

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



5 Bad Habits

***KILLING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR
CHURCH'S ANNOUNCEMENTS***

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There are five precious minutes in your service that are solely intended to move people to action. **The announcement time in your church service 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-leveraged 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 five minutes in your service.

Over time, bad habits creep in and loom large on this aspect of your services that neutralize the efficacy of announcements. **These habits reduce this part of the service - from potentially maximizing an incredible opportunity of getting people plugged into your church's mission to an incredible waste of time.** If your church can eliminate these 5 unhealthy habits from its system, the impact of your announcements will soar exponentially!

You're Talking About the Weather... way too much!

All communicators know what you need in order to build rapport with your audience. You're looking for quick ways to make a strong connection with the crowd that's in front of you. Chances are that everyone has experienced the same weather that you did on

the way in, so you quickly make some random comment about the sunshine or the rain - or whatever else you've just experienced.

Stop it... it's lazy. Unless there's something truly remarkable about the weather, like a history creating storm, talking about the weather is just verbal diarrhea and besmirches the effectiveness of your announcements. It's loose, excessive and doesn't help anyone. People know what the weather is like, and what you are experiencing most days is pretty much what they've experienced the day before. It's really not something your audience connects with you over. It's like saying:

- Wow! Isn't there a lot of oxygen in this air today?
- How many people are thankful that the sun came up today?
- Hey friends, hasn't all this gravity been weighing us down lately!

While the urge to talk about the weather comes from a good place, you instinctively go there because you somehow feel the need to break the ice with your audience. By all means, do attempt to build a bridge with your audience, but resist the temptation of stating the obvious. Here are a few more effective ways to make an emotional connection with your audience:

- **Eye Contact** // Studies have proven time and again that the best way to effectively engage with an audience is when the speaker actually looks people in the eye. Slow down and actually notice people!
- **Stories** // Our minds are hardwired to lean in and listen to a good story, so you might as well use that to your advantage. Draw your audience in by weaving your announcements through a narrative arc to come across as someone they can relate to. As you do that, your people can't help but listen!
- **Humor** // I know being funny is hard. It takes insight and perfect timing to deliver a joke well and not come off as a hack. Hone this skill over time and it will surely draw your people in.
- **Availability** // Finally, this might seem obvious, but people tend to listen to people they know. This is why at weddings, you can listen to people you love break every known rule of communication and still enjoy the speeches. On the other hand, if you don't know the best man you can't wait for them to sit down! Whoever is delivering the content during your services needs to be "known, liked and trusted" by your people; this means they need to be available to build a relationship with them. At the bare minimum, your hosts can't be sitting in a green room somewhere before and after the service but be out there to mingle with your community!

You're Talking About Too Many Things!

If the announcement time looks like a never-ending shopping list, you're doing it wrong. The human mind is simply incapable of retaining more than one or two "next steps" that it should take so you are wasting your time going beyond that in your announcements. **As you start making multiple demands on the memory of your audience, they start unplugging from the information.** Attention is a precious commodity that you are managing as a communicator. Don't push your people to focus their attention on too many items, or they won't focus it on anything!



At the core of reducing the number of items that are a force-fit in the announcements is a robust approach to telling ministry departments that they can't get stage time. **In my experience, an effective way to do this is by ensuring that department leaders know the variety of other channels they can use to reach out to their people.** This includes (but isn't limited to) channels like:

- **Direct Mail** // It's old fashioned, but still works. People like stuff that isn't bills!
- **Social Media** // Facebook, Twitter & Instagram are great places to start!
- **Email Marketing** // Yes, it still is the most effective way to drive "calls to action".
- **Foyer Chaos** // Doing something cool in the church foyer to attract people's attention!
- **Phone or Text** // Be it automated or done by people - it's still a great way to grab people.

Most churches should be moving towards just one "announcement" every week that isn't the offering talk or "new here" welcome. You're already trying to get people to take some sort of takeaway from the main message during the service, so you don't want to inundate people with too many other distractions. **The act of narrowing down the focus of the announcements to just one item will drive more intentionality and purpose into your entire church communication process.** Be bold and strive for that level of clarity!

Your People Don't Care About Your Plans or Goals... REALLY!

So, the youth group is planning a trip to the local theme park next month. **Yawn!** New small groups are starting next week and there are sign up forms in the foyer. **Boring.** We're starting a new series on the book of Jonah next Sunday. **Snooze.**

Humans are inherently self interested beings. We only really pay attention to things that we perceive are going to impact us. Every announcement needs to start from the perspective of "What's In It For Me?" (WIIFM?) for your community. **Each announcement needs to be framed as a potential benefit to the listeners.** You need to move beyond the mundane details and cut to the chase by clearly demonstrating why your people should care. Here are some examples that might help you do just that:

The youth group is heading to the local theme park next month *because* we all know our best friendships are formed with people who we've shared life with. Parents, **we want to help your kids make new meaningful friendships with other students and leaders from the church.** Will you help encourage your students to join in?



New small groups are starting next week *because* we believe that the best place to grow in our relationship with God is in engaging proactively with other people. **Small groups are an ideal environment to get your questions answered and build new friendships.** Drop by the foyer after the service to talk with a member about what you'd be looking for in a group!

Next week, we kick off a brand new series of Sunday messages about escapism. **We all have, at one point of another, run away from one thing or another.** Maybe we've over drank,

overeaten or worked a little longer than we needed to in order to escape from life. The story of Jonah from the Bible is so much more than the story of guy who got swallowed by a big fish ... it's the story of a guy who tried to escape and the God who kept pursuing him. Join us next week as we marvel at how this ancient story is even more relevant in our lives today.

Start constructing your announcements around the benefit to your listeners and you'll find your people leaning in and taking action at completely new levels altogether! Focus on how your people will benefit from whatever you're talking about and they'll show more interest than they did in the past.

You're Rushing the Offering Talk.

At some point in your service, you talk about how people can give back to the church's mission. If you're like most churches, this happens right before you pass an offering plate or maybe a bucket. Even if your church has a box at the back of the room where people can make their offerings after the service you still (most likely) draw people's attention to it. **Chances are that you're rushing the offering talk.** You aren't slowing down and drawing attention to this aspect of your church and it's hurting your people's ability to give. As a result, it's having a detrimental impact on your church's budget.

This offering talk is often rushed because people tend to become self conscious about the negative stereotypes associated with churches asking for money. **The way to overcome those stereotypes isn't by doing the offering talk poorly, but by doing it well.** Slowing down will help your leaders make sure they are delivering it effectively and not sending the wrong message to your people.

Here are some key ingredients of the offering talks that can make a vital difference in the life of churches like yours. Work towards ensuring that these pieces are making regular appearances in this strategically important part of service:

- **Express thanks!** // Take some time out to thank people for supporting the mission of your church. There are a lot of worthy Kingdom causes that people could give to and it's an honor when they contribute to your ministry.



They went from barely surviving to thriving in a matter of months. Make sure that you make the ask.

You're Lacking Visual Support to Your Announcements.

65% of your church members are visual learners. [ref] However, most people who are doing the announcements at churches seem to ignore this reality. They simply stand on the stage and present a few facts about upcoming events at their church without doing anything tangible to visually engage their audience with the information they are presenting.

Here are a few ways to “simply” add more visuals to the announcements this coming weekend at your church:

- **Get personal** // People will give to an important cause... but they love to give to a personal story they believe in and want to be a part of. Connect how that offering makes a difference to the lives of individuals within your community.
 - **Reduce pressure but don't ask them not to give!** // We want to be clear that we're not after the money of first-time guests since this is a common criticism of churches. However, we never want to ask people not to give to the church. They're giving to God's mission after all, and we don't want to stand in the way if they sense God is asking them to give.
 - **Receive... don't collect** // The phrase “we're going to collect today's offering” is a pet peeve of mine. We're not a collection agency! People are choosing to give to the church... receive that offering; plain and simple!
 - **Report on projects** // Some things in the life of your church take a while to come to fruition. Use the offering set-up to report on the progress of a special project and connect people's giving to it.
 - **Don't make people guess how to give!** // You cannot make this too simple. Show people exactly how they can give to the mission. Remind them that they have choices, that they can give through the offering plate, on the internet, in the mail and myriad other ways. Reduce friction and don't make them guess.
 - **Make the Ask** // I know a church leader who never actually asked people to give during his services. Just taking the time to ask people to give to his vision literally changed the financial picture of his church.
 - **Look at the Handout** // Print out a 4x6 postcard of whatever you're talking about and get it into the hands of people before the service. During the announcements, take time to draw your people's attention to the piece.
 - **Slides... Slides!** // Support your announcement with 2 or 3 slides that succinctly illustrate the points you are making
 - **Flipcharts** // You'd be amazed how engaged visual learners are by just having someone draw a simple diagram on a flipchart. It worked for your high school football team for a reason ... there's no reason why it won't work for your audience!
 - **Objects** // Bring an object or two that illustrates the action you're asking people to take on stage and it's more than likely to hook in the visual learners. (Pro Tip: Put the object under a tablecloth to tease your audience for added pop!)
- Get creative with how to integrate visual elements with every announcement you make. You'll notice that your messages will stick more over time!
- It's just announcements... I don't want to do all that!**
- The announcements represent a huge opportunity in the life of your church. At their core, they signify the all-important “call to action” in services. They are that part

of the service where you ask people to get out of their seats and take a leap of faith to engage with your church. It's critically important that you spend time, effort and energy to help your people engage with your church.

Taking some time to narrow down the focus to just a single announcement is paramount to help you do this part of your service effectively. Moving your people to action is important enough to get your people to focus attention on taking the step that matters!

Want more help? Check out my FREE ebook all about announcements.

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