



## THE CHURCH OPERATIONS TOOLKIT

# HOW TO LEVERAGE OUTSOURCING TO ACCOMPLISH MORE WITHOUT BREAKING THE BANK

## INTERVIEW WITH MATT LOMBARDI OF SHAAR.WORK

Matt Lombardi is the Founder of Shaar.work, a website geared towards helping church leaders find great freelance professional and to help those professionals find amazing church clients to serve.

### 3 Key Insights:

1. **Work that needs to be done for your church doesn't actually have to be done in your church.** Outsourcing and building remote teams can be a great way to grow your team without having to add several full-time staff members.
2. **Consider what you could outsource to someone who's off-site.** Social media, video editing, are just two examples.
3. **Leverage technology to adapt to changing conditions, save money, and increase effectiveness.** The church's overall mission doesn't change. However, the tactics and tools we use to achieve that mission are going to change on a regular basis.

Those just scratch the surface of my conversation with Matt Lombardi. Watch the video or read the transcript to learn more about how outsourcing can help your church accomplish more in a cost-effective manner.



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**Deborah:** Well, today we have Matt Lombardi from Shaar.work, who started this new resource for church leaders to be able to find freelancers who love the church, who want to serve the church, and to help those freelancers find great churches to work for. So it's an awesome place for both sides to connect, help each other out, and I'm excited for what Matt can help us learn about outsourcing and making that freelancer-church leader relationship work really well. So Matt, thanks so much for joining us today.

**Matt:** Yeah, Deborah, thanks so much for having me. I'm super pumped to be here. Love what you're up to, and you've always been such a great resource for me as a church leader, so yeah, Any value I can add, pumped to do it.

**Deborah Ike:** Appreciate that. So first of all did I explain Shaar well? I mean, is there anything you wanted to add to that?

**Matt Lombardi:** I couldn't have explained better myself. You did wonderful.

**Deborah Ike:** Perfect. So what is outsourcing, and particularly in a church environment, what does that really look like?

**Matt Lombardi:** Yeah, that's a great question. So there's a famous business guy named Peter Drucker. He once said, "Outsource everything except for your soul, and even consider outsourcing that," which I would not recommend to churches, but the point still remains. Outsourcing has been common practice in the business world for a very long time now. It's known as really one of the key ways to make your organization work more efficient, and ultimately to help you save a lot of money and get great results in the process.

So for churches, when we talk about outsourcing for churches, there's a thing that we like to say around Shaar that work that needs to be done for your church doesn't actually have to be done in your church. And so what that really means is we're just talking about building remote teams, which all of us are now comfortable with because we're working in a COVID situation. We all work with Zoom, and Slack, and Asana, and Google products. And so we all get that you can work with someone even if they're not in your physical location. So for churches, when we talk about outsourcing, we're trying to get churches to think more through how could you build a remote flexible team with the skills that you need, and be able to hire world-class talent no matter where you are working?

**Deborah Ike:** Awesome. Now, what types of projects or tasks specifically would you outsource? Especially if a church leader is just new to this whole concept and trying to get their feet wet in it. What are some easy, quick wins?



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**Matt:** Yeah. Super easy, quick wins would probably be things like social media. I've done a lot of social media marketing for churches, and we're always thinking through the same thing, even at the church I serve at right now, which is we know it's important. We know we're leaving points on the scoreboard, as they say, with social media. We know it could always be better. And yet, because it's not the immediate pressing thing of the weekend, oftentimes it becomes like, "Oh, I know we need to post. I know we need to post," and no one really owns it, and there isn't a huge strategy around it for most churches now. Some churches are crushing it, but in my experience, it's pretty common that that's a ball that gets dropped. And so that's a great, easy win. It's one of those things that every church leader knows, "I need to be doing better."

So instead of beating yourself up about it, what if you just found someone who that is what they do? But if you're like most churches, you probably can't afford 40 hours a week of a social media manager, and it's probably just too much for what you actually need. So outsourcing is great for that because it helps you to fill a gap in your staffing without having to commit to, "Okay, I have to hire someone for 40 hours a week." Say you need five hours a week, you can outsource for that amount for someone who really knows what they're doing. Give ownership to that. So social media is a great first one.

A big one right now is video editing and video production. Because even if you have a videographer on staff, or say you're a solo worship pastor, and you do all the creative stuff. You're filming and doing all this kind of stuff. Everyone knows that the most labor-intensive part of video production is the editing process. It's one thing to say, "Okay, cool. Let's set up a shoot, and get it lit, and get it recorded. That looks great. Awesome." Now for every hour I spent filming, I'm going to spend five to six hours editing.

And that's really where the time crunch comes in. So what if you could actually spend that time filming on the ground, and then just drop all those files into a Dropbox folder, someone across the world edits it for you, and then they produce a finished product, ship it right to your inbox, and then boom, you're ready to go. You've saved five or six hours a week. That really, it doesn't matter if the person's on the ground to edit video for you. What matters is that they get your brand voice and they're able to communicate what you need to through that editing process. So those would be two quick, easy wins. There are a ton other, but just in our current situation, those seem to be the two that are biggest.

**Deborah:** Yeah, COVID-19 has definitely changed how we have to function. So, being able to get on a Zoom call with an outsourcer and make sure they understand what it is you're looking for, organizing things via email, all of that is stuff that we've had to start adjusting to if we weren't already in that mode. And it can obviously work really well. It's just a matter of finding the right person. So again, that's where a website like yours comes into play.



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**Matt:** Yeah. Because that's something that we see all the time. So when we think about the way organizations hire people, there's the classic three. Everyone talks about them. Ultimately, you're looking for a competence, you're looking for a chemistry fit, and then an actual character fit. You want to make sure they're good people. You want to make sure they fit your culture. You want to make sure they know how to do the job. So in the broader business world, everyone hires first for competence. It's just like, are they good enough to do the job? Great. And then the character and culture are important, but very secondary.

But in the church world, we flip the script. So we care if they're competent, but at the same time, it actually really matters if they have the right character and they're a good cultural fit first. That's actually priority, and then we tend to get to the competence piece, just functionally the way we hire. So when we think about the talent we need, and making sure to your point that we have the right people, you almost need a way to know that the culture and the character are actually there in employees before you hire and okay, they are competent. They can do the job. And so the church is always just a unique beast in that if you're a church administrator you know finding the right talent is a huge struggle.

**Deborah Ike:** Yeah. Now, how can a church save money through outsourcing? I mean, obviously you're not hiring someone full time, so there's not fully loaded staff paying benefits, time off, all that kind of stuff you're dealing with. But is it one of those things where maybe you have the budget to hire maybe a part-time, 20 hours a week person, but instead you don't have maybe work for a 20 hour a week person. You have work for a five hour a week person here, 10 hours somewhere else, stuff like that. Is that the mix that can help you save money, really, and get more done?

**Matt Lombardi:** Yeah. And it addresses what I call a staffing chasm that most searches hit, which is there is not enough work to justify a full time salary. It's not enough work to pay benefits, which are going to cost you \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year, depending on your package. It's not enough to say, "We're going to commit to a full time salary." It's really like, "Okay, well we need like 10 to 12 hours a week." Or even, "We need like 20 to 30 hours a week, but we have to come up with the finances." There's this chasm that we have to cross to be able to come up with the finances to pay a full time person, even though what we really need is 25 hours. So what churches end up doing is justifying it, rationalize it, and be like, "Well, we're staffing for growth," and this sort of thing, even though they know their hand has been forced because there hasn't been a better staffing model.

And so that is where outsourcing comes in. It can be really helpful as you're able to hire for exactly what you need when you need it. So it grows with you. We had a church the other day hire a podcast producer. That's great. Right now they're just doing super basic sermon cut-up. So they just want that cut from the typical Sunday morning message, put on the iTunes so that people can hear it throughout the week. That's great. But what if in six months they want to do another midweek show? So right now they're hiring someone for four or five hours a week, but then they want to add to that. Well, that allows you to be really flexible with your staffing when we're talking about outsourcing. And so that's ultimately going to save you money.



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**Matt Lombardi:** The other big thing that people don't think through with outsourcing and with a remote team form of staffing is because you have higher job satisfaction for your team members, even though they're remote, and even though you think of them as outsource, if they can integrate in your team, they are a part of that. And you have a lot higher job satisfaction, which means less churn, less turnover, less staff searches, all the things that add up and present big expenses when you have to replace a staff person. Well, if they're remote, you're not going to be replacing them as often because they have higher job satisfaction.

The other thing is if you already have someone on your team who's doing this job right now, and they decide they want to move, say a spouse gets a new position, or just say life changes for them, they can still keep working with you, if you're willing to work with them remote, if they already know your team and your culture. So a lot of ways that you're going to save money that aren't the immediate okay, here's 15 bucks here or 300 bucks here, but over the long term are really going to create a better staff environment that allows you to save money from turnover.

**Deborah Ike:** Well, right now we're in a weird space where finances for churches might be a little tight right now. Donations might be down a little bit since people aren't coming physically to church as much. That's in flux it seems like on a weekly basis. And yet at the same time, there's seems to be a need, or maybe the potential, for some growth in the near future. So it's like you don't want to cut back too much because of finances and set yourself up for failure to support future growth.

**Matt Lombardi:** Yeah. And in a world that is uncertain and unprecedented, if I hear that term another time...

**Deborah Ike:** I know, right?

**Matt Lombardi:** But when you're looking at circumstances that are wildly chaotic and uncertain, which I think has all of us as church leaders would say they are right now, your biggest budget item is always staffing. We all know this. Average is 47% of your budget. Some churches high as 60%, some as low as 30, 35ish%, but still, by far, your largest line item is your staffing costs. When the future is uncertain, you need to have flexibility and agility in the way you build your budget for your church, and the way you staff. And so to us, outsourcing and moving towards a more freelance-oriented environment is actually one of the best ways you can build agility and flexibility into your staffing.

Because now all of a sudden, say, you're a church, and you're like, "Hey, the state we live in..." Like my wife and I were up here in Washington state. We're probably going to be on lockdown for another three or four months just because of the way things are up here. So churches up here are sitting there going, "Okay, well, we need a team that can really crush the online presence," but what if they reopened in six months and they see their numbers dip? So you don't want to hire a full time person for just online right now because you don't know if an eight months you're going to need them.



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**Matt Lombardi:** Well, what if you hired a remote team member that is an outsource freelancer to help you through the season, and then hey, if in six months you still need the help, great. You can keep working with them. If you don't, then you're not locked into a longterm contract. The nature of that outsourced relationship is that you use it when you need it and how you need it. And so it just provides a ton of flexibility for churches in this time.

**Deborah Ike:** Yeah. So getting more into details about Shaar and how it works, because this would apply to any outsourcing relationship. How does it work between the church, the outsourcer, and Shaar? Who files with the IRS, and pays who, and how does all that work?

**Matt Lombardi:** So we really are an online marketplace. Think of us like Airbnb. So on Airbnb, you have the supply and demand side. So the demand side for us is the churches, churches who need the work done. Supply side is the freelancers who are able to fill those needs for them, to do the services for them. We sit in the middle as that aggregator of freelancers. And also we create essentially a safe platform for the transaction to take place so that if you're a church, create a profile, super simple. It takes like two minutes. You can post a project. Just say, "Hey, here's what we need. We need a website developer," or, "We need a virtual assistant or a sermon research assistant or an accountant." Whatever we need, here's how many hours a month. Here's our budget. You post the project.

What you're going to get is like four to five freelancers who apply for that and are able to say, "Hey, here's my experience. Here's my portfolio." You can view their profile, and you're able to see, okay, who's the one who best fits us? So we bring everyone to you. That's that middle man relationship. And then what happens is we then allow the church and freelancer just to connect and to work together on this project. Freelancer's going to do the work on their own in communication with the church. And then ultimately when the project is finished and church is, "Hey, this is great. Work was done really well this month." The church is going to pay them through our platform, so it's secure, so that we take care of that whole thing. There's no freelancers sending a seven page scope of work or that stuff.

There's no one on the church side trying to figure out, okay, well, do we send them a 1099 or do we need to claim as a part time employee? How are we going to designate them? And actually with Shaar no 1099s are exchanged, which is a really cool feature, and just simplifies the whole process because as a third party payment provider we are governed by an entirely different set of laws by the IRS than two individuals, like a church and a freelancer. So we're able to really simplify the process for churches so that they don't even send a 1099. Depending on what department it's in, you can just say, "Hey, it's a marketing expense," because your invoice is going to say Shaar Inc. It's not going to say that freelancer specifically. And so it really does simplify the process to where it's just another budget line item instead of a team member.



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**Deborah Ike:** Okay. So it cuts down on a lot of the paperwork and accounting fun-ness that they have to do on the backend.

**Matt Lombardi:** Exactly. All that fun stuff that I know everyone loves to do in February and March.

**Deborah Ike:** Right, yeah. Perfect. So, from a freelancer perspective, how does it work for them? How did they establish their profile and start connecting to church leaders that could use their help?

**Matt Lombardi:** Yeah, absolutely. So it's a little more in depth for the freelancers to set their profile, mostly because we want churches to have a really clear idea of who they're working with. We know that trust is probably the most important thing. I know, as a church leader myself, if I'm going to hire anyone, I want to have a high degree of trust that they're all the things we talked about. So that they are a good cultural fit, that character-wise they actually love Jesus, that they're competent to do the work, all that kind of stuff. So we do try to put some tech solutions in place to vet them a bit more. We don't do a true hand vetting interview process just because it's not scalable at the rate that we're trying to grow. But what we do instead is we take all of my backend experience working in the church knowing people to create some tech solutions on how we vet.

So for example, every freelancer profile has an area for their statement of faith. That's an open ended question where we just say, "Tell me about your journey with Jesus." And that's a very revealing question because if you're a church leader, you probably know if someone came into your church and you're like, "Hey, tell me about your story. Tell me how you came to know Jesus." And they're like, "I am a Christian. I grew up in a Christian household," and that's all they say, you're pretty immediately like, "Interesting." You know what that's code for, which is I'm not sure you have a relationship with Jesus. but if they give you this dynamic response and they clearly articulate, like, "Hey, this is exactly how it happened. This is what my journey has been like," then you really get to know their story and feel like you connect with them on a personal level.

We also have it to where they link to their LinkedIn accounts. They can link to their Facebook profiles. So you can actually see this is who this person is across the entirety of the internet. You can get to know them a little bit more. So for a freelancer, the process for a great profile should take them about 15 to 20 minutes to fill out. We want them to put some thought into it. They'll put their employment history, education, history, just a little blurb about them. And we even have a space where they can set up a 60 to 90 seconds about me introduction video. So they can just record from their webcam, so a church can actually see this is exactly what I'm working with. Get a feel for them. Yeah. So for the freelancers, that's how it works.

We have 18 different categories, so really anything that could serve the church. Everything from all the stuff we've talked about so far, also really things that we're looking towards the future of church staffing. So we're looking at things like, "Hey, if you're a coach or consultant, and you want to serve churches through your experience, there's a place for you on Shaar. If you're say a preacher or a speaker and you're looking to get hired at youth camps or different events, there's a section for you on there."



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We talked about accountants and bookkeepers. So really any category for freelancers, I'd say, go on Shaar... it's [www.Shaar.work](http://www.Shaar.work), and you can create a profile. Should take you 15 to 20 minutes. So for freelancers, if they want to apply for a job, it'll actually show up in their dashboard, whenever a product is posted in their category. So if they're a graphic designer, and so they literally just hit submit proposal, and it takes them through a multi-step process of how they submit that proposal so that a church can start to work with them.

**Deborah Ike:** Awesome. Okay. Well, any last tips or encouragement suggestions for church leaders in this craziness of trying to adapt to the new world and figure out how to navigate outsourcing in the midst of it?

**Matt Lombardi:** Yeah. So this is not a outsourcing related thing, but something that I've learned as a church leader is do not give into the pressure of right now. Everything is not as urgent as it seems. It is so easy to feel like, "Oh my gosh, if we don't adapt right now, or this or that, or change immediately, then our church is going to go under, and we're not going to exist anymore." Jesus loves his church deeply and he is not asleep at the wheel. And so if you're a church leader out there, yes, I know there's a ton of pressure on you right now, but just understand one decision is not going to screw up everything. One direction you go, one failure is not sinking your church, even though it feels like in this time. So that would just be a simple encouragement for churches.

And the other thing I'd say is more in lines of with Shaar, is just pushing church leaders to think different. The future is not what we've been living in for the church world for the past hundred years, that there are going to be different ways to do things, and just keep an open mind. Because as much as what we're building with Shaar, we think is a great technology to help serve the church, I know a lot of other people building really cool technologies that are going to serve the church in different ways in the future. So keep an open mind because the days ahead are going to look different. If we keep doing the same things the same way, that consistent pattern of not changing, not adapting is a way that the church goes under ultimately. And so, yeah, I would just encourage church leaders out there to continue to be adaptable, try new products, try new technologies that might be able to help your church.

**Deborah Ike:** Yeah. And I think it's all about taking enough time to think it through and problem solve, analyze the situation a bit, not rushing into something, but not death by analysis, or analysis paralysis, I guess you could say. Taking so long to evaluate the situation and come up with a million different options that you never actually make it. So there's those that fine balance there. And even having different freelancers come in who have worked in different church environments who are from different parts of the country, have different backgrounds, might be able to give you a different viewpoint on how to handle a problem or a situation that you're facing, or how to reach out to a different part of your city and social media more effectively than maybe you have historically. So there's all kinds of potential benefits from bringing in somebody who's not in your city.



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**Matt Lombardi:** Right. And on your team and already in your church, those outside eyes can be so helpful. And something that you touched on that I think is going to be important for a lot of churches too, is to understand that the freelancers that you're bringing in oftentimes are going to help you get through a log jam of decisions. Oftentimes me as a leader in our church, but also with Shaar, there's so many things where I say, "Okay, here's the big picture strategy. Here's what we want to do." And then we actually get caught up with the overwhelm of there's so many things to get done. And so a freelancer provides you a way to say, "Hey, if they execute this, then it's well worth it because I probably wouldn't have executed on it. Or I may have dragged my feet for two weeks on it instead of just getting it done." So freelancers provide a really great way to actually almost supercharge the productivity of your team. So I think that's going to be so impactful for churches.

**Deborah Ike:** Awesome. Well, hey, I really appreciate you taking the time to share some of this information with us. No pun intended.

**Matt Lombardi:** I love it. Sharing is caring. I'm all about the dad jokes.

**Deborah Ike:** Yeah, no, but I appreciate it, and I'm sure this is going to be super helpful for a lot of folks, so thanks.

**Matt Lombardi:** Awesome. Thanks so much for having me, Deborah. I really appreciate it.

**Deborah Ike:** Thank you.