

Dos and Don'ts for a successful launch of a men's ministry

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Father's Day is a great time to focus on and do PR to grow a Men's Ministry. Growing a Men's Ministry is one of the most challenging tasks for church communicators, but it can be done and Father's Day is a great time to work on it. Below is advice that goes through the true story of what an otherwise large and successful church tried and didn't work and what they needed to do to make a Men's Ministry launch successful.

The following excerpt is from my book, [Ministry Marketing Made Easy](#).

Real life story about the limitations of prayers and good intentions



True story here: a church, in a town which shall remain unnamed, was experiencing great numerical growth. It had grown from 600 to over 1800 in attendance in three years. The Sunday service was spectacular, with seeker-sensitive music, drama, and powerful need-centered preaching. Individuals were making decisions to become a Christian every week and the church was growing in numbers. They were doing many things right. Though grateful for the growth, the church staff was concerned because the growth was primarily in the Sunday morning service.

The leadership realized that people also needed to grow in Christian maturity as well as their primarily passive involvement in the Sunday service. The staff decided to address this issue by beginning a men's ministry, where they could intentionally work to develop the men into mature disciples. They decided that the kick-off event for the men's ministry would be an evening when they would start a new men's Bible study group. They felt that getting the men of the church into an in-depth Bible study was an important foundation for discipleship. So far, so good. Now, how to get them there?

The staff prayed about the kick-off event. They advertised it for four weeks in the bulletin and newsletter, on PowerPoint and through lively announcements from the pulpit every Sunday. After all their promotion and prayer, the staff expected at least 100-200 men to show up. The night came for the event. The twelve men from the church staff and the planning leaders enthusiastically set-up tables and chairs for 200, expecting a great response. Three men came. What went wrong? The staff did all the right things, spiritually. They followed a biblically sound ministry model, they planned and prayed, and then they prayed some more. They held more meetings and prayed more. They advertised the way they advertised other events in the church, but admittedly the church was doing little else other than Sunday morning.

The marketing plan for the men's ministry

Though they did all the right things spiritually, the staff didn't do effective Ministry Marketing. Before some suggestions, let's look more closely at how they marketed the Men's Ministry Bible Study Kick-off:

- They advertised the study for four weeks in the newsletter and bulletin. Their belief about the effectiveness of these communication pieces was that the most important criteria for success in print publications was how the pieces looked. Therefore, the pieces were produced by a professional advertising agency in full-color on

glossy paper. The staff loved them.

- The content of the announcement was the same in both the newsletter and the bulletin. It said, “Men’s Bible study starting Sept. 8. All men of the church are encouraged to attend. Sign up in the church lobby.” That’s it. No detail, no reasons to come. The staff felt that people wouldn’t read a lot of text.
- They announced the event from the pulpit in the same way for four weeks, and used PowerPoint® each week to illustrate the announcement. The PowerPoint presentation was attractive and well done. The staff thought they were great-looking.

What looked right and what went wrong

At first look all the actions above seem like a good way to market the program, so what went wrong? Here are some of the most obvious problems:

Though the event planners advertised the event a total of eight times in their printed material and PowerPoint (a several times), the announcement was almost worthless because it didn’t give the complete information details that would enable the men to attend the event. The materials produced did not tell the men:

- The time the event was going to start
- Where it was going to be held.
- What was going to happen once they got there.
- Why they should bother to come (other than because church leaders said to).

The inclusion of these details, boring and uninteresting as they may seem, is essential. Your congregation members are not mind readers. It doesn’t matter how beautiful the graphics are in a communication piece if essential details like these are left out. All of the details must be included every time and as a part of every announcement of an event if you want people to attend.

They made a some additional incorrect ministry marketing assumptions because the staff assumed that men would find out the information about starting time and location, and would write it down and remember it when they went into the church lobby to sign up for the study.

That is what they told them to do. This was a deadly assumption. If you want to give any event the kiss of death and guarantee no response at all, tell people to “sign up in the church lobby.” Nobody does, especially guys. After church is over, does any man to say to his wife (please forgive any implied sexism in this illustration, “Honey, would you please wait for me in the car while I find out where to go sign up for the men’s Bible study?” It doesn’t happen. I know my own husband’s most pressing thought after church is—where are we going for lunch? Following the thought of food is football, basketball, or hockey, depending on the time of year. Most men I know, godly guys that they are, are similar in their after-church priorities. Trying to find a table in the church lobby to find out information about something that you may or may not be interested in simply is not a priority, even if by chance a man remembers he was told to do that. Any time you require people to take a second step (call the church office for more information, sign up in the lobby, etc. to find out essential details that they need to show up for any event, you will drastically cut down attendance.

More incorrect ministry marketing assumptions and how to correct them

The staff assumed that men would remember the details from the PowerPoint®

announcement presented every Sunday.

Most men don't. PowerPoint® is great for song lyrics, to set a specific mood for worship, or for graphics to reinforce a story or theme, but few men (women or teenagers) sit in worship, pencil in hand, ready to take notes off of a PowerPoint® presentation. A bulletin insert, ready to post on the refrigerator with all the details on it, would have been much more useful.

The staff assumed that having the pastor encourage the men to come to the event meant something to the men and would make them want to come.

It usually doesn't. Pastoral leadership doesn't have the influence it once did. We live in an irreverent age, an age that doesn't admire authority. A personal invitation can be powerful, but pleas from the pulpit to attend events that aren't particularly appealing to uninvolved church members, men or women, are seldom heard, let alone acted upon.

The staff assumed that men would want to come to a Bible study.

Most men don't. There was nothing in any of the advertising that told potential attendees what they would study, what it would do for them, or if it would change their lives or benefit them in any way. Just mentioning a Bible study simply makes lots of guys feel guilty, not hungry for the Word. For most people, even church attendees who are new to the faith, a Bible study is not a felt need. We may think it ought to be, should be and that's true. But for most people, it isn't.

The staff just assumed that a Bible study meant as much to the new Christians and unbelievers who attended the church as it did to the church staff.

It doesn't. Remember: The number one question people ask when they get an advertisement for anything from the church or elsewhere is, "What's in it for me?" If that question isn't answered quickly, clearly, and in a way that meets a need, people don't show up. Some of the earlier comments might seem rather unkind and somewhat brutal, or cynical. You may be thinking, "You shouldn't talk about church Bible studies that way! People do what our pastor says! I just know people are impressed with the PowerPoint® slides we make before the service starts. I'm certain my observations aren't true in every instance. Please know that I'm not sharing these observations from a cynical heart, but from a heart that cares passionately about the church of Jesus Christ and fervently believes in the value of Bible Study for growth as disciples. However, we have to start being honest in the church about what works and about what doesn't work if we are going to market our message effectively and have people respond. We are losing the hearts and souls of people to every imaginable philosophy and religion other than a saving trust in Jesus. If some people make a decision for Christ, so often they remain baby Christians all their lives because the church doesn't seem to offer them anything more interesting than what is on TV. This has to change for the church to become the powerful, life-changing force it could be. Attempts to get people to church and involve them in activities of the church are not working very well in most cases and people must become involved in more than Sunday morning if they are to grow up in the Christian faith.

What the men's ministry planners should have done

In the example above, the church leaders needed to pray, but they also needed some marketing savvy and some common sense. They should have:

Given complete information each time the event was mentioned in writing.

Remember, "The message is the message." It doesn't matter if you spend a pile of money for four-color printing if you don't give the time something starts or the location for the event. Complete basic information is the foundation of

all successful ministry marketing.

Sent out a series of postcards and email blasts to the men of the church, in addition to providing the newsletter and bulletin announcements.

Postcards, if done correctly, tend to get carried directly from the mailbox to the refrigerator. Once posted, an announcement on the refrigerator is a far more likely to illicit a response than an announcement in a discarded church bulletin. Email notices can be added to electronic calendars. All the details mean nothing if they can't be accessed when needed.

Provided food and advertised how great it would be.

A good, hearty, regional favorite dinner (and lots of it) at the kickoff event is an example of being market savvy and providing something men would enjoy.

Made it an event that would appeal to men for more than primarily spiritual ones.

Starting the Bible study series with a locally popular speaker (a sports figure, perhaps) who is also a believer in Jesus that the men would want to come and hear would have also been a good idea. Guys hear the pastor every week. A successful business man or athlete or coach can help men see that the values of the Bible transcend Sunday morning.

Be honest about the spiritual value.

Most men want to have a lasting and significant impact on their families and those close to them. Becoming a man of wisdom, insight, and strength that a study of the Bible and becoming a mature disciple of Jesus can give is a great benefit. In the outreach materials, these benefits should be clearly stated. We have the Words of eternal life; the message of true and significant power. We should not be shy in sharing it. **Growing and advertising a men's ministry isn't easy, but it also isn't impossible.** There are many challenges and a lot of hard work that needs to be done to advertise, promote, and grow a Men's Ministry at Father's Day or any time of the year, but it is worth it. A strong group of men who are growing in Jesus and discipleship is a joy and strength to churches and families not only at Father's Day, but throughout the year.

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