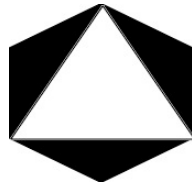


The 24-7Boiler Room Rule:
The Purposes, Principles, Practices and Customary
Requisite of a Licensed 24-7 Boiler Room Community



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Introduction

Fledgling 24-7Prayer communities calling themselves 'Boiler Rooms' have been springing up all over the place in various forms since the first one was established in Reading, UK (pronounced 'Redding') in 2001. At the 24-7 Round Table in Barcelona, Spain in September 2004 an important topic of discussion concerned the nature and structure of these emerging communities and this paper presents the current conclusions to such pressing questions as:

- What is a Boiler Room?
- How do you become a Boiler Room?
- What is the relationship between Boiler Rooms and the 24-7Prayer movement?
- What do you call a 'not yet' or 'mini' Boiler Room?!

Initially we simply watched in amazement as people all over the world caught the vision for communities of prayer, mission, creativity, hospitality and justice. But it became clear that unless we brought clarity, the term 'Boiler Room' (and more importantly the vision behind it) would soon mean little or nothing at all. For example, in one country every prayer room is currently being called a Boiler Room, while other situations see Boiler Rooms as post-modern church plants and still others as ecumenical projects.

We also realised that it had become impossible to adequately service all those expressing an interest in starting Boiler Rooms because we were spreading our resources too thin. So many people were wanting our input that we were failing to build 'models of good practice' and qualitative depth. If you are interested in (or are already) developing a Boiler Room, this document is designed to help you build depth rather than breadth, long-term sustainability rather than a short term explosion of excitement and also to grow in a meaningful relationship with the wider movement of 24-7Prayer. It is more important to us, at this time, to grow just a handful of Boiler Rooms which truly reflect the 24-7 values and express our vision, than to have hundreds of communities all over the world using the Boiler Room tag yet failing to have the impact God is calling us to bring.

This paper is a work in progress. However, it is also deliberately, uncharacteristically prescriptive. This is because, through it, we hope to bring some clarity and discipline to the emerging movement for the good of all.



These are all good problems!

Andy Freeman

(On behalf of
+ the *24-7 International Base* &
+ the *Boiler Room Network Team*)



INTRODUCING BOILER ROOMS

What's in a name ?

A lot of people ask why we call them 'Boiler Rooms'. Good question...

To be honest, the name 'Boiler Room' was originally just a working title for 24-7's first intentional community in Reading, England. It was simply a nickname that stuck! The title harkens back to the great days of steam when boiler rooms powered vast machines and systems. In these places fires were fuelled night-and-day, pistons converted pressure into unprecedented levels of power and generators turned heat into light for the community.

Much later we discovered that C.H. Spurgeon, one of the greatest preachers of the late 19th Century, attributed the fruitfulness of his entire ministry to his 'Boiler Rooms'. These were prayer meetings – often established in basements - that facilitated intercession while he preached. Spurgeon, who often preached to crowds of 10,000 in days before amplification, considered these 'Boiler Rooms' to be the very power-source of his ministry.

Where did the idea of 'Boiler Rooms' come from?



In September 2001, our first Boiler Room opened in Reading, England. Based for its first three years in an old pub complex (incorporating three semi-derelict apartments, a basement and of course the original bar) the Reading Boiler Room has sustained a continuing rhythm of prayer throughout its history. The community has also endeavoured to nurture creativity; it has received over 200 pilgrims from around the UK and all over the world; it has worked extensively with and for the disadvantaged locally, building friendships with many marginalised young people and receiving the recognition of local statutory bodies. All this in the context of prayer.

As this wild experiment has taken shape, some exciting things have happened:

- ◆ A discipline of prayer has developed. Many people visit the Boiler Room venue regularly, coming in week after week to seek God as part of a missional community.
- ◆ Prayers have been answered. The venue has two volumes full of testimonies to-answered prayer.
- ◆ The poor and lost have been reached. For instance, about 150 needy young people come in and spend time with the Boiler Community each week. Most of them are not Christians. Local Government has recognised the

effectiveness of what is going on and has sought partnership and funded projects.

Since Reading's commissioning, other Boiler Rooms have been started in **Manchester** (March 2002- November 2003), **West London** (October 2003), **Wandsworth** (November 2004 in partnership with the Salvation Army), **Calgary** (January 2005), the **City of London** (June 2005), **Brighton** (October 2005). All these venues have found that prayer, community and mission mixed together have amazing results. Currently Boiler Rooms are also being planned in other cities such as **Ibiza** (Spain), **Dresden** (Germany) and **Kansas City** (USA) (all where a community has already developed). Other locations in **Sweden**, **Germany**, **Spain**, **Mexico** and in a number of cities in the **USA** are also planning Boiler Rooms.

For more of the latest information check out www.boiler-rooms.com

What is a 24-7 Boiler Room Community?

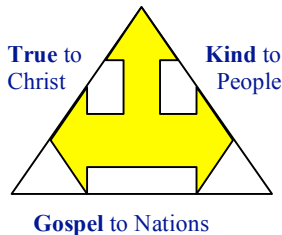
A 24-7 Boiler Room is a Christ-centred community that practices a daily rhythm of prayer, study and celebration whilst caring actively for the poor and the lost.

(i) The Two Purposes



A 24-7 Boiler Room exists to love God in prayer and to love its neighbours in practice. These purposes are contextualised in community and expressed in a defined location.

(ii) The Three Principles



At the heart of every Boiler Room is a living community committed to being: 1. **Authentic**: True to Christ. 2. **Relational**: Kind to People. 3. **Missional**: Taking the Gospel to the World.

(iii) The Six Practices



Every Boiler Room Community applies these three principles practically through six core activities:

A Boiler Room is true to Christ by being:

+++ A **prayerful community** practicing a daily rhythm of which includes all kinds of prayers on all occasions.

+++ A **creative community** where artistic expressions of prayer and worship may take the form of art, sculpture, new music, poetry, dance, fun and a celebratory lifestyle.

A Boiler Room is kind to people by being:

+++ A **just and merciful community** where the practical needs of the local poor are met and where liberation is championed.

+++ A **hospitable community** where pilgrims are welcomed, meals are shared and where friendships can flourish across boundaries of race and culture.

A Boiler Room is committed to taking the gospel to the world by being:

+++ A **missional community** existing for incarnation and proclamation of the gospel to all people. To act as well as to pray.

+++ **A learning community** of training and discipleship, where people are growing in their faith, their life-skills and their ability to lead.

Practical Customary

The ancient monasteries would often add a customary to their 'Rule' as a practical explanation of how their values were to be worked out in practice. We sense the Lord calling us to write a simple customary for our Boiler Rooms, giving guidelines about how to outwork the two purposes, three principles and six practices day-to-day.

v.1 The Practice of Prayer

- *Model #1: 'The Laus Perennis'*. Ideally Boiler Rooms will pray continually, night and day (known in the monastic traditions as the *laus perennis*), however we do not see this as the only model of persevering prayer and therefore do not require it of every Boiler Room unless the Lord has clearly given such a call.
- *Model #2: Rhythmic Prayer*. Should a Boiler Room choose not to practice the *laus perennis* we do expect there to be a disciplined *daily* rhythm of prayer, and at least one of these daily gatherings is to be held in the Boiler Room venue itself (unless of course the community is temporarily without such a base). There are many historical precedents for such a rhythm:
 - Scholars tell us that the ancient temple in Jerusalem conducted three fixed prayer meetings a day (at 9am, noon and dusk) and we know that the early church leaders endorsed this rhythm of prayer with their presence.
 - The Benedictine Rule, practiced since the 5th century AD, lays out a vigorous schedule of daily prayer including vigils (middle of the night), matins (pre-dawn), vespers (just before sunset) and compline (night).
- In addition to the daily rhythm of prayer practiced by all Boiler Room communities, we also expect them to establish regular seasons of 24-7 (night-and-day) prayer. For instance, our W. London Boiler Room currently prays non-stop for one week in every six.

v.2 The Practice of Mission

- Boiler Rooms are missional communities, which means that our prayer times must never become insular or disembodied from practical engagement with those who do not share our Christian faith. The Boiler Room is both a launch pad for outreach

(sending Christians out) and a context for 'inreach' (gathering people in).

- Outreach: Boiler Rooms are encouraged to partner annually with 24-7Mission (or an equivalent agency) in mobilising short-term teams to engage cross culturally in kind and creative evangelisation. They are also encouraged to engage in local expressions of ongoing mission such as Alpha Courses and Student Missions.
- Inreach: Our sacred space must never become so rarefied that it seems inaccessible to those that are unaccustomed to church culture. Rather we want our culture and our buildings to be welcoming and inclusive contexts in which people can feel safe and unconditionally accepted. We believe in becoming an answer to our own prayers for the poor and the lost.

v.3 The Practice of Mercy & Justice

- We expect our Boiler Rooms to be agencies of mercy and justice. We ask them to help people engage actively with the poor and oppressed, practically at an inter-personal level, prayerfully for the local community and even politically at a global level.
 - Personally: There should be at least one opportunity a week for people to join in with a reputable project that helps the poor, excluded or needy.
 - Locally: We encourage Boiler Rooms to pray purposefully for statutory bodies such as the police and social services and also for Christian ministries working locally with the marginalised.
 - Globally: Boiler Rooms in free societies are also encouraged to campaign intelligently and prayerfully on behalf of the poorest people on earth.

v.4 The Practice of Hospitality and Pilgrimage

- Boiler Rooms are required to offer simple hospitality to strangers wishing to stay and pray. They must therefore have the ability to provide or have easy access to (at least) short-term accommodation, even if this is not possible in the venue itself. Where possible there should be a warm welcome for people visiting, a place to drink coffee and chat and a regular open/shared meal. Boiler Rooms may also organise annual opportunities for pilgrimage, either within their own country or overseas.

v.5 The Practice of Creativity

- Boiler Room communities are called upon to encourage and enjoy creativity in all its forms. Whilst some Boiler Rooms will be stronger than others in this area, we would expect the creative arts to be a key component of every Boiler Room, that artists would be welcomed and encouraged and that artistic expression and communication with God be open to all. To create an environment for this, Boiler Rooms should have space set aside in their venues, and money in their budgets, for facilitating the arts (this could be anything from a recording studio to a pottery kiln, a garden to a dance studio, or a dark-room to a gourmet kitchen!)

v.6 The Practice of Learning and Discipleship

- All Boiler Rooms are learning communities committed to mutual discipleship, study and the ongoing spiritual formation of the community as a whole as well as its individual members. Some Boiler Rooms are recognised by 24-7 as Training Centres, thus benefiting from a regular influx of trainees.
- Within the core team at the heart of every Boiler Room community, we expect there to be a climate of relational accountability and mutual submission. An abbot or abbess is appointed to lead this team lovingly and with recognised authority, accountable ultimately to God and temporarily to 24-7 alongside locally appointed structures.
- Many Boiler Rooms practice a daily rhythm of pray, work, study and rest; something which the early Celtic monasteries lived out and which has inspired us in our early days as Boiler Rooms.
- Whenever Boiler Rooms multiply we would expect the sending community to offer strong initial support and oversight to these new communities they have planted (see later).

Not buildings but community

Although the name 'Boiler Room' may evoke an image of a room in a building, a Boiler Room is actually not a building – it is a community committed to the purposes, principles and practices of the lifestyle outlined above. A Boiler community is neither defined by, nor dependent upon the use of a fixed base, just as a human family continues to be a family even if it loses its home. The first task of a group seeking to start a Boiler Room is to build a local praying community – there is no way that a Boiler Room can be carried alone.

Having said this, just as a home is helpful for a family, so too for a Boiler Room, having such a base (or a series of buildings within walking distance of each other) can greatly enhance the six practices of the community by providing:

- A dedicated place for prayer
- A studio for artists
- A hostel for pilgrims
- A mission station for outreach
- A launching pad for acts of mercy
- A training base for the learning community

In theory, a building is not essential but the reality in practice is that no Boiler Room can be expected to continue fruitfully for very long without such a centre for their six activities.



LEADERSHIP & ACCOUNTABILITY

How does a Boiler Room Community relate to 24-7 ?

Since the first Boiler Room opened in 2001, we have found that these 'millennium 3 monasteries' have looked very different in different cities. Whilst this diversity is good, we found there was a simple need to clarify what these Boiler Rooms were and then how they related to 24-7.

In the previous sections we have set out what is expected from 24-7 Boiler Rooms.

This section covers how these Boiler Rooms are accountable and how they relate to the wider movement. In our early days, this structure was largely top down, like the Roman Monasteries, with a point of contact and then all monasteries linking to that point. As the movement grows, that structure will inevitably limit growth as well as being slightly alien to our DNA as a movement. Instead we want to move to a more Celtic model, where monasteries were commissioned and then able to plant other satellite monasteries, which they then oversee.

Boiler Room Centre

Some Boiler Room communities will be identified within 24-7 and commissioned as Centre's, licensed by 24-7 to:

- Train – using 24-7 training resources (E.g. the 24-7 Transit course)
- Multiply and Lead - planting and supporting other Boiler Rooms in conjunction with 24-7.

A Boiler Room Centre is recognised as a model of good practice, outworking the Boiler Principles, Practices and customary. A Boiler Room Centre is accountable to a local Board / church and also to 24-7 Prayer nationally. Other Boiler Rooms look to it for support and resources.

Review & Relationship

A licensed 24-7 Boiler Room Community takes an important place in the international network of Boiler Rooms. They can expect to share support and resources with other Boiler Rooms around the world.

In order to maintain our edge, and stay true to our purpose, each 24-7 Boiler Room, submits to an annual process of review, according to the principles,

practices and customary outlined above. This provides an enriching opportunity for cross-fertilization as well as the safety net of accountability. 24-7 reserves the right to withdraw the Boiler Room license from a community that consistently fails to pursue the purposes and principles of this Boiler Room Rule.

The Practices and the accompanying Customary outlined in this document are themselves subject to an annual review by 24-7's International Base and by the Boiler Room team to assess their ongoing value to the movement.

The Big Questions

The Boiler Room rule has looked to address the major questions that were raised at the 2004 Round Table.

In what contexts can 24-7 Boiler Room Communities be launched ?

There are various expressions of Boiler Room community and all three models are recognised by 24-7 as equally legitimate according to context. The choice of model fundamentally affects important organisational issues such as the way in which the Boiler Room is funded, the way its leaders are appointed, supported and held accountable and the level of ongoing connection with 24-7.

- **A 'renewal' model.** 24-7 is often deployed as a catalyst for prayerful 'renewal' in denominations and organisations. Whenever such established bodies take on the model of Boiler Rooms we recognise that they become the 'primary carer' for the new community e.g. the newly opened Salvation Army Boiler Room in Wandsworth, London.
- **A 'citywide' model.** These are Boiler Rooms established across a town or city and 'owned' by various churches rather than a single one. In these situations, cross-church unity is used as an effective tool to galvanise support for prayer, mission and justice through a Boiler Room. Generally these Boiler Rooms are born out of a number of previous citywide 24-7 prayer weeks. Citywide Boiler Rooms report to a committee representing local churches and they are accountable to them. We regard Christian unity as a vital and blessed partner of prayerful mission. We also note that the reverse is very rarely true. E.g. Reading Boiler Room and West London Boiler Room.
- **A Boiler Room 'Plant'.** In some circumstances a Boiler Room is used as a church-planting mission model in cultures and contexts where the gospel is not being heard. In these situations 24-7 may partner with a church or group working on the ground e.g. Tommy Nauman in the Balkans, Metro All Nations in Kansas City. These could also be projects that develop from ongoing mission teams e.g. the Heasleys working in Ibiza.

What do we call 'mini' or emerging Boiler Rooms ?

Sustained prayer often galvanises fresh vision and deep friendships. As a result, in some scenarios, 24-7 prayer rooms have evolved into ongoing expressions of community, gathered around the broader 24-7 vision and values. Similarly, in certain pioneering missionary situations, teams may deliberately establish small 24-7 communities, perhaps with a vision to grow the team eventually into a Boiler Room. We would want to be open and supportive towards such models, recognising that in many ways these groups are similar to, and may indeed

develop into Boiler Rooms. However, at this formative stage, somewhere between a one-off prayer room and a licensed Boiler Room, we will refer to these 'in-between' groups as **24-7 Communities**.

A 247 community is a group of people in a geographical location who have a desire to express the six practices especially around a rhythm of daily prayer and 247 weeks. They are often smaller than a licensed Boiler Room. These communities may sometimes exist in preparation for being licensed as a Boiler Room or they may exist with the intention of being a small local community.

We recognise there are many other communities which exist and have relationship with 24-7. This we love and these relationships are often maintained by our National Bases, but are not covered by this rule as there is no vision for a Boiler Room.

Is a Boiler Room a church?

Many people ask whether a Boiler Room is a church. This subject was discussed and debated at our annual gathering in Barcelona in 2004 and we came to a clear position.

As we have mentioned above when describing the scenario's where Boiler Rooms can be launched, 24-7 clearly recognises that in pioneering or exceptional circumstances, these Boiler Rooms are indeed church plants. In Ibiza, our aim is to plant a church in the midst of club culture on the island. In Kansas City, in the midst of exceptional circumstances, a community was licensed to plant a Boiler Room of which a church was a thriving part. In Liverpool, as part of their mandate from the Salvation Army, a church congregation was planted and has become part of the life of the Boiler Room.

However, we also recognise that in some scenarios, often in a citywide context, it is unhelpful and incorrect to refer to a Boiler Room as a church. In Staines, West London, the Boiler Room there looks to serve a number of local congregations and be part of a process of reaching their area based on the unity and support of local congregations.

On a wider scale, this is very much dependant on your ecclesiology. The German language has two words for church: 'kirche' denotes the formal, State denomination while 'gemeinde' describes all sorts of more organic expressions of Christian community. In the last fifty years, theologians like Lesslie Newbiggin have helped refocus the church on our primary call to incarnate the gospel in missional community. We have no hesitation in describing all Boiler Rooms as missional communities. As such they may be considered churches in the sense of 'ekklēsia' (ek – 'out of', klēsis – 'calling'), which is the predominant New Testament word for church, and simply describes a purposeful assembly of Christians. However history has complicated and occasionally confused this

simple definition. 24-7 celebrates the rich ecclesiological insights of sacramental, liturgical and non-conformist traditions and works closely with various denominations. In light of this, we have to recognise that the word 'church' is no longer one that can be used casually and should not be applied to a missional community carelessly. To describe a Boiler Room as a church could therefore be misleading or confusing in some situations. What is more, it's often not possible (or necessary) to clarify what various parties understand the word 'church' to mean.

In the light of this we continue to use the term Boiler Room all of our communities. Part of the attraction of this model is that the name can equally describe an ecumenical Christian community working with various churches to bring renewal and catalyse mission (eg. the Salvation Army Boiler Room in Wandsworth, South London) or to describe a church plant in an unevangelised context (Eg the vision of the 24-7 community living on the island of Ibiza in Spain). We have come to the conclusion that we would not add anything by generically labelling all Boiler Rooms as churches, and we do not feel that such a label is required for some of them to operate as churches if the local situation requires that.

It should also be noted that a 24-7 Boiler Room is a generic term that we would use for these communities. In their own localities many Boiler Rooms will call themselves different names, often dependant on their culture (e.g. Re:aktor in Sweden, Urban Monastery in Canada).

How are Boiler Rooms Licensed and Commissioned ?

Leaders of prayer communities inspired in some way by the principles and practices in the Boiler Room rule may sometimes decide that they do not wish their project to become a 24-7 Boiler Room. We recognise that this may be part of the process and would want to affirm that choice, recognising that all Christian prayer is good, regardless of it's model. However, we would encourage such groups to establish external frameworks for input and accountability, even if it is not with 24-7.

Wherever there is a long term vision to establish a 24-7 Boiler Room, we work with others assess the viability and compatibility of the situation and to suggest a development strategy towards that goal. Once a situation is considered eligible for a license according to the criteria outlined in this document it will then:

- Be launched locally with representatives of the appropriate national and the International 24-7 Bases attending to help commission the team and it's Abbot/Abbess.
- Be licensed as a Boiler Room by 24-7 in the form of a written agreement that will be reviewed annually. Where appropriate a Boiler Room will be licenced to plant and to train.

- Be profiled internationally as an official 24-7 Boiler Room.
- Be given ongoing support from the Boiler Room team.
- Be encouraged to contribute a pre-agreed amount financially to 24-7 and to share its resources with the wider Boiler Room Network.
- Be invited to send its leaders to 24-7's annual International Leaders Gathering.

How will Boiler Room's be managed and resourced

This document has already made mention of 24-7's overall management and licensing of Boiler Rooms. Each Boiler Room is ultimately accountable to 24-7's International Base and to its Trustees. However day-to-day management of 24-7 Boiler Rooms is divided into three areas:

- **Community Development Team.** Made up of leaders from key Boiler Rooms, this team consults with 24-7's International Base and co-creates the values and macro development of Boiler Rooms at an international level. These discussions will take the form of email discussions and regular meetings.
- **Community Room Office Team.** This is the team working practically on managing and developing Boiler Rooms. Currently based in Reading this team has the central responsibility of communication and implementation of Boiler Room vision into the nations. This team currently consists of Andy Freeman, Annie Bullen and Resa Daven in Sweden.

24-7 Transit course

At the Round Table of 2004, we considered the question of training. One of the ideas that emerged was to revamp the Wild Goose training scheme, which had been based in Boiler Rooms.

From September 2005, the 24-7 Transit course was launched. Students then joined two initial courses based in the UK and in Kansas City in the US. The course is based around dual processes of:

- Inward journey of spiritual formation
- Outward journey of social transformation

More information about Transit can be obtained from the website or by post:

UK 24-7 Transit
The Basement
4-14 Tabernacle Street
London EC2A 4LU

hospitality@24-7prayer.com

Glossary of terms

24-7 Boiler Room community is a 24-7 prayer community that has met the above criteria and been licensed by 24-7 to function as a Boiler Room.

Monastery is a Christ Centred house or community. These can be in movements like the Benedictines, Franciscans or Dominicans.

Boiler Room Rule is the purpose, principles and practices required of a licensed Boiler Room.

Customary is the practical detail of how the rule is expressed.

Pilgrimage is the process of journeying to a place, with the purpose of following God's lead in the journey or the destination.

Pilgrims are people going on pilgrimage.

Abbot or Abbess is the term given to a leader of a Boiler Room. It is derived from the name given to the leader of a monastery.

Laus Perennis is the practice of perpetual prayer