

## Taking Care of “Sticky Issues” in your Church

In a recent survey to over a thousand churches, some very interesting responses help us understand the commonalities that often derail the work of ministry. The questions were each designed to determine how churches deal with common Human Resource issues. Here are a few of the 15 questions we asked:

Is there a designated HR person?

What are the greatest challenges in hiring and firing?

How are problems with employees addressed?

Do you have liability insurance?

Do you conduct background checks on each employee?

We found that about half the churches who responded had HR people on staff, but it was often the pastor who is not necessarily trained for that task.

How a staff person was fired elicited the most emotional responses. There are fears of legal issues, personal issues, damage to the church and relationships, etc. Problems with employees are often so difficult to deal with and just ignored or handled on a case by case basis rather than having a policy in place that dictates how to work through the problems.

Churches do have insurance that cover many liability possibilities such as sexual abuse, on the job injuries, building/facility and health coverage. However, routine background checks, especially in smaller churches are often ignored because it's costly and they are afraid they might offend someone.

The overall conclusions of the survey are rather profound and yet simple. Larger churches often do the “HR” thing better than smaller ones. The hardest piece of running a church is how to manage the personnel in a way that maximizes the effectiveness of those they employ while minimizing the possibilities of litigation. It is so important to face the fact that we live in a very complicated world that does not acknowledge that we are Christians and hope things will “just work out”. We need to be prepared to address any and all issues related to the work place. Having a trained staff person is going to give the best opportunity for compliance while allowing those whom we work with the ability understand what to expect. A work place “manual” is designed to cover every issue for the employee addressing vacations, salary, expectations, evaluations, sick days, holidays, etc.

God expects us to be wise as we navigate the world of ministry and management of the people who do our ministry. We each have a responsibility to those whom we lead.

For more information about HR related issues, Google SHRM, Human Resource Executive Online, [www.hreonline.com](http://www.hreonline.com), or contact me at [smalphurs@malphursgroup.com](mailto:smalphurs@malphursgroup.com)