out on transferring vision. **If you seek approval, you will rarely gain acceptance.** Great leaders are confident in one thing: that they are following God, in who He created them to be. Then, they lead others to do the same. If you do not have

confidence in the vision He has called you to, here are two gut-check questions: 1. Are you sure it is God's vision and not your own (or some other pastor whose podcast you listen to regularly)? 2. Is right now the right time, or should you and your team spend more time and prayer and the Word?

- **Fallibility.** *In his heart, a man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.* If you cannot accept that no plan is perfect and are scared to share the vision for fear that other leaders may point out changes, you cannot succeed. **Letting others see and shape next steps builds ownership for the long-haul.** The road to success is more often than not paved by failure.
- **Humility.** The first step toward your next failure is forgetting your last one. There is no such thing as a sure thing. When you assume that a group of leaders are "with you," it often leads to rushing and "winging" vision roll-outs. Underdeveloped preparation creates uninspired participation. Without humility, it is easy to "look ahead" to the next meeting and forget to lead with humility and open-handedness in the moment that God has, in His wisdom, set before you. **People will not own what you have not already cared for and proved to be of value.**
- **Patience.** Vision ownership will always take more time than you want, easily require more resources than you have, and ultimately ask more from your leadership than you thought. Etsy founder Rob Kalin, says it this way: "The last 10% it takes to launch something takes as much time as the first 90%." **Without patience, a leader resorts to transferring information, rather than informing transformation.** More than wordplay, the difference is critical. There are no shortcuts to leading your congregation to be doers of the word, not just hearers.
- **Faith.** Finally, building vision owners requires real-time steps of obedience. Every example of faith, especially in Hebrews 11, clearly illustrates movement forward without the benefit of seeing everything clearly. Many high-capacity lay leaders do not operate like this in the marketplace. They poll, they test, and they only move forward with initiatives with absolute certainty. God rarely operates in this way. **Your faith enacted, in turn, builds faith in other leaders, and then cements ownership.** This may be the greatest contribution and action of discipleship you will ever make for your deacons or elders.

Remember, few people will ever own a vague statement of vision, but many will gladly rent one as long as it is convenient and fits their personal view of how the church can serve them. Therefore, build owners of vision, not renters in order to ensure long-term investment, and care for where God is calling.

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