

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



7 Realities

OF RECRUITING MULTISITE CHURCH LAUNCH TEAMS

RICH BIRCH



There is no doubt that the multisite church movement has blossomed, and has a massive impact on the church today. In fact, today in North America one in six people attend a multisite church campus. That fact astonishes me! **Each one of those campuses has had a group of volunteers at the core of the opening process that we're calling a launch team.** This is a group of people who have committed to be a part of starting up the new location and ensuring that it's healthy and ready to impact its community.

Since the early 2000s, I've had the honor of being at the forefront of fourteen campus launches. We've seen around 1,500 volunteers join our launch teams. Today, over 9,000 people attend the campuses that sprung from the combined efforts of all those people. It has been a privilege to have a front row seat to this amazing approach to reaching new people with the message of Jesus. Seeing the multisite revolution from the inside has given me a perspective that is second to no other! As I reflect on what I've seen in all those teams, I've attempted to boil down some common lessons about these critically important teams, which I have discussed below.

Stop trying to find people like you.

At the core of the challenge of recruiting healthy launch teams is a sociological fact that we tend to attract people like ourselves. We need to consciously push against this reality.

You don't want to find people like you because most people leading these endeavors are innovators and early adopters, which is a minority number among people in the world. While being an innovator is great for leading the launch of campuses, they don't make great volunteers long term because those "early adopters" tend to get bored after the initial launch phase and just want to move onto something new.

5 Categories of the Adoption Curve:

- **Innovators** // Eager to try new ideas, products, and services, almost as an obsession.
- **Early Adopters** // Rely more on group norms and values, as opposed to Innovators who rely on their own values.
- **Early Majority** // Collect more information about products and services to weigh the pros and cons before they make a decision.
- **Late Majority** // Adopt the new mainly because their friends have all adopted it and they feel the need to conform.
- **Laggards** // Do not rely on group norms and values, just like Innovators. Their past heavily influences their current decision process.

Your approach to finding volunteers needs to tread slowly with people and ideally be built around finding “early majority” people who will take some time convincing them to get plugged in. However, **when these people make a decision to be a part of the campus they will be more likely to stick and stay.** It’s only when this group starts to pile in en masse that the late majority will decide to be a part of the team!

You need more. A lot more.

Stop trying to find the minimum number of volunteers needed. There is evidence across the movement that campuses with larger launch teams have better initial campus launch sizes but then also tend to reach more people over time. **Figure out how many people you “need” to make the launch happen and then stretch.** Push to get more people lined up on the team than you need to make things better long term.



5 Benefits of Larger Multisite Launch Teams:

- **Trajectory Setting** // Studies show that the first five years of a campus is when the majority of its growth happens. [ref] A larger launch team means the campus is set up to maximize its potential of reaching people because there are more social connections to people outside the campus.
- **Healthier Teams** // One of the paradoxes of volunteer recruitment is that the more volunteers you have the easier it is to get volunteers. People want to feel like they are needed but they don’t want to feel like the whole thing rides on them. More team members mean it’s easier to get more team members.

- **Critical Mass** // Typically, when you’re launching a new campus you are attempting to replicate the “look and feel” of a larger campus in a smaller setting. These approaches to doing ministry are usually robust and require a lot of volunteers.
- **More Friends** // We need people to do work at the campus but our volunteers are looking for relational connections. When more people are serving on teams, it means there is a greater potential for people to make new relationships.
- **Expanded Donor Base** // Usually, people who are volunteering at a church are more likely to be giving to the mission of the church as well. Starting a campus is a financially stretching experience and more volunteers mean more people to connect with regularly about the financial needs of the launch.

The best time to get volunteers is before you launch.

It becomes so much harder to get team members once the campus is up and running. There is the pressure of actually running the campus, and that means the team doesn’t have as much time. However, there is also the reality that sometimes it’s easier to ask people to commit to an idea rather than the reality. **I would suggest building a process that doesn’t assume that you’ll recruit any volunteers in the first three months after the launch but work to try to do it because you’ll need people!**

If your team is “banking” on volunteers signing up in droves once the campus launches, they are setting themselves up for some disappointment. There is a funny thing that happens in the human mind... we think things will be easier down the road than they are today. We are overly confident in our abilities to acquire volunteers after the launch when in reality it’s actually easier before the launch. **This is also the case because typically the leaders involved in the leadership of the new campus haven’t been through a launch before and so they can only picture recruiting people when the campus is open.** Their own personal process is reliant on tapping people on the shoulder in the foyer or catching people’s eyes across the main auditorium and the idea of building a system that doesn’t rely on that seems foreign.

Think long-term campus health.

Don't make volunteer decisions in the first year that will hinder the longer term health of the campus. When thinking through how you're going to build teams, think through a process from the point of view of what is best after 3-5 years of the campus development.

Too many church leaders make short-term volunteer team decisions only to regret those decisions down the road. This is particularly fatal in a multisite church because you are actually multiplying these problems and instead of moving onto the next campus you will end up needing to loop back and solve unhealthy campus dynamics rather than launching new locations. Take your time to build healthy and strong long-term volunteer teams.



3 Short-term Team Building Decisions to Avoid in Campus Development:

- **“Missionary” Volunteers** // Asking people to come from another region “just for a few months” when your launch is a short sighted strategy because those volunteers will step out after a few months and hinder the new campus’ ability to function. Take longer and find people who are within the region you are launching in.
- **Going Against Policies** // There are good and sound reasons why your church has set up best practices and policies in place around volunteer engagement. Don't skip the line on background checks and documentation just to get someone placed. The risks associated with this behavior aren't worth the potential long term damage that could be done to the church.
- **Paying Volunteer Roles** // There can be a temptation to pay certain roles in the new campus... even those roles that are volunteer roles in others (e.g. set up teams, audio/visual teams, etc.). Resist this temptation! It is nearly impossible to back out of this long term and tends to spread to other roles within the campus.

Face to face is the best, but...

Anyone who has done a lot of volunteer recruitment knows that the best way to do it is to sit across the table from someone and ask them. It's a powerful strategy to get to know people personally and then match the perfect role to them. This would be the preferred approach to building up a launch team for the next campus but there typically isn't the time to have that many one-on-one conversations during the launch process, so you need to build a process that approximates the relationship building process as closely as possible, but does it at scale.

5 Ways to Scale Relationships in a Launch Process:

- **Social Connection Events** // It is important to take time to ensure that people from the region that you are launching are getting to know each other. More than “information meetings” these events need to drive people to talk with each other and make friends.
- **Home Meetings** // There is something incredibly personal about meeting with a group of 15-25 people in someone's home with great snacks and talking about the vision of the church. This scales up nicely because over a month or weeks, with 2-3 meetings you can end up getting hundreds of people connected.
- **Lots of Communication** // It's been said that leadership is 10% making decisions and 90% communicating about those decisions. Building a communication process that drips down information about the launch, and ensures that everyone feels like they are getting the most up-to-date information, draws in a community.
- **Do for One What You Wish You Could Do for All** // Don't be afraid to have a healthy dose of face-to-face interactions with people. Sprinkle this throughout your launch process and you will get a chance to talk with a lot of people.
- **Office Hours** // Make it a point to keep a regular schedule in the new community that you are launching in and let people drop in on you in that location. I would often pick an afternoon every week and just work out of a coffee shop in town and let people know about it. People would either book time with me there or just drop in to connect.

The perfect time to join the team!

Typically we have formal times during a launch process when we are looking to “intake” volunteer onto the launch team (like Sunday services, house parties, information events, etc.). **If you restrict people from joining the team just when you are ready to receive them you will miss out on lots of potential volunteers.** Your team and process needs to be built around a concept of “this is a perfect time to join the team” because the reality is that the moment someone puts their hand up to say they are interested, is the perfect time... for them.

5 Times When You Need to Be Ready to Plug in Volunteers Even When You Are Not Prepared:

- **Announcement Sunday** // The day you make the big vision pitch about the launch of the campus, there will be people who are so excited to jump onboard and help. They don't want to wait for your process to begin but want something to do right away.
- **Random Tuesday Afternoon** // You'll bump into someone as you're going about life and they will express a keen interest to move from just learning about the launch to actually helping.
- **Right after Your Sign Ups** // There are people that will hold back and see how many people sign up to be a part of this thing. They will only be ready to jump onboard once they see some sort of critical mass. Communicate that people are signing up and you'll see more people jump onboard.
- **The Week before Launch** // It never fails... I always get a call the week we're launching that basically says “Hey, do you still need volunteers for that new campus?” I want to ask them where they've been all this time but alas I attempt to get them plugged in.
- **Launch Sunday** // People will be excited and amazed that your team pulled it off. They'll drop in and ask one of those volunteers if they still need any help. (The answer is always yes!)

Always Be Launching!

Alec Baldwin's sales guru character named Blake in the classic 1992 movie *Glengarry Glen Ross* has a famous speech where he implores the sales trainees to be “ABC - Always Be Closing!” If I have to give one piece of advice that I would leave with you, it would be “ABL - Always Be Launching!” Build your approach to finding and releasing a core team around the concept that you are going to be moving onto another campus after this location. **Don't find a launch team but build a system for finding launch teams.** Pull together a repeatable process that will reinforce itself and point you toward finding more people to end up on more launch teams to send out more campuses!

I experienced this best when we had our launches just 12 months apart from each other. We would be starting the very early process of building the launch team for the next campus just as the current campus was opening. In fact, many times I had core team members together at the launch Sunday of a campus and got to cast vision by getting them to imagine what would happen if in just a year we were having a “grand opening” in their community. **The energy was palpable in those meetings!** It was like rocket fuel that got our launch team recruiting off in the right direction because a core part of that team got to see the vision being lived out first hand.

Visit unseminary.com for more free resources!

UNseminary

UNLIMITED GRAPHIC DESIGN HELP
for only \$370 per month.

Can someone say Amen?

LEARN MORE @ designpickle.com

DESIGN PICKLE