

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



3 Ways

***DISNEY IS IMPROVING
THAT YOUR CHURCH CAN LEARN FROM***

RICH BIRCH

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The Walt Disney Company continues to be an organization that churches should learn from. Obviously, our "core business" in the local church is totally different but there are many similarities in what we're attempting to do and what Disney does:

- We're both attempting to **keep people engaged with "life span" offerings.**
- **Families play a huge role** in our strategies.
- We **balance tradition and innovation** on a regular basis.
- We offer both **digital and "in person"** experiences.
- **Communication and storytelling** are core to what we do.
- We deal with the public in crowds on a regular basis.

A close observer will see that Disney continues to improve its experience and we can draw out many examples for our churches, including the following:

- **Data-Driven Decision Making** // Disney uses the information generated from its experiences to guide decision making. Forecasting models determine the kind of vacation packages preferred by guests and help the company provide targeted hotel offers to its customers. Guest usage patterns are examined in real time to determine how to best deploy its team. Sales in its retail stores are fed back to the central warehouse to alert them when more inventory

is needed. Every action that guests take at Disney is a potential "data point" that could help drive decision making. For church leaders, how are we tracking the data driven by our guest interactions to serve them better? When your nursery reaches near capacity, [could your database](#) flag a follow up with parents to ensure they had a good experience? How could small group attendance "drop off" be flagged as something that your team should follow up on?



• **Digital Team Management** // The scale of Disney's theme-park operation is staggering. Each week, Disney has to pay more than 80,000 cast members and schedule 240,000 shifts. Dealing with the complexities of ensuring that the right team members are in the right location at the right time has led to Disney investing heavily in a scheduling system. The outcome was a 20% improvement in its management of labor resources and the project paid for itself in the first year. In a similar way, your church can see huge improvements in volunteer team management when you [use your database](#) to manage your teams. Rather than a series of spreadsheets (or worse, a bunch of sheets of paper!) used to track where people are plugged in, your database becomes the central place of communication and connection with your volunteers to ensure you have the right team members in the right

place. Avoiding the problem of the same person serving in two places at the same time is a critical part of ensuring we're not burning out people. Although we don't pay our volunteer teams, we should be finding ways to reward those volunteers who serve with excellence. Simple acknowledgment is the beginning of a reward system for your volunteers ... when was the last time you reached out to say thank you?

• **Personalized Experiences** // Disney's MyMagic+ initiative is a billion-dollar investment that is a combination of a website, a mobile application and a wristband that collectively allow visitors to customize their experience at a Walt Disney World. The initiative has involved training 80,000 employees on new technology, equipping 28,000 hotel room doors with radio frequency readers, and installing scanners at the parks.

The implementation has resulted in a breathtakingly personalized experience for guests as they journey around the park. Photos taken in the park are magically saved in the cloud and are viewable at the end of the day back in guests' hotel rooms. You can use the app to schedule a time to skip the line on your favorite ride and then simply wave your magic band at the gate to be let into a shorter queue. Behind all of these (and many more) personalized experiences is a series of databases that track and serve guests throughout their entire Disney experience. In a similar way, churches need to look at [our databases](#) as tools to provide personalized experiences. Think about the personal data you have and leverage it to provide a more personal experience. You probably know many people's birthdays ... why don't we send birthday cards like the dentist does? Seeing which service people hand in their offering most weeks can tell you which service they attend ... you could ask them to serve with a specific team during that service time. By looking closely at your database, you could figure out which kids are moving up at the beginning of the school year and have their new small group leaders personally reach out to them.

The Walt Disney Company provides so many great examples of using information and data to make a better church experience. This inspires me to keep thinking about how we're [leveraging our databases to be more than just a warehouse](#) of names, phone numbers and email addresses and to use them to take our ministry to the next level. Here are some great articles to dig into if you are looking for more lessons from Disney:

- [How Bob Iger Remade the House That Walt Built](#)
- [Disney World Parks and Resorts mines magic from business analytics](#)
- [Disney Bets \\$1 Billion on Technology to Track Theme-Park Visitors](#)
- [The HBR Interview: Technology, Tradition, and the Mouse](#)

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