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Secrets to Launching
Healthy Multisite
Church Campuses

RICH BIRCH

When you reflect on the last 20 to 30 years, what was one of the changes in the local church that had the greatest impact?

When considering the historical changes and growth of the church, it's difficult to find a movement that has had as large an impact as the multisite church movement.

Back in the early 2000s, I was part of a church called The Meeting House, located in the western suburbs of Toronto, Canada. At that time, we met in a middle school and had two services. When even more people started to attend, it seemed that we would need a third service to accommodate the growth. We were reluctant to go to three services for many reasons, one of which being the wear and tear on our leadership team. That's when a key volunteer named Rob stepped in and said, *"Hey, what if we were to put a video camera in the back of the meeting room and run a line out to a video cart in the lobby? We could ask our volunteers to stand out there and wait for a space."*

Do you remember the TV/VCR/DVD cart at school when you were a kid?

You know, the one with the massive television that had a huge strap on it so it didn't fall off? That's what I'm referring to and that also tells you how early we were working on the multisite movement.

One thing led to another, and we moved that video cart to the teacher's lounge…and then into a classroom…and then to the cafeteria. It wasn't long before we had more people sitting in the video overflow than we had in the main room.

I didn't know it at the time, but we were seeing the birth of the multisite church movement.

A group of our church's volunteers came from a town about 45 minutes away and they were always late. Eventually, they began to wonder if they could use our video to plant a church or do something new in their town. At the time, church leadership didn't think it was a great idea. However, our lead pastor, Bruxy Cavey, did whatever a church leader does when they're confronted with an idea from their people that they don't like: he took it to the denomination.

Bruxy spoke with the bishop of our denomination, Darrell Winger, and explained how these out-of-towners wanted to use video to launch something in their hometown. Darrell was an incredible leader and very supportive. He said, *"You know, it's a funny thing you mention this because three months ago we came to the service with a group from our church planting team, and we were late and ended up in the overflow room during the service."* Over lunch that day, he wondered if there was some way to use this video feed to plant churches. In the end, the denomination stepped in and provided

some funding, and our journey as a multisite church began.

We really had no idea what we were doing. We were simply responding to what we saw happening around us and trying to follow what God was doing in our church. That first spring after the launch, we discovered that the new location was outperforming the original location across all the metrics (including percentage of unchurched people attending, volunteer engagement, donors, staff, etc.). With that in mind, we made a decision that we really had no business making: we decided to launch a new campus each year for five years, kicking our journey to multisite into high gear.

My own personal story intersects with helping those campuses launch at The Meeting House and eventually with Connexus Church in Central Ontario and Liquid Church in New Jersey. I found myself in the driver's seat for 13 launches. Over those years, we saw 1,500 volunteers become a part of the launch of those campuses. Today, more than 9,000 people attend services at these campuses every weekend. Those three churches have gone on to launch more than 30 campuses of their own. The multisite church movement is here to stay and is making a massive impact on churches across the country.

When I first started with this movement, I thought the secret to launching a healthy multisite church campus involved the following:

- **Finding the right person to lead the launch**
  I spent a lot of time, effort, and energy convincing people to join our teams and lead the launches. I had to consider the profile of those potential leaders: is this someone who is a leader, or is this a manager wrestling through a responsibility in relationship to the central services teams?

- **Location, location, location**
  I recall a particular launch where our team looked at between 60 to 70 different buildings trying to find a meeting place for a new campus. I've also been involved in moving campuses when we realized we were spending too much money on the location as a weekend meeting space.

- **The funding model**
  How can we raise enough resources to not only get the first few campuses launched, but to also reach the point where the campuses are financially self-sustainable and we can launch a new campus with the excess revenue that's being generated?

All these components play a role, but none are a secret key to multisite success. **After all those launches and watching the campuses grow and expand their reach, my firm conviction is this: the success factor for launching a healthy multisite church campus is the size and health of the volunteer core.**

If your church is considering launching new campuses, **you'll need to build a system for acquiring a large, healthy core of volunteers.** If you can get that team big enough and healthy enough, then the long-term success of your campus is almost guaranteed. This isn't about getting people to go to the new campus; it's about getting them to volunteer at the new campus. This is a subtle but important distinction. Your church doesn't need more people to sit in the seats and then drive home each weekend; your church needs actively engaged members.

We believe that your church should launch a new campus in this next year, but we want to help you do it in a way that will ensure the long-term success and health of the location. That's why we're offering this course.

Is your church thinking about launching a new campus? This course is for you: Launch a Healthy Multisite Church Campus.

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