

# Holding Worship Team Auditions

Why, when and how!

# Why Hold Auditions

- Have a focus point for people to connect with worship ministry
- To add people to a worship team
- To increase the level of musical presentation of your music
- To provide a consistent, common and helpful method for growing worship ministry personnel
- To give away and expand ministry

# Why Not to Hold Auditions

- You are trying to replace all your vocalists
- You are trying to replace a drummer
- You are hoping to trade a drummer for a singer
- You are hoping to trade a player to the St. Louis Cardinals for a draft choice to be named later
- Your pastor is trying to replace you
  - Honestly, don't use auditions to remove people. Be honest with those you have serving with you. Treat them with respect, even if you really need to increase the music in your church and it means removing them.

# When to have auditions

- Regular intervals: 6months, yearly.
- Hold them, even though you might not have an immediate need for more musicians. It allows for backups and lets people know you want their participation and value their contributions in any talents they may have.
- When your needs increase.
- When God speaks to do it.

# Some Ideas about How

- FIRST: decide the level of musicianship/ singing you will accept
- Get 2 or 3 musical people (possibly from another church, if you don't have them in yours) to help you do the audition. One person should be a vocalist who can help evaluate singers, and another should be an instrumentalist who can evaluate more than one instrument. Current team members are great for this!

# How to...

- Use written evaluations/forms. Have each evaluator fill out evaluation for each auditioned person.
- Complete the entire auditions (one person at a time), and make a written evaluation of each. Between yourself, and your two musical friends, you should have 3 evaluation sheets on each person.
- Do NOT give the results or say yes or no at the auditions. Instead, meet later with the 3 of you and discuss each person and your respective results. Do this intelligently (using your natural senses) and spiritually (prayerfully asking God what he wants for your team).

# How to.. (more)

- I use musical, spiritual, and team unity issues to determine whether or not to add a specific person to the worship team.
- If they have the musical ability to help your worship, that is the first step.
- Sometimes I will get a strong sense of God's presence when people worship, and you can sometimes see a clear desire to worship (not just perform) through people's mannerisms.
- One of the most important things for me is how well the person fits in to a group of people. Are they abrasive or argumentative? Do they project their personality in order to be noticed? Are they willing to just "play a part" and not be a "star"? Answering some of these questions honestly will help you determine whether or not the person will make it in a "team" environment.

# How to- an evaluation form

- Make one, copy one, steal one... if you aren't helping be honest with how you evaluate people, don't do auditions.
- Very rarely, supremely skilled people can do this without help or written summation. Just assume this is not you.
- A sample form is provided.

# Preparing for the audition:

- Give a sheet of 3-5 song names (and keys) about 2 weeks in advance . I will draw from this in the audition. The songs will range in key (stretching vocal limits), speed (for tempo and rhythm variations), style (from soft rock to blues, hip/hop, etc). The songs will each let me see something different musically about the person. I also let folks substitute songs they know for the ones I give, but only to a point. I like to know they at least have an interest in some of the songs in our repertoire if they want to be on the team.
- Check whether they show up on time and prepared for audition.
- Give them the evaluation sheet so they know what we are doing. They also must answer one of the questions on the sheet- that is key. I like to give homework, so I find out if they have thought about what worship and worship ministry really means to them.

# Auditioning Vocalists

- Have them warm up.
- Run through scales, and find their range.
- Ask them the questions on the evaluation sheet
- Then I ask them which song they would like to try first if they don't say, I start with the easiest one.
- I have one of the team singers sing with us, and one other band member. This makes them feel safer and lets them fit into us without having everything start off scary.
- We are all listening, along if the person is used to singing harmony, I see if they adjust to fit with us, or whether they even know how to do that.
- Obviously the most important music aspect here is pitch. if they don't hold pitch, that is pretty crucial.

# More on vocalist auditioning

- Then we move to having them sing alone through a song maybe I start with them and let them take a solo section.
- I listen for volume, breathing, annunciation, pitch, I don't worry too much about any one thing except pitch, cause most can be corrected by pointing them out and practice vocal exercises for the weakness. Rarely, I will also note a persons timing. I leave lots of room here for unfamiliarity with the specific songs. etc..
- I then have others join us again, and see if the person can improvise and worship with the gift beyond just the scripted words, notes of a given song. I find this is a rare person to come across who can do this well musically and still maintain a worship focus.

# Auditioning Musicians

- Warm up, pick songs, scales if necessary
  - Have them play various basic rhythms, for drums, percussion, and other rhythm section.
  - Play first song with group.
  - Try all styles of songs noting, timing (important here), pitch (they should still hit the right ones :)
  - Change dynamics in songs, seeing if the person can "read" a leader or band when they play.
  - Leave room in songs for a solo (well, I don't remember I ever heard a drum solo in a audition before, but that would be cool :)
- Then I lead through a song, and see if the person can follow mid-stream navigation : ) like - back to chorus; go to end... modulate.. etc...
- I listen to whether the person knows the music and what they do if they make a mistake (this is important to me, cause like in any music, we want to not be flustered by mistakes, but keep going).

# Wrapping up the audition

- I then sit down with the team and we all finish our sheets and they give them all to me. I have the person take the sheet home (their own copy) so they can fill out why they want to be on the worship team. I make sure I know the answers to the questions like "do you go to a small group at our church" .. etc. [see the evaluation sheet for general info to ask]... all this is just to get a musical perspective..
- at the same time, I am looking for clues about the persons attitude and demeanor in a group. how do they communicate to people there? some folks come right in and declare how we need them on the team and that their experience and musicianship or seniority in the church earns them the "right" to be on the worship team...
- I also ask for previous experience stories and how it worked out on other teams... did you quit the last 8 worship teams because people didn't appreciate you and give you a "fair" share of time on stage?

# More wrap up audition stuff

- here is something else I always look for... how did they come to the audition? did someone else suggest they go? did I have people without any vested interest plug the person to me (folks I know)? It is kind like what Brian Doerksen said about songwriting- he has never submitted songs, he let others do that.. folks ended up finding out about his music and pursued him. God, in my opinion, always makes a way, for His ministry to be done.
- \*\*\*Now don't take all this wrong... these are just pieces to a puzzle.. often times even after all this.. all I know is that I have a person who sings ok, and seems committed to our church.. then I pray. I look over the evaluation sheets, and talk to the other team members about their impressions of the person... then I pray. after getting back the persons response to the "why do you want to be on the worship team" question, I usually have a sense as to whether they would fit on our team.

# Evaluating the Scores

- The reason we use evaluation forms is to derive a overview of the persons levels in the musical and non-musical areas we discussed.
- With those forms, collate the results into a uniform result. (sample spreadsheet available via email).
- Generalize the results so that it is an overall score per area for the auditioning person.
- Have a consistent way to use those results. Example - I only add people who are better than the average of our team- this means we are always getting better.

# Audition Scoring Spreadsheet

- (switch to view team spreadsheet)

# Communication

- Communicate results to people in person, not on phone or through email or postal mail.
- Encourage people with real honesty
- Find a way for people to continue pursuing ministry in worship (take lessons, lead in small groups, etc).
- Re-evaluate the process— could you make it in your own church if you were starting over?

# About the author



Kim Gentes is a worship pastor at the San Tan Vineyard in Chandler, Arizona, as well as the president of WorshipMusic.com (the world's largest single retailer focused exclusively on worship and praise related resources) and the creator of WorshipTeam.com – the recently launch planning solution for worship teams. Kim writes and records new songs, articles on worship, and instructional books on guitar and worship leading. He pioneered and leads an art/culture worship experience in the Phoenix metro area, called "the Worship Gathering". Kim resides in Mesa, Arizona with his wife, Carol, and their 3 boys, Jordan, Jared and Cody.

*Contact, correspondence and booking inquiries should be directed to :*

*Address: 2432 W. Peoria Ave STE 1181, Phoenix, AZ 85029*

*Phone: (602)861-2555*

*Email: [kim@worshipmusic.com](mailto:kim@worshipmusic.com)*

*For Kim's personal website and teachings , see <http://www.kimgentes.com/>*

*For additional information about the Gilbert Vineyard, see <http://www.santanvineyard.com/>*

*For additional information about worship resources, see <http://www.worshipmusic.com/>*

*For additional information about worship planning solution, see <http://www.worshipteam.com/>*

*For additional information about the Worship Gathering see <http://www.worshipgathering.com/>*