

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



5 Lessons

**CHURCH LEADERS CAN LEARN FROM
THE "ALL-DAY BREAKFAST" TREND**

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In October 2015, McDonald's made a significant change to its menu that made a huge difference to its bottom line and market reach. That month they added all-day breakfast to their offerings, and in many ways it ended up changing the course of history for this corporation.

For years, insiders had been saying that all-day breakfast, while a great addition to the menu, simply couldn't be done. In fact, **the turnover between the breakfast and the lunch menu kept stumping the logistics folks.** It was almost a joke that you could get breakfast up until 10:29 a.m., but at 10:30 a.m. the entire kitchen had to turn over to lunch orders only.

People who follow this industry had been saying that **offering an all-day breakfast menu was a potential way for McDonald's to increase its reach and attract customers who normally wouldn't return later in the day.** I know for our little family this change meant a switch in our consumption habits. You see, my wife is the decision-maker when it comes to which restaurants we frequent. Now that she could order oatmeal or an egg McMuffin for dinner, it meant that McDonald's was now on the list of restaurants that we could go to if we needed to make a quick stop for a meal!

The story of why McDonald's began offering all-day breakfast is a fascinating one for church leaders to consider. For more than thirty consecutive years, the company had seen increases in its profits and stock value quarter after quarter. It was the darling of the Warren Buffet strategy to blue chip investing because of its consistent results.

However, for the first time, McDonald's was experiencing a downturn with lower profits than the previous quarter; subsequently, their stock value fell. The company sprang into action and made a number of changes organization-wide. One of those outcomes included the introduction of the all-day breakfast menu. **The rest is history: McDonald's became wildly profitable again, their stock value increased [ref], and they essentially set the trend for all-day breakfast menus in the fast-food industry.** A&W, Starbucks, Dunkin Donuts, and the Canadian chain Tim Hortons all eventually made the switch. The impact of this trend was profound. In fact, there was such a significant increase in the demand for eggs that the price spiked in the year following McDonald's introduction of this change. [ref]

How does this pertain to church leaders? **It's important that we try to glean lessons from an organization like McDonald's as they discover the changing trends in their industry and ask ourselves if there's anything we can learn as we lead our churches.** When considering the all-day breakfast trend, I see at least five clear lessons that you and I can apply to our churches.

What got us here won't get us there.

McDonald's decided to offer all-day breakfast because they realized that offering more Big Macs or Quarter Pounders wasn't going to be enough if they wanted to grow as a company. Instead, they needed to address a core offering that would attract a whole new audience of people.

In terms of our roles as church leaders, we need to recognize that whatever God used in the past isn't necessarily what He's going to use today or tomorrow. If our styles, approaches, or even ministry models are the same as they were twenty years ago, there's a good chance that we've already plateaued or are in decline.



What are those things that worked at one point in time that aren't working now?

What part of our regular "menu" do we need to refresh? What new options do we need to consider adding?

Systems are needed to support change.

If you study McDonald's switch to all-day breakfast, you'll see that the company needed to make considerable changes in order to actually be able to offer something as simple as an Egg McMuffin all day long. The entire restaurant needed to be reconsidered from the ground up, from the way the grills were engineered to the necessary marketing across many different channels to effectively roll out these huge changes to the public.

Since most McDonald's locations are franchises, it means that (in some ways) corporate can only *pitch* ideas to franchisees who ultimately decide whether or not they want to implement them. In this case, corporate knew that if all-day breakfast going to work, it would require a high level of network-wide adoption.

At our churches, we often think of the end product, but we don't consider how to reach that end product or what is required to make it successful.

- When we think about change at church, are we thinking about the systems behind the change?
- What new leadership teams do we need to have in place to ensure that the changes we're making will stand?
- What investments do we need to make in testing new ideas and/or equipment to see if the changes we're considering will have the impact we anticipate?
- What old processes need to be thrown out or redesigned in order to support the change that we're looking to implement?
- Do we need to develop entirely new processes to reach our goal?

Some innovations won't work.

It's clear that this change has been a huge success for McDonald's. You simply need to look at the value of McDonald's stock from before October 2015 to the present to see how clearly America's obsession with eating breakfast all hours of the day has made a positive impact on McDonald's bottom line.

However, this wasn't the only change that McDonald's was pushing at the time. Do you remember the Premium McWraps? They were essentially larger versions of the snack wraps that had been on the menu for years. **McDonald's introduced this item just before their all-day breakfast, and it ended up receiving lackluster results in the market.** I remember reading an article in [Bloomberg Business before this launch about how complex it was](#) to get cucumbers (yes, cucumbers) on the menu in order to add them to the wraps. Until that point, McDonald's hadn't even considered having cucumbers because of their accompanying food stall issues. The Premium McWraps failed to grab people's attention and ended up ultimately being a waste of time and energy.

What's the lesson we can draw from this example as we think about change in our church?

The launch of Premium McWraps was a significant push for McDonald's and many people thought it was going to make a big difference in the life of the company. Some of the smartest food marketers in the world devised an incredible plan to roll it out. However, in the end it was a failure despite these marketing efforts. It wasn't quite as bad as the McPizza or the McHotDog, but it was certainly heading in a similar direction. **The amazing resiliency of the McDonald's organization and franchises proved fruitful, however, as they didn't give up but instead pushed forward in their search for the next innovation that would gain more market share and allow them to grow as an organization.**



Don't miss the lesson here, church leaders: **you are going to inevitably try things that aren't going to work.** What happens when they don't work tests your leadership. It doesn't mean that you don't need something new; it means that you need to learn from that experience and move on to the next. McDonald's learned that people weren't looking for larger sizes of their smaller McWraps, that cucumbers aren't really that big of a deal for customers, and that people were more interested in ordering breakfast items whenever they felt like it than being offered another wrap.

Failures are simply opportunities for learning. Failure presents an opportunity for your church to ask **what are we learning through this experience that will help us get closer to our mission?** If we're going to make the kind of impact that God's calling us to, we're going to try things that simply don't work.

Give people what they want.

This might seem like the most obvious consideration, but at the core of the all-day breakfast trend is the fact that McDonald's knew that all day breakfast would be a hit *for years*:

- They tested it through marketing channels.
- They had surveyed their customers.
- They understood that the market could accommodate and support the change.
- In fact, many local mom and pop stores had been, for decades, offering all-day breakfast, so there was already a proven market for McDonald's to move in on.

The difference was that McDonald's had to get over its own internal processes and say, "Let's put the needs of our customers ahead of our needs to create an easy-to-deliver system of food." More pointedly, **McDonald's needed to stop asking what kind of food they could make for people and start asking what kind of food people were willing to buy.** The same is true for our churches.

I know this sounds heretical to some readers, but the same premise of demand applies here:

- What questions are people asking, and how do we answer those as a church?
- What are the things that people are struggling with that our church could be or provide an answer to?
- What are the things that people wonder about that we could talk about on a Sunday morning?

Answering these questions of demand was true of Jesus as He ministered. Folks gathered to Him because He fed miraculously, provided healing, and revealed truth to them through His teaching. The same needs to be true in our churches. What are those things that we need to be talking about or doing as a church that draw people in?

I suspect there are church leaders reading this right now who know that there is an approach to ministry that would interest the people in their community, but they refrained from doing it because it seemed "too crazy." I've seen many Bible studies offer a beer-and-Bible solution, where they provide an opportunity to get together and drink a good beer while discussing the Bible. Recently, [I discovered a church that blended being both a microbrewery and a church.](#) Yes, you read that correctly, and it

might seem like a radical idea, but it works; the microbrewery employs people in the community and also serves as a church to point people to Christ. It offers an answer, a solution. **Let's start with what our community is interested in, and then use it to point people towards Christ.**

Launch; don't just start.

When you start something, you tiptoe in and quietly offer it to your community. When you launch something, you make a big deal and announce its arrival to the people in your community and beyond.



When McDonald's launched all-day breakfast, they went all out. The company worked hard to get franchise networks across the entire country to launch at the same time. The marketing machine ensured that its communication about the launch was clear, compelling, and action-oriented. They announced that they would be offering all-day breakfast across the entire country, starting on a single day. This approach focused on garnering both the interest of the press and the market as people lined up all day long to snack on their favorite breakfast offerings from McDonald's.

What can you and I learn from McDonald's launch for our churches?

We constantly have the opportunity to launch new things, whether it's a new student ministry, a capital giving initiative, a special Christmas lineup, or something else; the possibilities are endless. Work hard to align both the operations and communication side so that the offering has a big impact. Go all in on your innovation and don't look to simply tiptoe towards change. Yes, do research like McDonald's did, but once you make the decision, fully commit all your resources to ensure that the risk has the best opportunity for success. **Don't tiptoe into innovation—jump in with both feet.**

We need less half measures in the life of the local church.

What is the "all-day breakfast" you need to offer at your church?

What are you looking to change at your church? Being a leader means taking people from where they are to a more desirable future. By definition, that means that leaders are change agents. God is probably calling your church to change some things in the coming weeks, months, and years. **The question is what is it that He's calling you to change, and how can you align your resources to make that change happen?**

I'd love you to [leave comments](#) about the all-day breakfast trend and its relevance to your church and to hear what it is that God might be calling your church to change in the coming years.

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