

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



# *7 Other Weekend Metrics*

**CHURCH LEADERS  
SHOULD STUDY REGULARLY**

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Too often, church leaders only pay attention to weekend attendance and revenue patterns at their churches. Sometimes these numbers are referred to as “nickels and noses” or maybe the slightly more vulgar “butts and bucks.” However, there are many other factors to consider if we're trying to understand what's really happening inside our churches.

Attendance and revenue numbers are limited indicators; they are simply the result of other things taking place. To have a true understanding of how our churches are growing, we need to dive into leading indicators.

**Leading indicators are numbers that demonstrate what's happening under the hood of your church and reveal the direction it's heading.**

We measure and study those numbers because we believe that if we focus on measuring, we will see a greater difference in the lives of the people in our church and in the community that we serve. It's been said that what we measure is what really matters to us. If we consistently only report on attendance and revenue numbers, then we send a subtle message to our leadership team that at the end of the day the only thing we care about are bigger numbers and more money.

**We also need to move beyond how we feel about what's happening at our church and look at the truth of the situation.** Part of being a leader is

defining reality, and numbers have a way of both doing that and sobering leaders in the process. Too many times I've heard church leaders talk about how they feel about what's happening in their churches, but those feelings aren't connected to reality in any way. Instead, we should be looking at numbers that reflect the truth about what's actually happening at church.

An executive pastor or key team member should undertake the important practice of examining these numbers on a weekly, monthly, or quarterly basis. Keeping these metrics in front of your people can help the church develop strategies and approaches that drive your church to be more effective. Prevailing churches often have dashboards that they generate internally and distribute (via email or through other reporting mechanisms) that present these numbers graphically in order to keep people who aren't interested in spreadsheets keyed in on what's happening at the church.

**The question for us is what numbers should we be looking at outside of attendance and revenue?** Here are seven other areas that you can regularly study to help you understand what's taking place in your ministry.

#### **New-here Guests**

When a church leader talks to me about growth, I frequently find myself asking them about their new guest numbers. Understanding the ratio of

new-here guests to your total average attendance can provide a clearer picture of what's happening from an evangelistic perspective. This important indicator demonstrates whether or not the church is drawing in new people on a regular basis.

A good rule of thumb to follow is this: **The yearly average number of new-here guests should be equal to the average number of regular attendees on a single Sunday at your church.**

**Example 1:** If your church averages 200 people on a Sunday, then every weekend you should be averaging about four guests per weekend.

**Example 2:** If your church has 500 people in attendance on a regular basis, then every weekend it would be reasonable for you to see 10 new guests.



If your church typically averages less than that ratio, it could be that your new-here process isn't robust enough or you're not effectively gathering information from your new-here guests to get them connected. Likewise, it could be that [your front door simply isn't wide enough](#) and that you need to spend more time reaching out to your community.

### Year-to-year Growth

I'm constantly surprised that many church leadership teams fail to reflect on what their regular attendance was a year ago in comparison to today. This is a relatively simple way to see what's happening in the life of your church. By comparing numbers from year to year, you can quickly get a sense of the momentum that has been gained or lost in your church over the last year.

I suspect many churches don't report their year-to-year attendance numbers because they're concerned that it will show that their church has flatlined or is in decline. **However, keeping that number in front of leaders will force people to ask, what are we doing to reach more people this year than we did last year?** If, in a worst case scenario, your church is in decline, ask yourself, "why aren't we growing, and why aren't we impacting more people than we did at this point last year?"

### Percentage of Volunteers

This is an important health metric for the church. **In fact, I see this number as a core reflection of growth and potential for the future of a church.** Oftentimes, churches that have plateaued or are in decline see somewhere around 20% of their people serving on a regular basis. You've heard the old adage that 20% of the people do 80% of the work. Well, that's not a good percentage ratio for your church.

Engagement is critically important to a growing church and ensuring that your community has a high percentage of people serving regularly is an important factor that ensures engagement is possible. [Tony Morgan states that 45% of your adults](#) need to be serving in one way or another. This percentage is relatively consistent with numbers I've seen in growing churches; on any given weekend, 30% of the adults are volunteering in one way or another.

Let's do the math: if your church had 300 people in attendance last weekend, it would be reasonable and appropriate to see 100 people serving next weekend.

What that number of volunteers does is provide a high level of service for your guests by aiding and driving growth. Volunteer percentage is a critically important piece of the puzzle that is necessary for us to understand what's happening in the lives of our churches.

## First-time Volunteers

An even more granular number to look at is the inflow of volunteers that serve on a regular basis. If you are not seeing a consistent increase in the number of people volunteering, it is clear something is happening to stunt engagement and the future health of your church.



**If your volunteer influx reaches zero, you have a pipeline problem that you will not necessarily feel the pain of today but certainly will in six months to a year.** In fact, by the time you feel that zero new volunteers are serving, it's too late, and you've already entered into a volunteer engagement crisis that is difficult to recover from.

**Ask yourself this question: how many first-time volunteers have we had in the past, how many do we have today, and is that number growing?** If you're averaging one new first-time volunteer every weekend, the question becomes how can you increase that percentage in the coming year? The trajectory of this number is more important than the absolute number.

## Next-steps Indicators

Are people responding to what's happening in the life of your church? **Is there tangible evidence that the ministry is making a difference in people's lives?** Are people taking steps closer to Jesus? Where in the life of your church can you see new spiritual development? Are people signing up for your new believers' class? What are the baptism numbers this year?

Finding a way to track next-steps indicators is an important way to examine the softer side of our ministry. Again, if these numbers atrophy, it's an indicator that we need to change and adjust what we're doing. We won't feel the pain right away, but a year or two down the road our ministry will stall and begin to recede.

## Gallons of Coffee Drank

This one's a little bit tongue-in-cheek, but I do think there's something important about trying to quantify and track community that's taking place at your church. I know for us, offering coffee after our services provides a quantifiable number that shows how many people slowed down to talk to each other on a Sunday morning. **If people aren't taking the time to interact with one another, it indicates that we have a larger community problem.**

While I understand that gathering in small groups develops a greater sense of community than a Sunday morning gathering, we don't want our Sunday mornings to feel like a show. We don't want people to arrive and feel so rushed to leave that they can't slow down, grab a coffee, and talk with members of their church family. So, while gallons of coffee drank may seem like a funny metric to keep an eye on, the question I would have for you is what are some other ways that you could quantify community happening within your church on a Sunday morning?

## Kids to Adults Ratio

Looking at the broader impact of your church, we need to consider how we're reaching the next generation. Churches that are impacting their community are obsessed with reaching the next generation. They spend a lot of time, effort, and energy on reaching young people and getting them connected to the church. They spend resources to ensure these ministries are led and funded well and that should translate into regular interactions with the kids.



I've spoken with a number of church leaders whose churches are in the final gasps of death, and one commonality between all those conversations is an expressed sadness over the fact that there are no kids left in the church, that the Sunday school or kids' ministry is sitting empty. Keeping a close eye on this ratio over time will give you a sense of the long-term trajectory of your church.

[Tony Morgan states that 20% of your community needs to be reflected in your kids' ministry.](#) I've seen these numbers grow as high as 30%, or even close to 40% in some churches, which (to me) represents a healthy future. It says that this church is attracting young families and people who are in some of the most important decision-making times of their lives. In fact, 50% of all people who make decisions for Christ do so before the age of 13; as such, our churches need to think clearly about how we're reaching and affecting the next generation.

### What are some other numbers you're tracking?

Looking just at “nickels and noses” gives you a flat indication of what's happening in the life of your church. Taking a step back and looking at these other indicators gives you a fuller picture of what's happening in the life of your church. It's the difference between a black and white picture and a 3-D image.

What other metrics are you tracking in your church? How are you getting these metrics in front of people? What ways should you be presenting these numbers so that they tell the story about what God is doing in the life of your church? **Every number has a name, every name has a story, and every story matters to God.** Tracking numbers is ultimately about getting a clear picture of what God is doing in the life of people in our community.

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