

## **Seven Tips for Seamless Staging**

**By Catherine Shanahan**

Your house of worship is more than just an ordinary space. It's a space where families and friends experience great joy. It's a space where you might gather for Sunday services, Friday night events, and Saturday pageants. It's a space where people take part in weddings and funerals, holidays and solemn days. And, in many churches, the most sacred space of all—the pulpit and altar area—often doubles as a staging area, a place where age-old religion meets today's technology.

So, how do you create high-impact staging while maintaining an aura of reverence and respect? It's all about how your equipment operates together. If you have a church full of people and no one can hear the pastor or see the screen, this will not only distract congregants, but also detract from what should be a joyous experience.

Here are seven ways to make sure your staging operations are as seamless as they are soulful.

### **1. Have clear goals for your staging area, and do proper research and design.**

The research and the design phase are the most important phases of the installation process. When designing a new system for your stage, keep in mind all the ways you use the stage or that you might use the stage in the future. Staging areas are becoming more elaborate so as to accommodate theater productions, pageants, and choirs, in addition to regular religious services.

Before jumping into the design or buying equipment, spend time talking to the people who use the staging area the most. What's on their wish lists, and what are their must-haves? While you should be mindful of future uses and growth, it's important not to over-design for the people who are using the staging area today.

### **2. Choose the right equipment.**

While needs will vary from one house of worship to another, here's what you should consider when choosing your audio, video, and lighting gear.

#### *Audio*

Today's microphones are getting smaller and smaller, as both audiences and performers demand "invisibility" when it comes to mics. A popular choice is an ear-mounted, flesh-tone microphone. Just be sure that you choose mics that are easy to use. It doesn't make sense to have invisible mics if they're difficult for users to operate or if they get in the way of what the performers are doing. Use clear and well-balanced microphones, and make sure they're well maintained.

When you choose speakers, do your research. Don't automatically turn to the biggest name brand. You want clear and even coverage across the room, which is a challenge in many churches, with their high ceilings and cavernous spaces. Proper speaker placement is essential. A good systems integration specialist can help you place your speakers for maximum coverage. Another thing to consider is how your speakers are used. If your church is hosting a rock band one day and a soloist the next, the speakers need to handle both scenarios. Keep in mind that some speakers are voice-quality only, while others are optimal for music and singing, and still

others can accommodate both voice and music/singing. This goes back to understanding the uses and needs of your particular staging area.

Finally, a quality digital console will allow the seamless integration of your audio devices.

### *Video*

Your video needs to be bright enough to be seen from all corners of the church—not always an easy task, especially on bright sunny Sunday mornings or during evening events in December. Screen selection plays an important role in this. You must be aware of not only the brightness of the projector, but also the quality of the screen. Different screens are made from different materials, which can produce different effects. Some spaces will call for front projection, and others will call for rear projection.

Choosing the proper lens for your projector is also essential. Are you going to be playing DVDs, showing PowerPoint presentations, or streaming video from the Internet? Each application is formatted differently and projected differently. Again, understanding what your video needs are will help your systems integrator recommend the right gear for your staging area.

### *Lighting*

Opt for a lighting system that provides multiple “scene” (setting) switching/recalling.

## **3. Conduct proper installations.**

No doubt, you will have church members willing to donate their time, but it’s important to have professionals install the systems. However, a good systems integrator will be able to maximize the volunteer force. It’s also important to have a systems integrator who is well connected with other professionals needed for the install. For example, if the systems integration company doesn’t do the lighting itself, it should have a quality lighting company with whom it can work seamlessly.

## **4. Provide proper training for staff.**

From the people behind the projector to the people operating the soundboard, the education of your staff is a worthwhile investment. Operators need to know what every button is for, and they need to troubleshoot quickly and efficiently. A quality systems integrator will offer training to your staff, but it’s important that you select church technicians who are interested and want to be involved. Don’t choose those who are technical minded only; choose people who are interested in the goings-on of your particular house of worship, as well.

## **5. Provide proper training for end users.**

These are the people on the stage giving the sermon, directing the PowerPoint, and singing the solo. They need to be trained on certain things as well, such as how to use the microphones.

## **6. Hold rehearsals.**

The church tech might know how to operate the soundboard, and the pastor might know how to use the mic, but the two need to know how to work together as a team. You can tell, for example, when the band hasn’t practiced or when it isn’t familiar with the gear. These glitches are more transparent to congregants than you might think, and they will get in the way of the atmosphere

of worship that you are creating. To have high impact, the best thing to do is have everyone practice and learn how to use the system.

### **7. Always look for ways to improve your system.**

Be on the lookout for ways to make your system simpler and easier to use. Make sure you keep up with the latest releases on your gear's software. Stay on top of repairs and maintenance. At least once a year, have the whole system checked, such as connections and mics. Even better, perform a check-up twice a year, prior to the biggest events or holidays, such as Christmas and Easter. Maintenance contracts are good ideas, especially if you don't have someone in-house who knows how to spot trouble.

Remember, church services and events are meant to be joyous and soulful experiences. Seamless systems play a huge role in making this happen. If a congregant feels he or she is on the stage with the pastor, choir, or some other performer, his or her worship experience is that much more enhanced.

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## **Product Roundup**

### **American DJ Mega Bar LED Light Fixture from TLS**

The American DJ Mega Bar LED light fixture has been selling like hotcakes to many churches. At just more than 3 feet long, this ultra bright LED color bar is perfect as a wall wash or to illuminate areas where traditional lighting is emitting too much heat onto the choir and pastor. Plus, because it's LED and has a life of at least 100,000 hours, no one has to climb up and change those hard-to-reach bulbs anymore. The other advantage is that it has very low power consumption, so your church can "go green."

[www.tlsinc.com](http://www.tlsinc.com)

### **CHAUVET COLORado 6 Wash Bank**

CHAUVET has introduced the COLORado 6 wash bank, an updated and upgraded version of the COLORado 3 that has been illuminating houses of worship and indoor/outdoor architectural elements this year. CHAUVET engineers have redesigned the unit, enhancing an already stellar performer. The COLORado 6 shares many features of the COLORado 3, with three pods of LEDs, an IP-66 rating, RGB color mixing, built-in automated programs, interlocking casings, and loop-through power and data cable wiring. In addition, the COLORado 6 can be set into 3, 9, or 12-channel mode (with ID addressing), and features full 512-channel addressability.

[www.chauvetlighting.com](http://www.chauvetlighting.com)

## **Exhibit and Display Truss**

Exhibit and Display Truss.com is a supplier of aluminum truss and trussing systems. They specialize in "off the shelf" displays and exhibits used for house of worship. Their aluminum trusses are often used in stage lighting situations where a load-bearing structure is required for lighting instrument installations. They offer five truss sizes and three different profile shapes (four-chord box truss, three-chord triangle truss, and two-chord flat truss). Any shape or custom design can be quickly created at no extra charge, and they always work with customers to provide the best possible service, price, and quality truss system for their venue.

[www.exhibitanddisplaytruss.com](http://www.exhibitanddisplaytruss.com)

### **MagicSnow**

Imagine... out of thin air, flakes of fluffy white snow float down from the sky, transforming your space into a living snow globe. But just as mysteriously as the snow appears, it disappears without a trace, leaving behind magical memories that last a lifetime. MagicSnow is produced with a system that creates millions of special effects snow flakes, and it vanishes upon contact. Snow falls on cue and disappears like magic. MagicSnow is safe, self-cleaning, and environmentally friendly. The company's team of Hollywood effects experts will design an installation that's right for you and are on-site for each show to ensure a realistic snowfall every time.

[www.MagicSnow.com](http://www.MagicSnow.com)

### **MXR from Apollo Design**

The MXR's magic is in its unique color strings. Putting a new twist on two-string color mixing, the MXR's innovative color selection and frame sequence maximize the useful colors. Off-the-shelf color works fine for many lighting applications, but Apollo's MXR gives you far more custom color options. Using the subtractive color mixing method to achieve the desired hue and saturation, hundreds of different colors can be realized. To further the creative process, the primary additive colors have been added to the ends of each string. With the direct drive 4-motor system providing quiet and smooth color transition and low power consumption, the MXR gives the designer absolute color control at a very affordable price.

[www.internetapollo.com](http://www.internetapollo.com)

### **Vortek**

Vortek automated rigging solutions are a perfect fit for religious facilities that are looking to upgrade their praise and worship capabilities or construct a new building. Manufactured as a complete system, Vortek consists of compact, motorized hoists, with pre-engineered wire ways and easy-to-use stage-level controls. The flexible configurations allow for the system to be installed into almost any space. Fundamental to every Vortek hoist module is its patented load brake. The added protection of this fully mechanical, continuously applied brake reduces the risk of runaway line sets. The Vortek system offers creative theatrical motorized movements, simplicity, economical benefits, and easy installation.

[www.vortekrigging.com](http://www.vortekrigging.com)

### **Wybron Nexera**

Lightweight, versatile and practical for any house of worship, Wybron's Nexera ellipsoidal spotlight produces thousands of vibrant colors by projecting light through a dichroic glass color changer that mixes cyan, magenta, and yellow. The glass won't fade or burn, keeping colors strong for years, and a convection cooling system means no noisy fans. The Nexera comes in several different models for wash and profile lighting, and the Nexera DX model contains its own dimmer and power supply. The Nexera works with the DMX communication protocol as well as the Remote Device Management two-way talkback protocol, which lets users manage their lighting rigs from their laptops.

[www.wybron.com](http://www.wybron.com)

### **Galileo Pendant Series from Eclipse Lighting**

The Galileo family has expanded to include a series of standard pendant models. Galileo Pendants are available in three sizes, each with a standard stem length of 12" (custom stem lengths are available). Pendants can be suspended indoor or outdoor and look best when paired with architectural sconces within the Galileo family. Eclipse Lighting Inc. is committed to staying current by incorporating cutting-edge LED lighting technology into its line of products. Eclipse Lighting designs and manufactures award-winning architectural outdoor/indoor wall sconces, decorative luminaries, and vandal-resistant fixtures using the latest technology in fluorescent, HID, and Induction lamps.

[www.eclipselightinginc.com](http://www.eclipselightinginc.com)

### **SICO Staging Systems**

The Dual or Single Height 1800 series from Sico offers all the advantages of a mobile folding stage, plus the added simplicity and speed of built-in height adjustability. The 1800 is designed to be set up and taken down by one person, resulting in considerable savings in time and labor. SICO also offers the Tri-Height stage for even more flexibility. Set up at single level for meeting room stages or head table settings. Set up tiered configurations for seating or choral risers. All SICO stages are easy to set up and take down. Each section rolls on its own casters and is quickly and easily set into place.

[www.sicoinc.com](http://www.sicoinc.com)