

What does it take for the Church to do marketing?

Identifying the Body of Christ in an Age of Images

*An Example of Marketing in the Early Church
(Acts 17:16-34)*

Know your audience!

“So [some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers] took [Paul] and brought him to the Areopagus...Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new.”

Create a climate or opportunity to communicate!

“Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, ‘Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship...’”

Capture their imagination!

“I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.”

Know your message; be simple and direct!

“The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things.”

Meet the audience where they are – establish common ground!

“From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him – though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’ Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals.”

Keep in mind the goal of your communication – it isn’t always a numbers game!

“When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed; but others said, ‘We will hear you again about this.’ At that point Paul left them. But some of them joined him and became believers...”

Marketing creates climates of Opportunity

The key to church advertising and marketing isn’t in how many new members we can gain, but in creating an opportunity to effectively relate and communicate with our audience. **Marketing has to do with creating a proper environment among members of the congregation so that making the invitation and issuing the welcome to a**

stranger is the logical, appropriate and compelling next step in its plan of outreach. This will often lead the stranger to regular worship attendance and active participation in church life, paving the way for membership – but it isn't always about the numbers! In other words, the internal task of marketing is to establish a climate so that the members can excel in their efforts of sharing the faith with others.

Someone once said that the best definition of the church was this: “a gathering of people who have had an encounter with the Risen Christ and who seek to share that experience with others.” How we reach out and communicate that experience is critical. **Marketing in the church is an exercise in building and sustaining relationships with groups of people.**

Keep these things in mind as your church seeks to reach out to others in your community:

- 1 An effective marketing program differentiates your congregation from the other congregations in your community or service area. By far, the most serious criticism a congregation may have to face is that it looks like every other congregation in its area. From the visitor or guest viewpoint, there may be little or no way to pinpoint why it is beneficial to belong or become a member at one church over another. When this happens, of course, the final decision will, more often than not, be based on folks feeling better for worship and being motivated to do, learn, and serve with others through the week.
- 2 An effective marketing program will create a continuous flow of quality leads. Too often, church leaders focus attention on how much marketing is going to increase membership. In reality, a proper test is to measure the flow of qualified contacts or leads for attaining visitors or guests, both currently and over an extended period of time.

Leads precede visitors and guests coming to worship because they need to be invited. Following-up on leads will naturally increase a congregation's guests or visitors. Combining the leads with visibility will create an awareness that can become contagious.

- 3 An effective marketing program keeps your congregation on top of people's minds - visible. It is easy to forget the decision-making process that goes on in just about every level of life. It goes something like this: When a need arises collectively in the community or with an individual whoever comes to mind first attracts the person or people.

A primary role of marketing is to stay in front of folks who are targeted by our congregation(s). Developing programs that reinforce awareness is an essential element of good marketing. In most cases good marketing doesn't attract first time visitors or guests but retains them after they come, keeps them coming back. Those folks then in turn invite others because of their enthusiasm for the congregation. Marketing is an on-going process. Key question: How top-of-

the-mind is your congregation's purpose or mission with your members and prospective members?

- 4 An effective marketing program showcases what your congregation does well! A little of here's what we can do for you is needed. Far too many congregations fail to recognize that it maybe worship that attracts folks but it is relationships that keeps folks. Who does your congregation attract and for what reasons?
- 5 An effective marketing program is a vital membership that is able to build relations that last with folks. It is a mistake to harbor the notion that marketing has only to do with picking the fruit off the tree. It has just as much to do with caring for the fruit that has been picked to make sure it doesn't spoil.

Many times the loss of membership, out the back door, begins right after one joins a church. It happens subtly almost imperceptibly, yet members get that uncomfortable feeling they're not receiving the attention they did when being courted by the pastor or key leaders in considering joining the church.

Without even recognizing that it's happening, churches or congregations allow members relationships to become dull, empty and lifeless. A routine sets in that fails to keep the fire alive.

By asking the right questions, it is relatively easy to determine whether or not a marketing program is on track. If marketing is carefully planned and effectively implemented, then your congregation can expect a variety of life-building opportunities.

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Marketing Points for Ministry
Presbyterian Media Mission – (PMM)
Blueprints for Congregational Reach Out and Media Designs