The Three "Ps" of Refreshing The Children's Ministry
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When considering the challenge of "refreshing" the children's ministry (CM), it is critically important to ask God to show you what needs to be refreshed the most. There are similarities between "refreshing" a ministry and remodeling a house.

When remodeling a house, builders or owners have two options:

- To completely tear down the structure and build a new one.
- To use the existing structure and add "cosmetic" features to "freshen" the look of the house.

   Vs.

A "cosmetic" remodeling project only seeks to add some "cosmetic" items to the original house (window effects, wall facings, patio covers, etc.). A "cosmetic" remodeling effort gives a fresh, new look, without changing anything inside the structure.

A complete "tear down" removes everything related to the original structure, with the exception of the cement foundation. This option is very costly and involves permits and legal issues.

There is usually no need to tear down the entire CM and to build a new ministry "from scratch." Most CM refreshment projects can include some significant changes or additions without tearing down the entire ministry.

There are three factors that begin with the letter "P" that play significant parts in a CM refreshment: **People, Programs,** and **Process.** These are the three "P's" of refreshing the CM.

PEOPLE

The most important factor in refreshing the CM is the people who serve on the CM team. Ministry isn't about the facility, the curriculum, or the programs. Ministry is about people. The people who serve on the CM team are very critical because they are the ones who build relationships with the children and who become significant examples for the children as they grow spiritually.

When considering refreshing the CM, you need to consider the CM team members:

- Are they passionate about the Lord?
- Do they love children?
- Are they servants?
- Are they committed to the CM vision?
- Are they faithful, willing to work, and dependable?
- Are they willing to go beyond what is expected of them in order to minister to the children?

If there are any CM team members who don't fit these qualities, they may need to be "retired."
REMEMBER: In order to please the Lord, and to protect yourself from possibly being sued, it is important to assure and document that you have done the following before you "retire" a CM team member:

- Consistently, regularly compliment the team member for what he/she does well.
- Confirm that he/she knows what is expected through training and communication of the policies and procedures.
- If he/she acts differently from what is expected, discuss the differences with him/her privately and encourage him/her. (This is only done if the "inappropriate action" doesn't place the children at risk emotionally or physically.)
- Document the discussion content and date.
- Look for changes in his/her behavior and reinforce the changed behavior.
- If he/she repeats the inappropriate behavior, discuss the issue with him/her privately again. Ask him/her to explain his/her actions and to describe the appropriate behavior as described in the policy manual. Caution the team member regarding repeating this inappropriate behavior again. Explain that those who cannot conform to the approved standards will not be allowed to serve on the CM team.
- Document the discussion. Email the documentation to the team member and ask for his/her approval of the documentation.
- Meet with your supervising pastor about the issue. Give him/her copies of the documentation and ask for his/her direction. (This may present you with the challenge from your supervising pastor to "make it work." You may need to work with the inappropriate team member and not remove him/her.)
- If the CM team member repeats the inappropriate behavior, then make plans to deal with the team member according to your supervisor's wishes. If you need to reassign the team member to a different area of the ministry in order to increase his/her supervision, do so. If you are able to "retire" him/her, you'll have to adjust your team to care for the children without leaving a CM team member alone with children.
- Document your decision and actions.

PROGRAMS

When you consider "refreshing" CM programs, you need to first identify the vision and goals for every program. Then, you can begin to "refresh" them. If a current program "looks" good, but it doesn't satisfy the vision or goals, it might need to be refreshed. You can't afford to keep a program simply because it has been around for many years, or because "that's the way we've always done it."

Refreshing regular small-group programs can be accomplished by changing the "look" of the room, adding interactive, interesting experiences to the curriculum, or changing the schedule of the hour. You can also lead the children out of the "normal" room periodically to have an on or off-campus "field trip."

Refreshing a large-group program is more complex. Here are some thoughts on the basic principles for large group programs. As you read through these basic principles, you might discover aspects of the current program that can be refreshed. Of course, every church and every CM is unique, but these are general principles for large group programs:

Foundational Principles of Large Group Programs

Today's culture is moving away from "long and complex," and embracing "short and simple." Today's children still want to be captivated and inspired; but they are not as patient as they used to be. Today's large group gatherings must be stimulating and quick. There must be a purpose for, and use of the information, or the children will lose interest. The presentation must be "fresh," and it must relate to the audience's present needs and interests.

Operational Principles

1. Reflects the overall church and CM vision –
2. Attractive to children
    a. Identifiable by kids – contains topics that today's kids understand and talk about.
    b. Interesting to kids – includes topics or content that kids want to know more about.
3. Fun for children
    a. Interactive – lets the children talk back, voice opinions and give answers.
    b. Surprising – surprises come in the spoken dialog, staging, entrances, visuals, etc.
    c. "Sensual" (involving the senses) – incorporating visuals, smells, sounds and feelings.
    d. Funny – use of humor, jokes, slapstick, realistic behavior gone "bad," etc.
    e. Messy – use of water, messy liquids, gross stuff, falling items (glitter, powdered sugar, etc.).
4. Technically "tight"
    a. Communication between audio, video, and stage people is clear and swift.
    b. No "down time" – the video controller must have a "filler" video to show if necessary.
    c. Lights – use of lighting to indicate various "feelings" of focuses.
5. Energetically varied
    a. Times of high energy excitement.
    b. Times of low energy, thoughtful moments.
6. Contains clear scripture passage/principle
    a. Easily understood by the children.
    b. Repeated often.
7. Includes a clear, realistic (age-appropriate) challenge for evangelistic application
    a. Something the children can use/apply today!
    b. Something that is measurable next week.
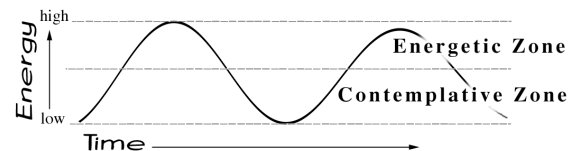
Specific Components

1. <u>Something visually interesting as the children enter</u> ("Cool" Factor)
    a. Video clips of lesson-related activity or unusual fun.
    b. Video clips of random, thrilling activity (amazing feats or stunts).
    c. Video clips of animals doing cute or funny things.
    d. Lesson/topic-related decorations.

2. <u>Friendly staff to welcome the children</u>
    a. Greet them at the door with smiles and "high fives."
    b. Assist them in getting seated in their areas.

3. <u>Energetic welcome from kid-focused, happy team member on stage</u>
    a. A personal welcome, "So glad you're here!" (Engage the kids!)
    b. Reinforce the name, purpose, topic for the program.
    c. Introduce the guest or worship leader (if the greeter isn't the worship leader).
    d. Speak loudly.
    e. Possible use of low talk or silence to capture attention.
    f. Must demand attention from the very beginning.

4. <u>Audio Mood Setting</u>
    a. Use of audio to signal or set a mood.
    b. Well-rehearsed (no "dead time").

5. <u>Energetic, Active Worship</u> (also applies to a single performer)
    a. "Up and moving" motions – not "tired" motions, but creative, fresh ones.
    b. Words on screen – for only new songs.
    c. Repeatable phrases or shouts for kids.
    d. Brief introductions or applications between songs (optional).
    e. A blend of loud and quiet songs (variety).
    f. Professional-looking kids on stage.
    g. A mixture of familiar and new songs.
    h. If "adult" songs are used (main stage songs), they must be "energized" with movement.

6. <u>An interesting guest</u> (may deliver the lesson)
    a. Exciting, interesting to the children (not only to adults).
    b. Good with children (can talk to them, and "play" with them).
    c. Demonstrates something that is related to the topic.
    d. Actions or story can be applied to the children's lives or Christian life.

7. <u>An interactive lesson</u> (if there is no teaching guest)
    a. "2-way" conversations (from stage to kids). (*Have you ever...?*)
    b. Thought-provoking challenges. (*"What would it be like if...?*)
    c. Humorous, purposeful "bird walks," or comments. *(Wow, that's a great shirt!)*
    d. Speak the kids' thoughts. *(Why do I always have to do the right thing?)*
    e. Bring the scripture "alive" to the kids' day today! *(That means when your brother...)*
    f. Use of repeated statements, comments, or phrases. *(But, God's love is different!)*
    g. Clear, specific lesson application in an action or attitude. *(So, next time you...)*

8. <u>A spiritual challenge</u>
    a. Connect the lesson to the kids' relationships with Jesus.
    b. Clearly challenge the kids to respond to the message.
    c. Identify the kids who express a desire to become a Christian.
    d. Contact the parents at the end of the service (offer assistance or pray with the child).

9. A "Wow Moment"
   a. At the end of the program
   b. "Grand Finale" with balloons, glow sticks, etc.
   c. Surprise factor (may be anticipated, but not totally known).

PROCESS

When wanting to refresh a CM, you might consider refreshing the CM "process." The "process" includes policies, procedures, recruiting, training, scheduling, communication, supervision, etc.

The process is influenced and controlled by the people. If the "right" people are in place, the process moves well in the "right" direction. If the "right" people aren't in place, you will face hurdles, push-back, and complications along the entire journey.

Within this "process" area, you must "count the cost" and move carefully. If you move too fast, you might significantly destroy the structure of the CM (as a result of the leadership rebelling and possibly quitting). If you move too slowly, nothing is ever accomplished because you aren't creating enough "momentum," and you are always "sidetracked" by the excuses. You need God's provision and leading as you move forward. Here are some ways to refresh the process:

The Overview

1. An address/commissioning by the senior pastor or elder who joins the CM Director/pastor. This gives a strong support for the changes that are to be made and it fosters trust.
2. Follow the address/commissioning with specific plans for "refreshing" people, programs, and processes.

CM Leadership Restructuring

1. Consider adjusting the CM leadership titles and positions.
2. Adjust positions and responsibilities to make the CM more efficient.
3. Adjust positions to increase the possibilities for new CM programs.
4. Add more CM leadership positions, if possible, to increase communication and support.
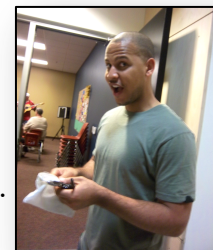
Refresh Team Development

1. Improve the CM team recruiting process.
2. Improve the CM team training process.
3. Adjust the CM team placement to assure that "veteran" CM team members mentor the new ones.
4. Increase the on-going team training plans.
5. Increase the CM team fun or social events.
6. Increase the CM team appreciation plans.
7. Improve or establish the CM team rotation process.