

Platform Protocol

I. The Lesson

Protocol, by definition, is a set of guidelines and boundaries, correct etiquette and precedence. Etiquette and boundaries are necessary and healthy for every worship team. Protocol, policy, rules, standards, expectations and boundaries are not words and concepts that artistic people readily embrace. So it's easy to slip into a very relaxed or subjective application of rules that drain the energy and productivity from the team. When a protocol is established, implemented and enforced it produces consistency, life, and joy in the team.

Many of the guidelines we will discuss are subjective in nature and change from church to church and culture to culture. As we discuss this topic we will attempt to establish a clear understanding of what is desirable, acceptable, and unacceptable when standing before the congregation, or even behind the congregation (sound and media teams). Although this teaching is called "Platform Protocol," we will be discussing these principals as they apply to all those involved in worship ministry. Some will only apply to those in the band or on stage, while some will apply to all.

1. Respect other people's time by being _____. This is a huge one for leaders. To make people wait or to be late for an appointment sends the clear message, "Your time is not important to me." Preparation for ministry begins long before we enter the building. So, we must prioritize the set times for rehearsals, sound checks, prayer meetings, and other team meetings. We must do our best to create a culture where we all help each other hold to the standard of punctuality. Have grace with each other but be strong with this standard!
2. Exemplify _____ and temperance (to be moderate and self controlled) by practicing an honest "mirror check" before leaving the house (evaluate your attire in the mirror before you leave). When it comes to dress code, I was raised in Pentecostal legalism (Dave here). So, I understand the unrealistic and even ridiculous expectations that can be put on people in the name of "holiness" or "representing God." Dress codes change from nation to nation, culture to culture and what is appropriate and accepted in Southern California may not be accepted in Washington D.C. We cannot – and should not – attempt to regulate or enforce our standards beyond our local church, but here is where we can all agree on:

1 Cor. 10:32-33 "Do not cause anyone to stumble... Even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many."

1 Tim. 4:12 “Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.”

1 Tim. 2:9-10 “I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety... To dress appropriate for women who profess to worship God.”

A particular dress code and platform protocol needs to be established for every local church. Perhaps a special chat with the ladies from one of the female leaders would be beneficial. Here are three recommendations that we believe would be a good starting point for any worship team:

- a. Don't let your attire – or lack thereof – be a _____.
 - b. Be free and uniquely you, within the _____ and parameters developed by the team.
 - c. Develop a culture where it is acceptable and expected to discuss any problems in this area.
3. Don't be trapped by the _____. This is obviously for the musicians and singers. It is quite uninspiring to watch a worship leader who is glued to his/her chord charts and staring at a music stand for 30 minutes. Depending on how many new songs your church learns each month as well as the rotation and consistency of musicians, it may be necessary to have charts available and there is nothing wrong with that. We would just encourage you to “be free” so that you can look at people, lift your eyes to heaven, and express worship without having to concentrate on the next chord or lyric. Don't forget to enjoy yourself too!
4. No chewing _____!
5. Realize you are always on _____. Even if your church does not use image magnification with screens and cameras, the concept and ramifications are the same. Try to film your team so you can do a play-back to see what is being communicated. This will help us to be intentional in our behavior without performing.
6. Stay _____ to the worship leader by keeping your eyes open! This will apply more to the musicians, but should be discussed with everyone as to how well you are staying with the signals that are directing the team. You should also develop solid communication with the media team as to where you are going and what needs to happen next.
7. No _____ or “drinking fountain retreats!” This is a personal area of concern... well, actually I think the term is “pet peeve” of mine (Dave again). I believe it sends a strong signal to the congregation when the worship team leaves the room after worship. Even if they need to exit through the back of the stage and take a restroom break, I believe the

team should be seen finding their seats near the front, Bibles open, ready to hear the Word. Can I get an “amen” on that one?

8. Be ready for the _____ _____. Your church may call it the “altar call”. Here’s the thought. If you know the pastor is going to call for the musicians at the close of the message, then:
 - a. Be seated somewhere close to the front and near an aisle so you can make your way quickly and with minimum distraction to the stage.
 - b. Know what song you are going into so you don’t have to have a small conference on stage while the pastor is still attempting to communicate to the people. We would recommend the worship leader always have a couple options ready to go. Pull a couple extra chord charts that are appropriate and by the last ten minutes of the message, be thinking about what song would work well.
 - c. As you go to the platform, try not to move microphone stands, re-string or tune your instrument, or anything else that would not serve the moment.
 - d. Stay on stage and “flow” until it’s an appropriate time to transition from live to CD or DVD (this might be a good point of discussion for your team).

II. Discussion questions

- 1) How are we doing on showing up on time and respecting other people’s time? Are those who have additional set up and preparation requirements making the necessary adjustments?
- 2) What would be some “platform distractions” that have bothered you as you have watched other teams (be nice and constructive with this one)?
- 3) How are we doing with “green room worshipers?” Are we setting an example for the church in this area?
- 4) How are we when it comes to being free from sheet music and able to express ourselves? What should our expectation be in this area?
- 5) What specific areas of platform protocol do we need to discuss and implement for our church?
- 6) How does all that we are discussing here affect the congregation and worship atmosphere, both positively and negatively?

III. Prayer Points

- 1) Pray for Grace!
- 2) Pray for maturity in the team and the ability to be challenged by the standards that are being set without becoming offended.
- 3) Pray for an “excellent spirit” to be over the whole team.