**How to Properly EQ Your Pastors Mic**

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One of the biggest hurdles for a church tech is how to set up a microphone for a pastor. I know many seasoned audio engineers who work in full-time ministry that still have this as an Achilles heel. There is a fine balance that you need to achieve between making the pastor sound natural while also maximizing gain before feedback. Here are some tips and tricks I use every Sunday to make my pastors sound great.

**Midweek prep**
My prep on the pastor’s microphone starts midweek, every week. I know that this sounds a little over the top, but so much of our work as church techs relies on maintenance and prep, setting yourself up for a win on Sundays. Check the cable for any breaks or new bends, check the mic element to make sure it is not broken, check the connection to the wireless pack and make sure it is solid. You’d be amazed how many times I have done consulting for a church and when I pull out their headsets, they are all bent, broken, frayed, or otherwise unfit for use.

**High-pass Filter**
The high pass filter is an EQ filter that serves its purpose in its name. When I show someone the high-pass filter on a digital console, they see it block out all the low frequencies and they’ll say, “hey, why is it the high-pass when it’s blocking all the lows?” The answer is simple. It allows the high frequencies to pass through, while blocking low frequencies. This may seem counter-intuitive, but it makes sense if you think about it. The first EQ setting I make is pushing the high-pass filter up to around 200hz. This is standard because the average human voice doesn’t resonate that low, so blocking it will give you more sonic space even though you may not hear it. This is depending on the pastor though, if your pastor has a Barry White type voice, you don’t want to be filtering out that sweet, sweet sound.

**Ring it out**
Ringing out a mic is a technique that a lot of engineers use to get as much gain before feedback as possible. After I’ve checked and made sure the mic is in good condition, I put it on a stool, downstage center. Basically where the furthest place forward that the pastor might stand in front of the PA, therefore, the most likely place that the mic will give feedback. Then go back to the console and I push the gain up and try to make it feedback on purpose. Once it feeds back, I find the frequency and pull it down. If you have a digital console, then you might even be able to insert a graphic EQ on the mic to get even more precise dips in the EQ. You can use an RTA app on your iPhone to assist you find those problem frequencies if you are newer to EQ.

**Make it sound natural**
By now you should already have some basic EQ on the channel, and you haven’t even passed a voice through it yet. Set up a time for your pastor to come in and do a sound check with you. Have them put the microphone on and talk for a while. Ask them to go over their last sermon, maybe rehearse next week’s, or even just have them read scripture for a while. Make sure that they are constantly talking. A 1-2 minute talk is not sufficient. It is during this time that I experiment with the EQ making minor adjustments trying to make their voice sound natural. If you rang out the mic correctly, you should be able to experiment freely without fear of any feedback. If they sound like they are in a cardboard box, It will help to pull out around 1k, or if they sound a little too bright pull down 6-8k. The key here is to make adjustments subtracting out other frequencies until it sounds like their natural voice.

That’s it! The key here is to never just set stuff once and hope that it’ll stay the same. I do my mid-week checks every week to make sure the mic is in good working condition. Reset your EQ and ring out the mic once a month, recheck the pastor through the system every 2-3 months, and, of course, make small adjustments every week during the pre-service sound check. Keep in mind that your pastors voice may change. They may get sick, or the microphone may get moisture in the element, which can change how it sounds over time. Variables are always changing, and it’s up to you not to be behind the 8-ball when that happens.

Feel free to drop your questions in the comments!

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