

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



4 Experiments

**TO RUN THIS SUMMER
TO HELP YOUR CHURCH THIS FALL**

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Church leaders in prevailing churches think of themselves more like scientists testing theories than bakers applying a prescribed recipe. **Rather than looking for the “perfect” strategy for your church, it’s better to consider your practices as a series of experiments and then watch the results.** While it’s important to learn from other churches and incorporate “best practices” from organizations, your church is a unique culture, and therefore you need to employ a “uniquely you” strategy to connect with the community you are trying to reach!

3 Reasons Summer is the Perfect Time to Try Something New at Your Church

- **Easing Attendance** // Most churches see a slight pull back in attendance during this season. This means that the logistics side isn’t as taxed as other times in the year, making it easier to try something new.
- **Program Reduction** // Similarly, churches often cut back on their programs during the summer, which means that the leadership and staff have more energy and time to try something new.

- **Fall is Coming** // Most churches see the time between Labor Day and Christmas Eve as a critical season in the life of the church. Leveraging the period before that season to improve your ministry is a great use of your time.

Are you looking for a few new or different practices to possibly test this summer to see the results in your church? Here are four testable items that you could experiment with over the summer and then make changes to improve your ministry in the fall.

Try Something New with Your Announcements

There are five precious minutes in your service that are solely intended to move people to action. **The announcement time is a high leverage opportunity to encourage your people to move from where they are to where you want them to be.** It really is the quintessential leadership moment during the service. However, it’s usually under-planned and under-utilized in most churches. You’re missing out on the opportunity to make sustained progress in your church simply because you’re not leveraging those critical moments in your service.

Rather than relegating the announcement portion of the service to just one person, a growing trend in thriving churches is to use a team of two co-hosts. This summer, what if you experimented with co-hosts during all your weekend services?

5 Benefits of Co-Hosts for Your Announcements

- **Requires Practice** // The only guaranteed way to get better at this part of your service is to practice. When two people make the announcements, it requires them to talk through the elements and practice together, which in turn improves the announcements. This part of the service is about moving people to action and getting them connected. It deserves to be well thought-out and executed effectively!
- **Increases Diversity** // As a church grows, it needs to appeal to a broader community. One way to do this is to have a variety of people on stage at your church. If it's all "guys" on the stage, you may be unintentionally sending the message to ladies that they are less welcome in your church. If everyone on stage is over 65, you communicate to the next generation that there isn't room for them. Co-hosting increases the diversity of people on stage. Take this opportunity to appeal to a broad group of people.
- **Builds Influence** // The people who are on stage gain influence in your church. People see them and begin to trust them. Although we don't want the stage to be a shortcut around the "hand-over-hand" work of building a church, it is a valuable tool for increasing the profile of leaders on your team. Regular hosting helps people to know, like, and trust leaders.
- **Trains Leaders** // Constantly training others and releasing ministry to them is central to our role as church leaders. Often, roles like this require "public face time" that we're hesitant to give away because we're not sure how to train people. Resist this temptation! Bring another leader on stage to co-host with you and have them start by doing just one part of the announcements. Putting them in front of people will be an adjustment. As hosts get more comfortable, and as you become more confident in their abilities to move people to action, give them more elements of the announcements. As their proficiency grows, you can hand off the

responsibility of raising up other co-hosts to them.

- **Departure Insurance** // The people who are with you today won't necessarily be with you in the future. All leaders are temporary to some extent as people move on for one reason or another. If you have the same host in front of your community all the time, it makes these inevitable transitions more difficult. Sharing the stage exposes people to a range of leaders and can help you down the road when you need to move people to a different seat on the bus. Obviously, you don't want to put leaders who are a high "flight risk" in front of your people, but having co-hosts helps expand the group of leaders people are used to seeing on weekends.



Looking for more help trying this experiment at your church? [Download this PDF on co-hosting announcements that includes tips from a team that's done it!](#)

Experiment with Different First-time Guest Gifts

An early step in most churches' processes for helping new guests get connected is to offer them a free gift in exchange for their contact information. The purpose of these gifts is simply to encourage your guests to "raise their hand" and indicate that they are new. Knowing exactly what gift to offer your guests can be a bit of a mystery, and sometimes it seems much more like an art than a science.

When our church switched from one gift to another we saw a 500% increase in the number of first-time guests that submitted their contact information!

Clearly, it's important to get this gift right! However, due to the expense of these items you want to make sure you've experimented with a few different gifts to see which one garners the best response.

3 Factors to Consider for First-time Guest Gifts

- **Perceived Value** // At the core of this transaction is the perceived value of the gift that guests will receive in exchange for their contact information. What you're looking for is high perceived value but lower actual cost. Design and presentation are often factors in this equation.
- **Brand** // There is a delicate balance in how this item relates to your brand. Real estate agents are notorious for handing out all kinds of swag to people around town. But ask yourself, when was the last time you wore that t-shirt from them? If the items you give to your guests are overly branded to your church, it won't feel like a gift but an advertisement.
- **Cost** // As a rule of thumb, the number of guests who attend your church in a year should be equal to your average weekend attendance. So, if your church averages about 500 people every weekend, then you should be averaging about 10 first-time guests every weekend. This is important because whatever item you end up choosing to give as a gift, you'll need lots of them over the course of a year. For this reason, testing the response to the gift is important because you'll most likely end up investing quite a bit in it.

What if this summer you picked two potential first-time guest gifts and then tried one of them for a month and the other one for the second month? Closely track the feedback on the gifts. Which gift received the higher number of total guests picking it up? Also, listen carefully to the guests' feedback on the gift at the guest kiosk or wherever the gifts are handed out. Record all the comments that are made throughout the month. After just

two months of testing, you should have a better idea of what to give to your guests going forward!

3 Common Items Prevailing Churches Use for First-time Guest Gifts

- **T-Shirts** // People love free t-shirts. It almost seems like it's embedded in our culture! These relatively low-cost items do carry a high perceived value. The design can be done in such a way that it communicates about your church but doesn't overwhelm the guest.
- **Coffee Mugs (& Travel Cups)** // Coffee continues to be a culturally acceptable addiction. Many churches make up mugs or travel cups featuring their logo and find that these functional gifts are a hit with their guests.
- **Water Bottles** // Staying hydrated is important! Many churches find that elegantly branded water bottles are a practical gift that their guests love!

Looking for more help with gifts for first-time guests? Check out: [First Time Guest Gifts: 26 Lessons from 33 Churches](#)



Test Changes to Your Offering Talks

Most churches take an offering at some point during their services. Churches looking to make an impact in their communities invite people to join their mission by giving back to God. How you deliver this part of your service is one of the pieces of the generosity puzzle. Do it poorly and the finances at your church will suffer. Do it well and you will see a rise in the giving at your church.

What if this summer you tested an assumption or two about how you do the offering talk? There might be a better way to do this element of your service. Maybe there is a way to do the offering talk that would encourage more generosity from your people. There could also be a way to do it that feels more in line with the mission and vision of your church. Here are a few different offering talk tweaks you could test this summer:

3 Offering Talk Tweaks to Test

- **Before or After the Message** // Some churches have seen a change in giving depending on the placement of the offering during the service. Specifically, why not test its placement before or after the message? This data might be helpful for you down the road as you're looking to make-up small financial shortfalls that can happen from time to time.
- **With or Without an Offering Talk** // The best practice is to take the two minutes before the offering to slow down the service to thank people for giving and to connect their gifts to the vision of the church. But what if you could quantify the difference this is making in the life of your church? Take a month to craft pitch perfect offering talks and then do another month where you don't emphasize the offering at all. What difference does it make both to the revenue and the feel of the service?
- **Digital Giving** // What if you took a month to specifically show people how to give digitally? Maybe you have a new "text-to-give" service that you want to test out. Try pitching that option for a month and see what difference it makes; then don't mention it for a month and see what happens.

Looking for more help with the offering talks at your church?

- [6 Common Problems with Offering Talks and How to Fix Them](#)
- [8 Elements of Effective Offering Talks \(Plus 8 Example Scripts!\)](#)
- [Offering Talk 201 // An Advanced Strategy for Encouraging Generosity at Your Church](#)

Examine What Happens If You Change Your Meetings

Stop and think about how much of your time is spent meeting during an average week at your church. Now do some quick math to calculate that across your team. That's a lot of time! Although it can seem like a "plumbing" issue of how the church does its work, in many ways the meeting culture of your church could be a make-or-break aspect of what is either pushing your ministry forward or holding it back.

You need to ensure that your team is being a good steward of that meeting time.

The meeting culture in your church is like a garden; sometimes you need to pull out the weeds in certain areas and sometimes you need to add a little fertilizer to others. There are meetings that you probably need to get rid of altogether or maybe there are other meetings you need to do more of. The summer season is good time to change up your routine in this area because your team is often in flux with vacations and other commitments.



Try These 3 Experiments with the Meetings at Your Church and See What Happens

- **Make Every Meeting Optional** // Seriously, tell people they don't have to come to any meeting and see what happens. Get your leaders on board for ensuring the work of the church still gets done but make it evident that people aren't "required" to come to any meeting. You might be surprised what your leaders do to ensure that people show up. ;)
- **Cut Every Regular Meeting in Half** // What would happen if you only had 50% of the time to complete the regular meetings every week? Would the work still get done

or would the wheels come flying off the church? We did this a few years ago, and I was pleasantly surprised that our productivity went up, not down!

- **Try Remote Meetings** // What if your team wasn't all located in the same town? Try some meetings using remote collaboration tools like [Zoom](#) or [Slack](#). We often only envision the work of the church being done by people who are in the same building as us. However, considering the potential to take some of your functions to a remote team can open up all kinds of interesting possibilities for the future of your organization.

Download this FREE PDF to help your team think about the meeting culture at your church: [5 Healthy Meeting Habits in High Performance Church Teams](#)

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