



**THE REASON YOUR  
CHURCH MARKETING  
ISN'T WORKING**

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Are you wondering **why those Facebook ads that you've been running for the last few months don't seem to be translating** into people connecting, neither in person nor online?

Have you **tried multiple flyer drops in your neighborhood** and you're desperately hoping that maybe one person would show up, but it just hasn't happened?

Are you worried about how you can leverage the next big day that's coming up at your church to see people connect with your church?

Did you **update your website last year, but it seems like people haven't even noticed** and it hasn't translated into more guests walking through your church doors? Whether those doors are physical or virtual!

Are you **doing tons of live video on every platform** and at the end of the day, these efforts don't seem to be translating into lives being changed?

### **Why does so much church marketing seem to not work for so many churches?**

Over the decades I've spent so much time thinking about the connection between church marketing and church growth. It goes back to when I was in college. After a History of Christianity class, I remember talking to my professor about what he believed was going on during periods of great revival. There seemed to be two options:

- One was that the people who were leading in those seasons were more qualified and skilled, which meant they were able to attract larger audiences and ultimately see people connect to Christ. This is a non-satisfactory answer because it feels like it all has to do with people and our own skills rather than a move of God.
- The other was that maybe God loved people more in those periods of revival and so he moved in a way that ended up seeing tons of people connected with Christ. This is also an unsatisfactory answer because it would mean that God seems to be more interested in certain people, at certain times, and in certain places.

What I am left with is that we as church leaders are responsible for thinking carefully about how we communicate the life-changing message of Christ and invite people to plug into our ministries.

## Here's the dirty secret of church marketing: None of it works.

If you're looking to market your church by using outbound communication approaches to try to connect with people who have no relationship to your church, chances are that's not a wise investment of your time or the financial resources associated with these efforts.

## Churches that grow have built a system that encourages their people to invite friends to connect with their church, whether that's in-person or online.

Let's look at this idea more closely. After years of study and hundreds of interviews with leaders within the fastest growing churches across the country, my deep conviction is that churches that grow have built a series of systems that reinforce an invite culture. These churches don't see "church marketing" as the core of their strategy. They aren't trying the latest Facebook ad hack, flyer drop, or some other form of "interruption-based marketing" designed to "convert cold leads" into active parts of their churches.

The fastest-growing churches in the country consistently encourage their people to invite friends and family to be a part of their church. **It really is that simple.** *Growing churches have an ever-expanding invite culture.*

The reason your church marketing isn't working is it's got the wrong target. **Your communication as a church leader needs to be directed toward the people who are connected to your church and motivate them to invite their friends and family to connect with your church.** Until this system is completely developed, fully capitalized on, and worked out, it's a waste of energy to try to market more broadly.

Here are four areas to consider when trying to develop an invite culture at your church. Use these as a filter to think through how robust your invite culture is at your church. Gather your team and discuss whether these four areas are robustly represented in your church. **Chances are you need to stop thinking about church marketing and start working on building the invite culture at your church.**

## YOU NEED A FLYWHEEL

Building a robust invite culture at your church requires more than a single silver bullet.

There isn't one simple step that will do this. It's hundreds of small steps in every avenue of communication that we share with our people. It's about consistently showing how it's normal for people to invite their friends to church. [People like us do things like this.](#)

**It's repeated steps in a consistent direction over a long period that will see people connected and motivated to invite their friends.** It's like a flywheel. It takes tons of effort on the front end and the more you push it, you go from pushing hard to hardly pushing.

Over time, all that cumulative effort makes a difference in your community.

## BIG DAYS ARE STILL A BIG DEAL

Every church has three or four Sundays a year that I would call big days. These are days where two things happen:

1. Your people are more likely to invite their friends. They're more inclined to invite people on Christmas, Easter, and a few other days during the year.
2. Their friends are more likely to attend. Even in the most post-Christian communities that we serve, there are a few days during the year that people who don't normally attend church are more likely to walk through your church doors.

You need to build a strategy around how to encourage your people to invite their friends on that day so that when their friends attend, they have a successful experience and ultimately see them return. That's why we like to say that "big days are a really big deal." It's an important time of year for you to focus a disproportionate amount of energy to increase the invite culture of your church.

What are you doing on Easter to ensure that the maximum number of people in your church invite their friends and family to be a part of it?

How are you crafting the Mother's Day experience so that every Mom in your church invites everyone in their family? Or are you providing a great enough Mother's Day experience that every kid will invite their Mom?

## A SUNDAY SERIES BUILDS MOMENTUM

Have you ever logged onto Netflix or maybe Disney+ and you don't just want to know what to watch but you want to know what else is on that you might want to watch next? The human mind is wired to want to know what's coming next.

This happens with our weekend services. People attend, whether that's in person or online, and they may not connect with what's going on here and now, but they wonder what's coming next. Chunking your teaching into pieces that create a series will help build momentum. A series can be anywhere between 4 and 12 weeks long and can focus on a particular book or a theme. A series takes a logical approach and provides multiple opportunities for people to invite their friends and family to attend church.

It's an important principle of church growth that we help communicate in a way that ultimately captures the imagination of the people who we are attempting to see change into the people God wants them to be.

How are we going to see people change if we can't first capture their attention?

Preaching a series of weekend messages will help us build that kind of momentum.

**Having a common system for onboarding every new series in a way that focuses your people on who they can invite is a critical piece of church growth that we've seen time and again in the fastest-growing churches.**



## JUST BE CAUSE

Growing churches are the kind of churches that develop a system that reinforces the value of their people inviting friends into your church's community.

**The underlying assumption here is that your church is the kind of church that people not only want to attend but want to tell their friends about.** Time and again, we've seen in the fastest-growing churches across the country that they go out of their way to not just be a Sunday church but repeatedly find ways to encourage their people to get out of their seats and into the streets to make a difference in their communities.

We know that this is a "God thing" but the community also sees it as a "good thing". It creates a commonplace for people to talk to their friends about their church.

**People want to be part of a church that's making a difference.** When our churches are motivating people to get out of their seats and onto the street to make a difference, it's the kind of thing that people want to talk to their friends about.

When was the last time your church made a notable, positive impact in your community? How are you partnering with other leaders in the community for the good of your community? How are you celebrating the good things your church is doing in a way that makes it easy for your people to share about it with friends?

## ARE YOU LOOKING FOR MORE HELP WITH CHURCH GROWTH?

Your church marketing efforts need to be focused primarily on encouraging your people to invite their family and friends to connect with your church.

Your team should be 100% focused on increasing the invite culture in your church before you attempt to do any external "church marketing." You should not be looking at marketing externally to other people beyond the walls of your church. You need to take advantage of the community that is already connected with your church. This is the way your church will grow and reach new people.

A few years ago, I wrote a book called [Church Growth Flywheel: 5 Practical Systems to Drive Growth at Your Church](#)", which is a compression of all these lessons from 200 plus interviews with church leaders from the fastest growing churches across the country. It covers five practical systems to drive church growth at your church. It helps your leadership wrestle through some of the ways to increase the invite culture in your church.

**I'm not trying to convince you to buy the book, but I would love to give you the first chapter to read.** If it seems like the kind of thing that could be helpful, I encourage you to pick up copies for your leadership team.

[Click here to download the first chapter of the book and see if it's something that might help your church take its next steps.](#)