

---

# Dave Wilcox and Jim Cowan

## SEASONS OF A SOUND TEAM

The goal of this seminar is to outline transitions that happen as a church grows and changes and then to help others to benefit from the lessons we've learned through the years at Covenant Life.

### I. First, a brief history...

- A. Fall of '77 = 6 Channel University mixer with two column speakers. Everything was in the back of a station wagon.
- B. 1978 Purchased used equipment from small band resulting in cobbled together system. Altec 1202 main speakers, column speakers converted to floor monitors, 6 channel mixer and "new" 8 channel mixer patched together as band increased in size
- C. 1979 upgraded to 16 channel mixer with 2 monitor mix outs
- D. 1980 bought first real monitor speakers
- E. 1981 first piece of outboard processing equipment, compressor to help control C.J.'s dynamics
- F. 1982 Pastors purchased 8 Bose 802 speakers since they were not happy with the existing sound.
- G. 1985 Purchased separate monitor board and snake system with a built in splitter
- H. 1987, upgraded to Meyer UPA1 speakers with subs. By then had a Tapco mixer from Mylon LeFevre.
- I. 1989 moved band to headphones, leaving vocalist on floor monitors
- J. 1991 made the biggest investment yet, a 56-input Ramsa mixer, which we still use. This was in anticipation of building.
- K. 1993 moved into permanent facility

Volunteer Time at this point:

6:00am = Load up the equipment into the truck

8:30am = Goal for setup time

10:00am = Service time

2:00pm = Done and unloaded

- L. 1993 – Moved into first permanent facility, a gymnasium. Used the UPA speakers and Ramsa mixer as the heart and soul of the new sound system. Released a lot of the sound team at this point.
- M. Dave came on staff in 2002
- N. New building in 2002, which required added flexibility in our teams
- O. We added a separate lighting and IMAG video team a few years into the new building

## **II. Major Transitions to consider:**

- A. Size of Church and Location Changes
  - 1. As a church grows larger it uses more space or moves to a different location
  - 2. During these times, a sound team leader should be looking to improve speaker coverage, not necessarily an entire sound system
  - 3. The speaker system should be tailored to the room
  - 4. Portable churches are in a more difficult situation because they change locations more consistently. You may want to lease speaker equipment rather than buy.
- B. Portable Church to Permanent Facility
  - 1. Fly and bury your money – Spend on speakers, amps, and infrastructure. You can get a fancy mixer later.
  - 2. Don't try to incorporate too much from the portable rig into the permanent facility. Let's face it, portable is more problem-prone than permanent. Make it permanent whatever you can.
  - 3. You will probably have many "brute force" people on your team. You've spent the life of the church hauling stuff in and hauling stuff out, setting it up and tearing it down. Take the time to think through how you will employ them all later. Maybe release some, but not too many. Most likely, the building will start out underutilized and then will require more and more support throughout the week, before you know it.
  - 4. In our experience we let too many people go when we first entered our permanent building.
  - 5. Visit other permanent churches and see what it could look like three to five years from now

C. Other Building Projects

1. If you are going to multiply space, you'll need to multiply people, too.
2. Attempt to create opportunities for people to learn BEFORE you need them
3. This requires a full-team effort. The current team members will need to embrace this training period, help you to train people, then step out of the way while they get fully employed, and then step back in when they shift to the new space.

D. Changes in Musical Style and Instrumentation

1. Over time, musical style changes. Musical and creative pastors want to do creative musical stuff. How do we adjust?
2. Mixers need to listen broadly
3. Systematize for flexibility

E. 100% Volunteer to Having Paid Staff

1. This requires pastoral care.
2. Define the purpose of paid staff carefully: is it to do, or to empower others to do?
3. We recommend using paid staff to empower church members to serve rather than displace church members from service.
4. Requires buy-in from the current volunteer tech leader. In my case, we were blessed.