5 Actions
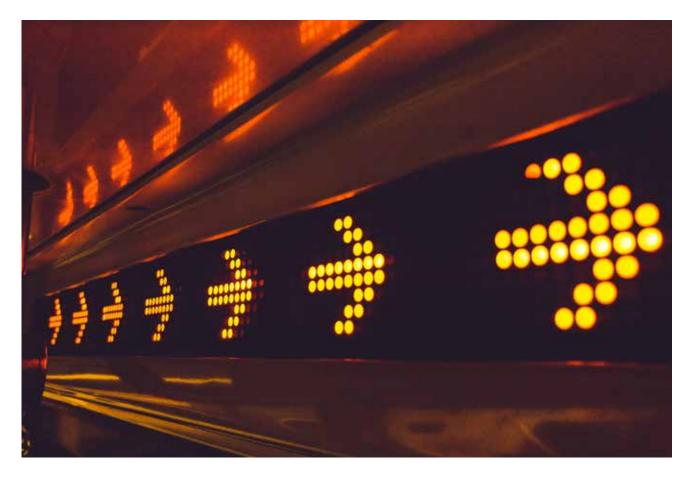## *YOUR CHURCH NEEDS TO MAKE WAY MORE CONVENIENT*

RICH BIRCH

I was struck by Tim Wu's column in the New York Times called "The Tyranny of Convenience" a few months ago and it has stuck with me. Core to the thesis of this article is that convenience is at the center of what drives humans today. The author sites a lot of compelling arguments that organizations that are prevailing today are doing so because they are figuring out how to make life more convenient for people.

Amazon is on a constant quest to make it easier to purchase items that we "need" all the time. The "Amazon Dash" buttons are a great example of putting physical buttons around people's homes they just need to click when they want Amazon to send them replacement items. Need some more toilet paper? Just click the button and that item will be added to your cart and sent your way!

Remember Napster? The file sharing service that millions of people used to get free music that they loved. What killed this industry disruption? It wasn't the cease and desist letters or a wave of moral outrage over "file sharing". Ultimately, the iTunes music store killed Napster because Apple figured out how to make purchasing music more convenient than Napster. *Easy beat free.* People want things convenient more than they want their money.

What difference does this make for us in the church? So many church leaders are bemoaning the decline of church attendance and engagement. What if we looked at that issue as a convenience issue? What if we took it upon ourselves to make what we do easier to fit into people's lives? What if we made the main thing, the plain thing? What if we went out of our way to make it more simple and more straightforward to connect with our churches? Here are 5 actions at our churches I think we need to make more convenient with some suggestions on first steps towards making them easier!

Make it Simpler to Volunteer

Growing churches move people out of their seats and into service. They do this because they know that when people get engaged in the life of the church they are more likely to invite their friends. Churches grow because people invite their friends. In a very real way, getting people to volunteer at your church is a key leading indicator of growth. However, in far too many churches it's just too hard to volunteer. Rather than creating simple ways for people to get plugged in, we create roadblocks to service.

3 Ways to Simplify Volunteering at Your Church

- **"Shallow End of the Pool" Opportunities //** You can't have people you don't know very well serve in every role at the church but there are roles you could plug almost anyone into. Think about roles on your teams that you could (almost) take a first-time guest and have them try out. Have a few of these roles ready to plug people quickly into if they are showing interest.

- **Short-Term Asks //** Give people a "taste" of serving with a one-time 2-hour opportunity like a community service project. People can get their head around a one-time service opportunity rather than needing to serve every week at the church. Use these "short-term" opportunities as an "on-ramp" to other opportunities. But beware if people just want to keep serving in these short-term opportunities - don't punish them!

- **Orientation & Form Filling Out //** Avoid sending people home with forms to fill out. Instead, take time within your orientation or "new here class" to actually fill out the paperwork that is needed. If people leave the building with the paperwork not filled out they are less likely to return with it done another time. Build "fill out the forms" time into your orientation or exploration process.

Remove Donation Friction
Have you tried to donate to your church? You'd be surprised at how hard this can be. Lots of churches have outdated and painful donation processes that feel more like a gauntlet than a smooth transaction. When people choose to give to your church they are literally choosing God over the things of this world so let's make that process is as smooth as possible! Let's ensure we do everything we can to remove the friction in this process!

5 Friction Points to Look for in Your Donation Process

- **Limited Options //** If people can only give in the "bucket" during the service you are missing out … obviously! But are you only accepting one form of credit card online? Do you allow people to do bank transfers? What about stocks or securities? Give more options!

- **Login Required //** A pet peeve of mine is needing to log on in order to make a donation through church websites. This practice is fading but surprisingly still common!

- **To Make "Funds" //** Don't make your people choose between half a dozen different "buckets" to give to your church. Making people choose means people will opt out.

- **Mobile Friendly //** People are used to doing financial transactions on their phones. Can they donate from their phone?

- **Ask People //** Email everyone who has donated to your church in the last three months and ask them how you can make the process easier for them. You'll be amazed at the simple ideas people will give you.

Watch these videos to see smooth online giving processes: 36 Lessons We Learned from Donating Online to 10 Churches

Download this PDF as a discussion for your team: 5 Lessons from Amazon for Your Church's Digital Giving Strategy

Help People Get Connected
People who stick and stay at your church will have friends at your church. They might come for the great teaching or great music or even fantastic kids programming but they will stay because they know some people. For people to stick long term they need to move church out of the category of a place they go to and into the category of the group of people they know. They need to transfer from thinking about the "leaders" of the church as the primary reason for attending and to the list of other "normal" people who are a part of the church. We all know this truth but we often stand in the way of making our church relational.

3 Things You Can Do THIS WEEKEND To Make Your Church More Relational

- **Name Tags //** Seriously. Buy a bulk pack of those "Hello! My Name Is" name tags and have fun with it. Enlist a group of *friendly* people to ask people what name they'd like on their name tag. Slowing people down and asking them this simple question is the first step towards more relationships in your church.

- **Coffee //** If your church isn't serving coffee before or after the service you're probably missing out on a simple way to build relationships. There is something about a cup of java in people's hands to help them connect!

- **Groups & Teams Onboarding //** This weekend, ask 10 volunteers this question: "If someone wanted to get plugged into a group or onto a team, how would they do that?" If you don't get the same (and simple) answer from people than your onboarding process is simply too complex.

Ease the Inviting Process

Only 2% of people who attend church will invite a friend to church this year. [ref] This is a problem because your church grows when people invite their friends. In my latest book, Church Growth Flywheel, we explore lots of ways to encourage your people to start talking to their friends about the church. I'm convinced that a key part of the reason that people don't invite friends more is that we don't make it convenient enough. It's up to us to make it super easy for people to talk with their friends about the great things going on in our churches.

5 Ways to Make Inviting Easier at Your Church

- **Straightforward Series Titles //** Put the cookies on the bottom shelf! If your people have to guess what the series is about then they won't be inviting their friends. Stop trying to be

so creative! ;) A simple tip is to think about what people would be searching online to find the content that you're talking about. Make it easy to understand at face value.

- **Invite Cards //** These simple tools continue to be an effective way to help your people invite their friends. A blurb about what's coming up at your church with some compelling graphics and all the "dates & times" details and you're ready to go! People use these cards to pass along to people that might be interested in coming to their church plus they serve as a physical reminder to people when they take them home.

- **What to Expect //** A best practice for inviting is to ensure that prominently on your website is a "what to expect" section where your potential guests can get a sense of what coming to your church is going to be like. We take for granted when we attend church all the time how anxious this experience can be. Imagine you were going attend a synagogue or mosque and think about the questions you'd have about that experience. Pictures and videos are particularly great for these parts of your website.

- **Invite to Invite! //** Don't forget to ask people to invite their friends. Your people will need reminders of how important this aspect of their faith is. Ask them directly to invite friends and family to various things at the church. Model to your people who you are connecting with to come to church. Share stories of how people have invited friends and when people have been inviting and impacted by the church! Turn up the inviting culture in your teams and groups by having these smaller groups of people pray for people that they're inviting.

- **Compelling Content //** Generate great social media content that people will want to share with their friends. In fact, the content needs to start with what will be shared and be about the church as a secondary goal. Generate helpful content that answers the questions people are asking. (Hint: Ask your people what question they or their friends have that you should be answering!) Aim to be consistent and compelling in your social content and it will make it easier for people to invite their friends.

Show People a Leadership Pathway

How do people move from serving at your church to leading at your church? What's the pathway they need to follow in order to grow in their leadership with the church?

One of the ironies of too many churches is that we complain that we don't have enough leaders but at the same time the pathway to how people become leaders isn't clear. Rather than being an obvious and clear process, it's often shrouded in mystery and wonder. Make it easier for people to take their next steps in leadership and you'd be amazed at how many leaders will step up to lead!

3 Key Ways to Clarify Your Leadership Pathway

- **Make it Visual //** A simple drawing helping people understand the visual framework of the process that someone follows is an important tool in your clarification tool belt. LifeWay Leadership has been doing some great work with their Leadership Pipeline to develop great language and understanding in this area. Find a compelling framework and continue to communicate it over and over until it sticks. (Or until your people start making fun of you for talking about it so much!)

- **Everyone Has An Apprentice //** One of the simplest ways to drive leadership development is to ensure that every leader has an apprentice serving with them. This natural mentoring relationship is a big step towards passing leadership to the next level of people. Requiring that people have an apprentice if they want to lead is a great step towards developing a leadership development system. If people are interested in leading, their first step is to apprentice under someone else. A part of that conversation is who they can bring on to apprentice under them before they step up to lead.

- **Training ... Training ... Training //** Churches that prevail in this area are finding ways to train at every phase of the leadership experience. They are taking it upon themselves to ensure that people are growing in their leadership regardless of where they are.

Growing churches don't leave this training piece up to "happenstance" but are looking for places to infuse it into everything they're doing. From weekly huddles when people arrive to serve to full-on leadership conferences, prevailing churches are getting leadership development resources in front of their people. They're not waiting for people to come to them looking for development, but going to them instead!

Visit **unSeminary.com for more free resources!**