



UNITE & UPLIFT

TIPS FOR BUILDING A STRONGER WORSHIP BAND



by Doug Gould, Worship MD

From a musician's perspective, when a band is described as being "locked in," it reflects a level of precision and cohesion that comes from intentional rehearsal and strong musical chemistry. This means that musicians are not just individually skilled, but they listen to each other, understand their roles, and know their parts deeply. They play with clarity, respecting the space within the arrangement, ensuring that no one is stepping on anyone else's part. This results in a unified, cohesive sound that feels polished and connected.

Achieving this doesn't happen through individual practice; it's the product of many hours spent rehearsing together as a group, learning how to lock in with one another. While mastering your instrument is essential, playing in a band requires focus on how your part fits into the larger picture — making the group sound great rather than just excelling individually.

In non-musical terms, being locked in can also describe the closeness of our relationships with each other.



You may have heard me mention that the amount of time someone dedicates to practice directly influences their level of expertise. It's often said that mastering a skill requires around 10,000 hours of dedicated practice. That's equivalent to working full-time (40 hours a week) for seven years! Before The Beatles recorded their first album, they had already accumulated 10,000 hours of practice as a band, which was a critical factor in their success. Consistent, dedicated time is the key to achieving that level of musical excellence.

If you're a volunteer musician on a praise team, you probably realize that with the limited rehearsal time you get at church, reaching 10,000 hours of practice could take a lifetime. Expecting to sound like Hillsong United isn't realistic when you're only practicing for an hour and a half each week or just squeezing in 20 minutes before the service starts. So, what can you do? My hope is that some of the following ideas will help you get closer to achieving the results you desire.

STRUCTURE REHEARSALS FOR MAXIMUM EFFICIENCY

With limited rehearsal time, everyone must be ready to begin right at the scheduled start. They should arrive early to set up, warm up and tune up so when the rehearsal officially begins, the band is ready to make the most of its time together. (Take the time to pray as a team before you begin.)

Everyone should know their parts before they arrive; rehearsal is for blending your parts rather than learning the song. Start the rehearsal with a song the team knows well; it helps bring everyone together and sets the tone for the session. Focus on practicing the transitions between songs to ensure smooth flow, especially through tempo changes and key modulations. As the worship leader or musical director, come prepared with clear song arrangements. Guide the musicians on exactly what you want them to do, including when to rest, and give direction to create dynamic and intentional moments in the music.

Don't be afraid to tell a musician they're overplaying or playing at a level that's inappropriate for the space. If the drummer is overdoing it, understand that caging them will not solve the problem. Instead, direct, encourage and instruct as if you were the conductor of an orchestra. For more on this topic, check out another article I recently wrote for Yamaha about soundchecks and rehearsals in the guide ["Ready, Set, Go! Soundcheck and Rehearsal Routines."](#)

LEARN FROM THE EXPERTS

Beyond the walls of your church, there are a lot of people and resources that can help your worship band improve. Live events, consultants and online courses abound. Consider this section your guide to what's out there.

CHURCH WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING

Workshops: Larger churches or those with experienced worship leaders occasionally offer in-person workshops that focus on team dynamics, music arranging and/or the spiritual aspects of leading worship.

Guest Clinicians: Invite experienced worship leaders or musicians to your church to conduct workshops or training sessions. They can offer fresh perspectives on playing as a cohesive unit. Even if they tell the group the same things you've already told them, information heard from an outside specialist carries added weight.

ONLINE COURSES AND RESOURCES

[Worship Artistry](#): This website offers online lessons tailored to worship teams. It covers individual instrument parts as well as how to play together as a band, and offers tips on creating a unified sound.

[Worship Initiative](#): Brought to you by the organization that Shane & Shane created, it's one of the best sites for worship team training.

[Worship Online](#): Like Worship Artistry, this resource provides tutorials and lessons for worship musicians, emphasizing how to lock in with other band members and play as a cohesive unit.

WORSHIP CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

Worship Leader Conferences: Events like the [Experience Conference](#) often feature sessions on band dynamics, musical arrangement and spiritual unity within a team.

Band Workshops at Conferences: Many worship conferences offer sessions just for band members, focusing on how to improve as a team, both musically and spiritually.

If possible, spend time with your team in a space where they can find encouragement and grow their skills, such as at one of these conferences:

- [Worship 4:24](#)
- [ReFuel](#)
- [Worship NW](#)
- [Christian Musician Summit](#)
- [Simply Worship](#)
- [Worship Innovators](#)

My friend Kenny Lamm is the director of [Renewing Worship](#), and he offers programs, camps, and seminars that help worship teams get to the next level.

TEAM RETREATS AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Worship Team Retreats: Organizing a retreat focused on both musical practice and spiritual bonding can strengthen the team's unity. Include times for prayer, team-building activities and informal jam sessions to enhance both personal and musical connections. Vineyard hosts a yearly retreat, as do many other denominations and organizations.

Devotional Times Together: Incorporating regular devotional times before or after rehearsals helps align the team spiritually, fostering unity and promoting a shared sense of purpose.



COLLABORATION WITH OTHER WORSHIP BANDS

Inter-Church Collaborations: Partner with other churches to create joint rehearsals or worship nights where bands can learn from each other. Observing how other bands function can provide valuable insights and encourage a collaborative spirit.

Guest Appearances: Occasionally, invite musicians from other churches to join your worship team. This can introduce new ideas and techniques for playing together.

Consider hiring an experienced worship leader to spend a weekend with your band.

Examples include:

- [Lead Worship with Paul Baloche](#)
- [Three Streams Worship Training with Mike O'Brien](#)
- [Worship Team Training with Brannon Dempsey.](#)

MUSIC SCHOOLS AND WORKSHOPS

Community Music Schools: Enroll in local music school workshops or classes focusing on group playing and ensemble performance. While not explicitly geared toward worship, the skills learned are highly transferable.

YouTube Videos: One of my favorite worship leaders to learn from can be found online at [DonMoenTV](#). Another good one is [Worship Band Workshop with Paul Baloche](#).

RECORDING AND ANALYZING REHEARSALS

Record Rehearsals: Recording rehearsals and services allows the team to hear themselves, identify areas for improvement and work toward playing tighter as a unit. You don't have to make a polished multitrack recording; handheld recorders can capture the band in a room like a pair of ears listening — they really work well. Creating recordings and reviewing them with your team should become a regular, scheduled process.

Post-Rehearsal Analysis: Spend time after rehearsals discussing what worked well and what didn't. Encourage constructive feedback and emphasize the importance of each member contributing to the overall sound.

MENTORSHIP AND COACHING

Seek a Worship Mentor: A worship mentor or coach can work with your band to address specific challenges, provide personalized advice and help develop a stronger team dynamic.

Peer Mentoring: Encourage experienced band members to mentor newer members, helping them integrate more smoothly into the team.

REGULAR TEAM-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Engage in team-building exercises that are not directly related to music, such as group outings, social gatherings or service projects. These activities build trust and camaraderie, which translates into better teamwork on stage.



IN SUMMARY

In your worship and tech teams, initiate small groups for spiritual development and strengthening horizontal and vertical relationships. Enhance the experience by sharing food and ideas, playing songs together in a non-church environment and relaxing together. By utilizing these approaches, a band can grow in their ability to play together as a cohesive, unified team.

If you need more help, my wife, [Sheri Gould](#), and I conduct day- or weekend-long workshops to help worship and tech teams in their quest to be the best they can be within their means. We are here to serve.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Doug Gould is the CEO and Founder of Worship MD and has been a veteran of the Pro Audio and Music Technology industry for nearly 30 years, serving in management roles at Shure, Tascam and E-Mu Systems. Doug has served as a worship leader, musician and sound tech at various churches throughout his career.

Over the last 18 years, Doug has been a very effective presenter at hundreds of worship conferences all over North America and beyond, focusing his experience on consulting and teaching.

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