

vision casting

An Exclusive Interview with Pastor Ed



weekend worship service at Fellowship Church

Vision Magazine recently had the privilege of spending some time at Fellowship Church (in Grapevine, TX) getting to members. Attracting some **17,500 people per weekend**, Fellowship Church has been stirring up a lot of national changing influence in the Dallas Metroplex.

While attending various services, meeting with their leaders and researching the results of their ever-expanding ministry, we on Sunday morning. It is a place where true life-change is constantly taking place. In the last 18 months, Fellowship has In addition, 2,284 people (over the age of 7) were baptized in the last twelve months. Life-change doesn't stop there at successful reach was found in their culture built around volunteer ministry. Currently, Fellowship Church has over 750 volun the people who are giving of their time and abilities every week making ministry happen!

Young



The greatest churches are “always about evangelism... the great churches are about reaching people.”

- Pastor Ed Young
Fellowship Church, Grapevine, TX

by kellian schneider

Vision wanted to find out how a church that started with roughly 150 people meeting in an office building in 1990 has been so effective in influencing its community over the **last thirteen (13) years!** Perhaps one of the most exciting statistics Fellowship shared is that over **12% of weekend attendees are considered to be “unchurched!”** How does a church really effect change in the world? What does it take to attract the unchurched? How do they know when they’re on the right track to reaching people? Where do they get their ideas? How do

Fellowship Church Quick-Facts

- started in 1990 with a group of about 150 people
- location: Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas
- attendance: some 17,500 people weekly!
- growth: about 100 new attendees per month
- over 4,500 new members in the past 18 months!!!
- 2,284 people were baptized in the last 12 months

know its ministries and interviewing their executive staff attention both in the Christian and secular media as a life-

found that Fellowship is not just a place to be entertained 4,500 new members, of which 54% were unchurched! Fellowship... we felt that one of the huge keys to their teens committed to specific areas of ministry. These are

they implement them?

walking into Fellowship

What’s it like visiting Fellowship for the first time? You know it’s going to be a different experience from the mo-

ment you reach the parking lot and encounter their first line of volunteers! The parking lot is massive with volunteers directing traffic. People are everywhere and the overall atmosphere is lively, but it's still surprisingly easy to get around. From the parking lot to the auditorium to the classrooms, everything is organized and well thought-out to create as much convenience as possible while also minimizing potential distractions to the worship experience (such as chaotic parking experiences, uncertainty on where to go in the large complex, difficulty for the single mom to get her kids to their classrooms, etc.)

Greeters are in place at the door of the sanctuary handing out worship guides as you enter (see pg. 42 for examples). You really get the feeling that you are entering a "big event." The music is powerful, the stage set-up and lighting was very cool but tasteful. It seemed to help keep focus on what was being said instead of what was going on around us.

the biggest thing people want in church is relevance to their lives

keeping the focus

When asked how Fellowship stays focused on the main Message and the results rather than the "production" of it all, Senior Pastor Ed Young put it in perspective: "What drives us here is that we know that heaven is real and hell is real and we know that a lot of people are going to

hell." The greatest churches are "always about evangelism... the great churches are about reaching people." On that note he added, "You've got to be very

passionate and strong and sometimes mean about keeping the church (others) focused..." In fact, Fellowship's mission statement says "Reach up, reach out, reach in."

relevance

So, what are people looking for when they come to church? According to Ed, **the thing people want most in church is relevance to their lives, and it's up to the church to build that bridge between the life-changing power of Christ and people's everyday lives.** Why do people stop attending a church? Usually it's because they

don't see why it is relevant to them. Without relevance, church loses its impact and the Message gets lost.

building a bridge using technology

Look around... this is a technologically driven world. Technology, according to Ed, is a natural "part of what we do because it's part of the culture... The church is to





guest and information kiosk in Fellowship's lobby

go out there and do what we have to do to reach them and technology is a big part of that... it's a tool."

Although "far too many churches have been afraid of it," Ed says that technology actually "multiplies the vision God has given us." While everyone knows that technology is expensive, Ed encourages ministries "Don't be afraid to spend the 'jack'... Think about your priorities as a church and think about how technology fits." Start by buying technology that you can continue to build on; make sure your basics are high quality, like you would your own wardrobe. "Many churches are too conservative," Ed reminds us, "we aren't in the church world to manage our portfolio."

How do you know if your next technology purchase is a

"We aren't in the church world to manage our portfolio"

tool or toy? After all, if it's just a toy, that's not good stewardship. On the other hand, if you have the ability to invest in technology that would be a powerful tool to reach people but keep putting it off, that's not good stewardship either. It's sometimes an unclear balance for many church leaders, so Ed suggests that you allow the "techy" people on your staff to help define what the technology will do for your ministry. Ask questions like, "Can we accomplish the same thing with what we're already using or do we need something new?" "Will it take us to the next level?" Ask yourself, "Even though the techno-geniuses see the difference, will the average person see the difference?"

Since "The biggest part of entry to your church is worship," Ed says that they seriously consider any technology purchase that will enhance this opportunity to reach people. For example, Fellowship recently invested in new screens and lighting that have "changed the complexion of our whole service." Because technology is such an effective tool in reaching your community, it is important to talk about budgeting for technology every year.



control room

What if you're afraid your investment will become obsolete too soon? Leasing can be a good option because when something new comes out, you can try it and avoid being strapped down with costly outdated equipment.

one of the best ways to get people to mentally "check out" is to keep doing things the same way over and over.

building a bridge using creativity

"Unique churches reach unique people," Ed reminds us. It's been said that one of the best ways to get people to mentally "check out" is to keep doing things the same way over and over. So how do you actually come up with ways to relate the life-changing truths of God's Word to people's everyday lives?

First, Ed says, creativity requires organization and effort. "Many times people use 'being real' as an excuse for laziness." Actually, "great creativity comes from great order," not vice-versa, he insists.

While order is important to allow for creativity, it is also important to start with a structure that allows growth and change. In Fellowship's case, they are staff-led: the staff members whose jobs are on the line are the ones making decisions. While the staff members (including Ed) are accountable to a board of trustees, they make the decisions for the church much like managers would for a business.

When coming up with creative ideas for sermon series, Ed doesn't try to do it on his own. He says, "when you plan in teams, you'll discover some of the best and most creative ideas come from unusual sources," but if you try to do it yourself, you will become the creative bottleneck.

continued on pg. 37



Pastor Ed Young in Vision Interview

Technology Traps to Avoid from Ed Young

- trying to top yourself all the time
- letting creativity instead of the Bible drive what you're doing
- sensory overload (having too much at one time)
- trying to be someone that you're not
- the technology money pit... it's very expensive so make sure you have the right people in the process
- not buying the right technology to begin with: make sure to buy high-quality technology you can build on
- getting too cheesy... trying to hard and being overdramatic
- avoidance of honest, consistent critiquing



See What Planning Looks Like at Fellowship! To Watch Excerpts from a Planning Video Ed & His Team Created, visit www.vision-mag.com

continued from "vision casting: An Exclusive Interview with Ed Young" pg. 15

So what does creative planning as a team look like for Fellowship Church? Ed has regular meetings with his senior staff members (and sometimes others) in which they brainstorm ideas for upcoming series and events. Ed says that he deliberately depends heavily on senior staff members because they know the direction the church is going, they have a "buy-in" to the vision, and they have built-in accountability because their job success is on the line. Ed says it's crucial that you carefully choose people that you trust, people that know you well. This strategy that Ed uses for sermon planning has evolved over the years; not only are the Messages much better in the end, but it really reduces the pressure on one person to come up with everything.

Creativity looks different for different leaders and for different churches. "You have to be who you are... you can't be someone that you're not," Ed reminds us. Who you are as a leader will determine the style of church you will have. If you try to be someone you're not, it's not going to go over well, and you will never realize the full potential of who God made you to be as a leader. Ed and his staff talk about this issue and other specifics on how to creatively plan your services

in Fellowship's annual C3 Conference (Creative Church Conference). The next C3 conference will be held January 22-24, 2004 and is open to all pastors, church staff and laypersons who would like to maximize their church's relevance to the community using technology and creativity.

think outside the Box...



Free Standing... Lightweight... Portable... Highly Sound Absorbent...

CREATE CLASSROOMS THAT ARE QUIET AND INVITING
HIDE UNSIGHTLY EQUIPMENT AND BLOCK OUT DISRUPTIVE SOUND
FROM DRUM SURROUND TO TRAFFIC DIVIDER TO ACOUSTIC PANEL



With building costs on the rise and membership increasing, more and more churches are turning to Versipanel to achieve full multipurpose use of their valuable space. Whether creating temporary Sunday School class-rooms, hiding and dividing away unsightly equipment and storage areas, or building versatile and flexible office space, Versipanel is simply the most versatile room divider available today.

VERSIPANEL is a... Room Divider, Portable Partition, Moveable Wall, Sight Barrier, Sound Acoustic Panel, Drum Surround, Quiet Room, Sound Absorber, Crash Pad, Conference Room, Trade Show Booth, Portable Recording Studio, Rehearsal Room, Portable Dressing Room, Office Cubicle...a partial list of nick-names for **VERSIPANEL**.

VERSIPANEL

877-942-4841
www.versipanel.com

building a bridge by vision casting

Obviously, it's imperative that every area of your church is building a bridge of relevancy to the community, so how do you keep everyone on the same page with the same vision and enthusiasm?

Ed has found that "Vision is more caught than taught." It's very environmental. He suggests to always be "vision-casting" and reminding your leaders as well as your congregation where you have come from because "...when you understand where you're from, you understand where you are and where you're going."

How do you do this? Ed recommends that you keep sharing stories about the great things God has done and continues to do. Recently, Ed packed up the leadership staff at Fellowship and took them on a "field-trip" to where they used to meet in the early years, reminding them of all the challenges that God has lead them through since then.

how do you know if what you're doing is hitting the mark?

Although many church leaders may not like to talk about it, Ed says that it's really all about the "numbers". He asks, "How did the shepherd know there were only 99 sheep in the sheepfold if he didn't count them?" It becomes pretty clear how effective you are being because **people get to vote every week with their feet and their wallets.** The main areas that Ed and his staff really watch in order to evaluate their effectiveness are:

- **How many people chose to show up?**
- **Are we growing?**
- **Life-change: Listen to the results of what's going on**
- **How many people are involved in ministry?**
- **Are people giving?**
- **How many people are involved in small groups?**

tips to keeping fresh & relevant as a leader

from Ed Young

- **Keep your personal walk with the Lord in-tact... you can easily become someone who just "crams Messages out" instead of hearing from the Lord.**
- **Take Breaks! Disengage, do things you enjoy and "become a normal guy."**
- **"Be careful about who you associate with as a leader."**
- **Be consistent in spending family time, and make sure to guard your "date-night" with your wife.**
- **Look around at what others are doing. Some people that Ed looks to are his dad (Dr. Ed Young), his uncle, Barry Landrum, Rick Warren and Tony Evans.**


- **Are people being baptized?**
- **How many people are going to the newcomers class?**


future of fellowship:

When asked about the future of Fellowship Church, Ed responded with several exciting upcoming opportunities. First, they are currently looking at adding several thousand seats onto their worship center in the next year or two. In addition, they are looking at the possibility of other campuses in the Dallas Metroplex or even around the nation.

As a result of many requests, many of the tools, content and graphics that Fellowship has developed will be made available for you to take advantage of:

- creativepastors.com (providing graphics & content to churches)

- G-Force kids curriculum (distributed through LifeWay)
- The **Fellowship One System** will be made available soon through Fellowship Technologies 



To Watch Video Clips of Pastor Ed Young's Exclusive Interview with Vision Magazine, visit www.vision-mag.com

continued from "3,600 weekly volunteers rotate every 3 weeks..." pg. 25

ministry has their own training program. This provides a framework in which volunteers can ask questions and get clear definition of their role, allowing them to be the best they can be!

- **Utilize the technology you have available.**

Technology doesn't have to be scary. Regardless of what size of ministry you have, there are tools that you can use to help organize your volunteer ministry. Even tools like a Microsoft Excel® spreadsheet can be extremely helpful. Spreadsheets can help you see who's serving where and more efficiently allocate resources to where they are most needed. Make sure to check out what technology is available to help you organize and minister to your volunteers... after all, they are your ministry's lifeblood.

- **Have a volunteer appreciation night to honor volunteers**

Fellowship Church has a formal appreciation dinner annually where the staff serves the volunteers. They put together a program to show their volunteers how they have contributed to the life-changes of so many people. It doesn't have to be a formal or elaborate celebration to show your appreciation; sometimes just sharing accounts of life-changing stories may be what your volunteers need.

- **Select a Volunteer coordinator.**

We all know that what's **"everybody's"** responsibility soon becomes **nobody's** responsibility. This fact of human nature makes it important to have a key person responsible for your volunteer ministry. If you can not justify a full-time paid volunteer coordinator, perhaps you could assign this responsibility to an existing staff member or perhaps make this a volunteer position. Most churches do not have a volunteer coordinator on staff, so it is no wonder that most churches express frustration in trying to get, keep and organize volunteers. It is important to have a "go-to" person organizing and managing this ministry.

- **Constantly promote volunteer opportunities.** Get the word out about opportunities within your church. Fellowship Church is not only asking people to get involved, but constantly shows them how to get involved. Opportunities are listed in their worship guide each week. They even focused on service in a recent sermon series. They get everyone involved from kids to adults. The weekend VISION Magazine™ visited their children's ministry, we could see 3 people running the multimedia equipment. We found one adult and two 12 year olds! The adult volunteer took none of the credit saying that he is really back there just to ensure that the kids know how to handle situations and to be a backup. The kids are the ones cuing up the video tape and making the transitions. They have an 8th grader who has been serving in a multimedia team for 3 years! What a way to get and keep the kids involved! You're teaching first hand responsibility and accountability, not to mention the practical application of using their talents to glorify God.

Volunteers can come in all shapes, sizes and ages and each one of them represents an important part of the Body. No matter who you are, God can mightily use a willing heart! 