

11:51



**Spread
God's**

Applying technology to the spreading of the Gospel via video churches is on the rise. TFWM asked Brad Herring to unearth why video churches are becoming so prevalent and how readers can incorporate the concept into their churches.

ding Word in the 21st Century:

VIDEO AND SATELLITE CHURCHES

Why they're succeeding and how you can create your own.

by Brad Herring

Being in Atlanta, I spent most of my time researching this article with many wonderful people making up the North Point Community Church Ministry. North Point is one of the larger video churches in America—and in their own way, a pioneer of new technologies pushing the video church forward.

I started off by visiting Buckhead Church, a satellite campus of North Point. Being my first “video church” experience, I wasn’t expecting too much—boy was I wrong. Buckhead runs four services each Sunday. Their worship auditorium seats around 1,000 people. Expecting a lighter crowd, I chose to visit the 6PM service. Five minutes before service time the Lead Pastor of the campus made his way to the microphone to ask everyone to stand up and

move towards the center of the aisle because they were about to have to start turning people away! Wow. A 6PM church service on Sunday that was THIS well attended? I must be in for something I had not expected.

The service began with the lights fading, and a swishing sound effect followed by a slam of a hammer – the video screens kicked on, and I felt like I was watching a Hollywood produced trailer. The production values were excellent, and the message sank home. For this particular Sunday, Buckhead Church was speaking to the congregation via dramatic sketches – but these sketches were on video. I felt like I was watching a sitcom on TV. And just like many TV programs, this one spoke to me. As it wrapped up, the lights slowly came back on and the Lead Pastor walked on stage, made some an-

nouncements and welcomed everyone. As he turned around, the lights dimmed, and the video screens once again fired up. This video transition complimented what the Lead Pastor had been speaking of with a real-life relevant message. As the screens faded to black, the stage lights popped on, and out came the worship leader.

I stood on my feet with my other 1,000 fellow believers, and thought to myself, “Aside from this being REALLY well done, I don’t see such a huge difference from every other contemporary church service I attend”. The people were real, the worship was genuine, and the congregants were engaged in worshiping God.

Now, I must take a moment and point out – the people at Buckhead Church do an excellent job. Often times, I work with churches to be the “critic”. As a consultant, I look



Brownsbridge Church stage, which is North Point's satellite campus 20 miles North of the main campus. The large center screen for the message is being used to complement the band with high-definition motion backgrounds during the worship set for visual ambiance.

for the weaker areas and help the church develop new techniques to make these areas stronger. I've got to tell you – there were not “weak” moments here. The sound was perfect. All the time, every time. The lights were perfect. All the time, every time. The video was perfect. All the time, every time. (This is important, and we'll get to it later), but for now – hats off to the men and women making this happen. They were dedicated, well trained, and focused on the task at hand. They had the equipment necessary to do the job and they executed their task with precision. Not once was I distracted by technology. Every aspect of the technology used built the worship and teaching experience.

As the praise and singing portion of the worship service began to close we transitioned into the teaching time of worship. The congregation

was led in prayer by one of the campus pastors and at the conclusion of the prayer a large 30' wide screen had taken the place of the main “stage” area and there was Andy Stanley in full size! I had to do a double take! I KNEW this was video, but it didn't feel like video. I'm looking at a 6' tall Andy Stanley surrounded by a set (that was VERY similar to what I had seen since I first walked in the door), and on either side of the worship center were two large IMAG (image magnification) screens with Andy's face larger than life.

Wow. I'm watching video – but it doesn't feel like it. As Andy began to teach, I watched the congregants, and witnessed an amazing phenomenon. The people completely bought into it. As far as everyone was concerned, Andy was there in person. It was amazing.

Now, part of what pulls this off

(and for that matter makes the satellite church mentality a reality) is that Andy is a great communicator. When he told a joke, the crowd laughed. His timing was impeccable. As the laughter died down, he continued on. His message was timeless – but packed with Biblical Truth. This message could have been played that Sunday or 3 years from now. Either way, it's going to apply and God's going to work through it.

The message wrapped up, Andy asked the congregation to join him in prayer, and when the prayer was over, the two side IMAG screens remained as Andy concluded the final portion of the service, but the main screen was gone. The band was back, and out walked the Campus director.

He concluded the service by thanking everyone for worshiping there that day. He also spent time explaining how they could go deeper in their walk and get plugged in via medium-size meetings with just a couple of hundred people at a time, and ultimately small groups where they would join 8 – 10 other people and learn together and hold each other accountable in life. You see – for North Point, this is the goal - 100,000 people in small groups. The Worship Service is for corporate worship, and the experience helps people from all walks of life feel comfortable as they are drawn into worship. But the real purpose is to connect people with God and get them into small groups where they can be with other believers, study God's Word, and walk closer to Him each day.

Wow. I was blown away. I experienced corporate worship with a large group of believers. I was spoken to in a very real and relevant way via drama and video, and then I had this incredible communicator of God's Word speak directly to me. I had met some wonderful people, and began to want to know more about their small groups. I would say “Mission Accomplished.” Now I understand

Solutions for an HDTV World



HDTV Tuning
232-ATSC HDTV Tuner
Universal Tuning
ATSC, clear QAM and NTSC channels – Off-air and Cable
Pro Integration
features 2-way RS-232 and discrete IR control
Versatile Video
full-time HDMI, RGB/Component, and NTSC outputs
Surround Sound
digital 5.1 HDMI, coax, and optical, and analog stereo

HDTV Signage
SignStream HDTV Display Network
HDTV Broadcasting
delivers HD video and signage as HDTV channels
Easy Networking
download to one server, video travels over RF cable
Simple Integration
connect HDTV displays through same cable as TV channels
Web Control
manage playlists, schedules, and displays via Web pages



Contemporary Research

crwww.com
888.972.2728

why it's 6PM and they are worried about turning people away. I understand why shuttles are scurrying all over Buckhead getting people to the church because they can't all fit in the church parking lot, and I see why this church is exploding in growth. God is in this.

I know that was a little long-winded, but I believe it's necessary for you to understand what the experience is like – many of you don't have the chance to visit other churches to see what they are doing because you are so involved at your church each Sunday. Until you experience this first hand and speak to the leaders that are doing video church campuses - and speak to the attendee's - it's hard to make the connection. This is real – and it's being used by God to reach people.

A Brief History of Northpoint: The Why

So, before we talk about the technology used and how video church is pulled off, let's address the question I asked at the top of this article – WHY do it in the first place?

There are many credible answers to this question, but lets take a brief look at the history of North Point Community Church and how this evolved for them. Initially in 1995, meeting every other Sunday night, North Point began its ministry. In 1998 they moved to Alpharetta, GA and built their first auditorium with a building that could seat in the neighborhood of 2400 people. Within 2 years, God had blessed the church and they were busting at the seams. Running two services each week, they were faced with a challenge that many churches have faced – where

do we go from here? Should they build a huge 6,000+ seat worship center that is larger than life or do something different?

Being North Point, they opted for something different. They decided to build a mirror auditorium that was just like the original only without a balcony. The idea was basically an overflow room on steroids. This second auditorium had it's own praise and worship team, lighting, and sound system. Then, when it was time for the teaching time to begin, on came the projector and there was Andy Stanley (or another communicator) – live sized and ready to teach. Does this sound familiar?

Brad Weston of Renewed Vision (and member of North Point Community Church) remembers the first Sunday they opened the second auditorium. He recalls that everyone was on pins and needles wondering if it was really going to work – were people going to connect with Andy or were they going to check out knowing it was video. He said, he remembers when Andy asked a polling question – “how many of you in this room have ever...”, and immediately throughout the second auditorium hands shot up everywhere. He smiled and at that point knew – THIS WORKED. People connected with Andy – even on video.

The growth continued and soon, North Point found them self again at a crossroad. How do they facilitate the growth they are experiencing? Wow – what a great problem to have to deal with!

There were several issues to address. Parking was a nightmare – crowd control was insane – thousands of people were descending on this campus for multi-services each week. How much bigger could the facilities get, and if the facilities did grow in size, how would they accommodate the people? These were serious issues.

As the North Point staff looked at this, they realized that their “overflow service” was a huge success. People

Save \$\$\$ on your Media Ministry!

as low as 31¢

Custom Pre-Printed CD-Rs and DVD-Rs



Simply choose from our professional backgrounds or upload your own artwork!

You type:

(Your Message Here) . . .

Now your discs will have a professional look for much less than the cost of printing labels.

See cost comparisons by visiting: www.wtsduplication.com/discprinting

Design and buy online!

WTSduplication.com

1-800-591-4784



loved it. Then they started to think, well, if it works in another room, why not another building – ON ANOTHER CAMPUS? They started looking at the demographics and realized that people were traveling 40+ miles to attend North Point. So they tested the idea.

They were prudent – they didn't just jump into a satellite church right off the bat, but as they tested the waters bit by bit, their first satellite church was developed.

What they began to learn is that people will attend a church and drive 40+ miles to get there if they believe in it, but they are not as likely to invite their friends to do so. On the other hand, if they took the church service to the people, all of a sudden they can't wait to invite their friends. Many of these people go (much like I did) figuring, it'll be interesting and they have nothing to lose. But what quickly happens is they connect with the people, the worship, the message, and the experience. Suddenly they can't wait to come back, and before you know it, they are involved and God is working in their life.

Why do it? It's not about ego or pride or self-indulgence. You do it to reach people. This concept of video church allows you to plant a new church, staff it like a regular church, lead worship as a regular church, but when it comes time for the teaching you get to bring in a world-class communicator (any number of people that God has anointed to bring His Word in a powerful way) to your church every Sunday.

Brad Weston hit the nail on the head when he said: "If you don't build a system that encourages corporate worship and small group development then you might as well be broadcasting on TV". When he said this, the final piece of the puzzle fell into place for me. He's right. This isn't watching a sermon on TV at all. It's getting the truth communicated by a great man of God (be it an Andy Stanley, Joel Osteen, Billy

Graham, or anyone else) but within the corporate setting of other believers with real-life real-time ministry happening all around.

"It's the biggest no-brainer in the history of man" to quote a commercial often heard on the radio. Use the best resources available to us today to reach people. At the same time solve over-crowding issues and insane building costs. Take dynamic speakers to the people.

So, I think we've covered the Why, now let's look at the How.

"There is one trick to doing a recorded feed for delivery at a later time: The material has to be timeless."

The Tech Behind the Curtain: The How

The first question you should answer is: Do you want to do video church live or to do a delayed tape or hard drive service. This is the question of much debate among "Video Church Experts". The primary question you have to answer is: "Is there a specific reason I have to do it live, and if so – what is it?".

Live feeds are problematic at best. They are expensive, and tend to require more infrastructure. Also, depending on how you plan to conduct the live feed you have potential compression and quality issues to address.

The only tangible reason to do a live feed is if your communicator tends to teach time-dependant material. If the communicator is teaching God's Word in a timeless manner choosing a delayed tape or hard-

drive delivery method might be the best choice. It will be cheaper, easier to maintain, and easier to control the overall quality. A delayed stream will also give you more flexibility in how often the material can be used. For instance, North Point has an inventory of teaching series' that their "Strategic Partner" churches use from time to time, as it is needed for their congregation.

If you are going to do a live feed you are going to need some form of dependable transmission method – and preferably a backup. It's going to require more equipment and more money. Chris Mavity who is on staff at North Coast Church and oversees the North Coast Training Network often says: "Murphy is in the live feed". When I questioned him about this he says that whenever he is doing multi-site broadcasts, he always experiences exponentially more problems with the live-feed than the delayed feeds.

When the question comes up about doing it live, the number one question asked is: Why?

It seems that there are countless advantages to doing a recorded feed that is shown at a later time. The advantages are so many that is what we will spend most of our time looking at.

There is one trick to doing a recorded feed for delivery at a later time: The material has to be timeless. Your communicator can't reference a specific event in history or be too detailed with local demographics. While this might seem like a bad thing, it's really not so bad – one of the huge advantages to using a recorded feed is that it can be used over and over again. Remember – one of the primary reasons for doing multi-site video churches is to be able to allow your communicator to reach as many people as possible. Why would you want to limit this to being used on one weekend? Image a solid message that can be delivered next year or the next? Now that's exciting!

If you are serious about creating a video church, there are some things you have to get right. First off, your use of technology has to be solid. The lighting, sound, and video need to be dependable systems, and those who operate these systems must be accomplished at their task.

In order for video church to work it has to connect with people. Every time there is a glitch in the video, or bad sound, or any other distraction this creates a disconnect. If you create enough disconnects then this technology won't work. In order to make this effective you have to draw people into the message – to do this, it needs to be flawless.

I suggest that your technology has to be the best it possibly can be. Chris Mavity states that in his opinion, the size of the room and congregational expectations will drive the quality needed. Chris makes the point that not only must the quality be good, but it must be CONSISTENT QUALITY. At the bare minimum, the production quality must meet the expectations of your community. I urge you to do the best you can and exceed expectations. Ultimately – God has to be in it, and as we all know – if God is in it then it will work.

If we take a moment to look at the North Point model (perhaps one of the more complex setups in this arena

of Video Church) we see them using multiple screens. North Point took the concept of Video Church and made it extreme. Not only do they use the side screens that you would expect to see in a worship environment, they also put their communicator on a huge Hi-Definition screen center stage - life sized and ready to teach!

In the early stages they experimented with different delivery methods and faced several challenges. One of the biggest problems was syncing the hi-def and standard-def signals. Over time due to dropped frames or other issues, one stream or the other would move out of sync and there was nothing they could do about it. Plus in the early days they were using tape (tape that was extremely expensive by the way). As they searched for a better method, the guys at Renewed Vision invented a new piece of software called ProVideoSync.

ProVideoSync is in its most simple form a video playback device. The hi-def and standard-def streams are loaded onto the machine and synced together. Then, once they hit PLAY it fires both videos at the same time. The software solves any potential drifting problems by providing buttons on the interface that allows one stream to skip ahead or drop back one frame at a time until both video streams are in sync again. This can be done live,



St. Thomas More Catholic Church, Paducah, KY

We Provide Lighting Solutions.

Whether you need lighting equipment, supplies, repair or rentals, you can count on the professionals at Vincent Lighting. Since 1978, churches nationwide have depended on us to deliver reliable advice, quality lighting and consistent service. Give us a call with your next challenge. We provide lighting solutions.

Our NEW 2007 catalog is now available. Log onto vincentlighting.com or call for a FREE copy.

1-800-922-5356 vincentlighting.com

VINCENT LIGHTING SYSTEMS

Expand Your Video Ministry

With High Quality Video Transport

- Bidirectional streaming for interactive worship
- Unrivaled video quality at low data rates
- Reliable distribution over IP networks
- Easy to set up and use
- Low total cost of ownership

See us at NAB
Booth #SU15515

— Steve Griffith
Creative Media Pastor
Christ Fellowship Church



www.streambox.com
sales@streambox.com
+1 206.956.0544 Ext. 222



without the audience noticing – and it can be done by a volunteer, thus reducing the need for trained professionals.

ProVideoSync solved several problems. Now the series is delivered on a Firewire Hard Drive each week – no more costly tapes. It allows a solution for quickly getting the presentation back in sync when it drifts, and finally, the system itself is cost effective. Instead of spending upwards of \$50,000 - \$100,000 on a hi-def playback device (and the same again on a backup device), plus all the hardware and standard-def playback devices you are now able to purchase ProVideoSync for a small fraction of that cost. By far a more economical solution.

The effect was worth the hassle. Having the big-screen center stage with Andy life size and the IMAG screens on the side really sells the effect. You feel like you are in the live auditorium. You see Andy (or other North Point communicator) out of the corner of your eye on stage – complete with the set and everything else behind him – but you're really watching the close-ups on the IMAG (if you think about it, that's what you do in a normal church – you naturally gravitate towards the IMAG screens even if you don't need to). You might think this is a lot of money, time, and hassle, but I believe it's a smart step. The whole idea behind Video Churches is to connect with people and minimize disconnects. Having the center screen makes the reality that much more so.

Now, it's important to realize that North Point is in the minority. Most churches doing Video Church campuses are doing it with standard-def IMAG screens, and they are using either a single screen or a dual screen system. The end result is that you don't have to go crazy to make this work. You can dim the lights on the staging area and fire up the video screens and let the communicator teach away.

The important thing is your overall production quality, the ability for your communicator to teach in a timeless fashion, and the ability to manage your content. With the advances in technology, it's easy to transmit messages via FTP, Firewire Drives, or Digital Tape. The choice is yours.

Many churches use this concept of Video Church for different reasons. Some use it for Sunday night service, others partner with churches such as North Point and use the materials as their primary message for a sermon series. Some, such as North Coast, use it to communicate to many different styles at once. Perhaps you are in a church that is facing an identity crisis – how do you reach a new generation without alienating the old? North Coast solves the problem by creating multiple venues that have the aesthetics and worship style of different genres then tie the teaching together with the video message. When I questioned them about how effective is it to have one person giving the same message to a young group of “heavy metal” worshipers versus an older group of “country western” worshipers and so forth they replied



A typical live-video switching room

that it was very successful. In their experience, what makes it work is that the communicator is authentic. That's the thing. People want to see authenticity. If you are genuine and have the anointing to communicate, the message will stand and people's lives will be touched.

North Coast, along with many of the Video Church models still puts a high priority on the development of small groups. The goal is to get people worshipping together in an environment they are comfortable in but doing the discipleship and training in small groups. It's really not too different than what Jesus did – he taught to the multitudes, but he picked 12 to walk with on a daily basis. Ultimately, it's about connecting with people.

Chris Mavity compared the idea of

video church and how it's spreading the Gospel to the way the invention of the printing press allowed the wide-spread of the Bible. I believe he sums it up best when he says that the concept of Video Church is simply "Applying the technology of today to the spreading of the Gospel".

Applying technology to the spreading of the Gospel. What a concept – and it's a concept that's catching on! If you are interested in starting a Video Church or would just like more information, I urge you to visit the Coast to Coast conference website at www.multi-site.com. The entire purpose of this conference is to help churches understand what it takes to do Video Church. You can attend and get more information and determine if Video Church is for your ministry or not, or if you know

it's for you this conference will equip you in how to do it.

The one thing that I have found in writing this article is that all the people I spoke with are without exception on fire for God and passionately want to reach people for the Kingdom. These people all want to see the Word of God spread world-wide. If you are serious about wanting to get into this kind of ministry there are many people willing to help along the way.

Spread the Word. ◆

Brad Herring operates Church Production Resources, Inc. a ministry designed to equip the worship technicians and worship leaders with the skills needed to use media and arts to further the Gospel message. www.ChurchProductionResources.com



Brownsbridge Church again, this time with band instruments rolled off stage and Andy larger than life on all three screens for the message. They play back 16x9 standard-definition on the sides and high-definition in center. This one was nicely complemented with blue stage lighting which matched the blue set on video.