

Putting a Church Marketing Plan Together

Whether you know it or not, you are marketing your church. But are you doing it right? Marketing is more than advertising your church or worship services. Before you even think of telling others about your church, ask yourself these questions: Why would I want to visit this weekend? Why would I want to stay? What is the vision and mission of the church? Would regulars say the same thing? What is God



saying through your church? Are people growing in their relationship with Jesus? Communicating who your church is begins with such fundamental questions. How can you tell people who you are until you know what you have to offer? Does your marketing truly reflect the reality of your church? Consider taking the following steps to develop a simple church marketing plan:

1. Read through this document. Note: no special training required.
2. Talk with other churches. Adapt their ideas. Contact Church Marketing Solutions (not-for-profit church marketing organization: www.church-marketing.com).
3. Start with understanding your demographic/target family. Obtain free demographic reports. Conduct demographic surveys (hard and soft data) – find out what makes the unchurched in your area tick so that you can learn where to find people just like them.
4. Begin creating a brand identity. Start with a name, logo, tagline, font, and color scheme.
 - a. Find the right name for your organization – first thing people will see. The smaller it is the bigger it can be on your marketing materials.
 - b. Develop a logo (the simplest way possible to communicate an idea) – think of the major benefit that you offer, and then determine how to best communicate it with an image or a phrase.
 - c. Develop a theme line/tag line. A set of words that describe the spirit of the company – grows from your identify and helps people think of you whenever they see it.
 - d. Develop a font and color scheme that will be consistently used on all your marketing

5. Define your church identity.
- a. Determine your unique niche. Consider your strengths, what other churches are offering, and trends. Your niche should be simple. How will you be uniquely identified in the community? You seek to become known as the _____ church! Niche is determined primarily by understanding your target demographic, how God has uniquely wired you as the planter, and what other churches in the area are already doing.
 - b. Benefits list – make a list of reasons people should be associated with your church. Don't be modest. Differentiate between features and benefits: It is benefits, not the features that hook people. Features are elements of a product/service that deliver a benefit.

Example:	Features	Benefits
	Airbags	Lowered risk of serious injury
	Large Type	Ease of reading
	Digital recording	Hiss-free listening
	Soft leather sneakers	More comfortable walking
	Mercedes Benz Logo	Increased self-esteem based on status
 - c. Features list – features flow out of benefits. Using your benefits list above, develop a list of features that will help shape the personality of your church.
6. Identify the purpose of your marketing. Although all things we do should lead to reaching lost people, try to identify the specific “next steps” you are looking for in specifying a purpose for your marketing. For example, “The purpose of New Life Christian Church’s marketing is to establish broad, positive name recognition in the community as a fun, safe place to connect with and pursue God and to help people respond to an invitation to a New Life event/activity.”
7. Determine specific marketing techniques to use. Go through the following list and identify specific marketing techniques to use:
- Newspapers
 - Magazines
 - Yellow pages
 - Radio
 - Television
 - Billboards
 - Portable outdoor signs
 - Blimps and other mid-air advertising
 - Business cards
 - Brochures
 - Video brochures (CDs)
 - Indoor banners
 - Outdoor banners

- Posters
- Special newsletters (mailed to community)
- Ads in newsletters (including HOA newsletters and community associations)
- Flyers (for car windows, handouts, store counters, store windows, etc.)
- Door hangers
- Stationary
- Canvassing (door-to-door)
- Member mailing lists (e.g. letters, group emails, special invitations, newsletters, etc.)
- Direct mail postcards
- Inserts (to local newspapers)
- Direct mail letters (saturate local carrier routes in the area near special events)
- Targeted email
- Movie Theatre preview ads
- music (theme song)
- Local community and civic events (e.g. booths, etc.)
- Sponsorships of community events and teams
- Special marketing giveaways (e.g. pens, cups, mugs, magnets, etc.)
- Free publicity (Public Relations – PR) (e.g. press releases, news articles, etc.)
- Word of mouth (community networking)
- Testimonials
- Seminars (e.g. parenting, money management, estate planning, marriage, etc.)
- Speaking Engagements
- Web sites (ranked high on search engines to applicable key words)
- Adopt a local cause/charity
- Ticket/invitation cards (high quality, 2 sided color invite cards)

8. From your outreach strategy, identify a list of specific outreach events through launch day. Identify dates for conducting each event. Identify which events will have supporting marketing. For these special events, identify which marketing will be used.
9. Using 1-8 above, write a simple marketing plan (one sentence for each of the following areas is fine). Address the following specific items (from 1-8) with at least one sentence per item (Adapted from Guerilla Marketing series):
- State the purpose of your marketing – What action do you want people to take?
 - Emphasize the main benefit you offer to motivate people to take that action – Why should people respond to take action?
 - Describe your target audience or audiences
 - List the marketing techniques you will use (only long sentence in the plan)
 - Identify your unique niche – what you stand for (e.g. quality, excellence, safety, truth, care, etc.)
 - Define your identity (describe your organization’s personality not its image)
 - Identify your budget

Example: New Life Christian Church – Haymarket Campus

“The purpose of New Life Christian Church’s marketing is to start and foster relationships with unconnected people. Our strategy for building relationships with unconnected people starts by building a positive reputation and trust throughout our target marketing area so that people will be more likely to respond to a specific invitation to a New Life event/activity. Over the next ten months, we will attempt to establish broad name recognition throughout our target area so that unconnected people will be more likely to respond to an invitation to our opening services.

New Life is a safe place for religious seekers who are interested in spirituality and Jesus, but are suspicious of churches. New Life is a safe place to find and pursue God as the only solution that will really satisfy their elusive search for contentment. New Life’s target family is 33 years old, married, considering a second child in the next 2 years, husband and wife both have a college education, half of the families have one spouse staying home with kids, earns over \$100,000 per year, have considerable debt partly resulting from the high cost of living and from a culture that promotes instant gratification, are in some form of transition (e.g. new home, new kids, new job, new friends, etc.), spend a significant amount of time commuting, have their extended families living out of the area, are sensitive to spirituality but not sure that Jesus is real or the only way, had no or some exposure to religion as a child but are now skeptical of their parents (or grandparents) church, and are consumed in raising their children (wanting to do better than their parents did). We will use the following marketing techniques:

Ongoing techniques (at least monthly):

- Ads in newsletters (including HOA newsletters and community associations –attempt to get small ads in all local newsletters and on community web sites)
- Member mailing lists (e.g. letters, group emails, special invitations, newsletters, etc. – mail things to launch team members frequently – at least once per month in addition to group emails)
- Stationary with church logo and name (ongoing use)
- Adopt a local cause/charity (select a local cause/charity such as the new high school)
- Testimonials (maintain a journal of personal testimonies of people from the new church) (ongoing)
- New movers program (send welcome letter and cards to new residents)
- Web sites (get site linked to as many community sites as possible)
- Word of mouth (community networking—launch team constantly inviting friends) (ongoing)
- Yellow pages (Small ad in Prince William phone book)
- Sponsorships of community events and teams (sponsor a summer and fall kids sports team, also look to be a sponsor for the new high school’s football team)
- Flyers (recruit launch team members – advertise events – general info – selected carrier routes monthly)

Giveaways (first touch): To be given away at events where possible.

- Brochures (new church brochure that can be used as first touch for visitors—could also be mailed to homes)
- Business cards (invite cards with new church grand opening information) (after date and location confirm)
- Special marketing giveaways (pens and magnets)
- Ticket/invitation cards (high quality, 2 sided color invite cards announcing new campus, upcoming events and grand opening)

Event Specific or One Time: To be considered for each event and seminar.

- Direct mail letters (saturate local carrier routes in the area near special events: 3-5 carrier routes per mailing) (target selected carrier routes at least monthly)
- Portable outdoor signs (at least 6 large A-frame or real-estate type signs) (purchase prior to launch day)
- Flyers (for car windows, handouts, store counters, store windows, for each event and seminar) (case basis to support events – mailed to selected carrier routes and handed out)
- Direct mail postcards (4 card mailing x 30,000 just prior to first public services) (during month prior to launch. Possibly other times if free cards available)
- Special newsletters (mailed to community directly near meeting location -- at least once) (selected carrier routes to target events)
- Participation in local community and civic events (determine opportunities and get involved in as many as possible --- booths, etc.)
- Posters (used on case basis for large outreach events and grand opening)
- Outdoor banners (at least one 4' x 10' vinyl banner with basic info- for use at outreach events and out front of Sunday meeting location) (purchased prior to outreach events)
- Free publicity (Public Relations – PR) (press release kit, “faith notes” free listings of church events, community interest articles released in conjunction with large events and start of worship services) (ongoing with emphasis prior to launch and at large events)

We will consider the following additional marketing techniques as God provides the opportunities:

- Door hangers (to be handed out within several weeks of launch)
- Magazines (builder/community magazines)
- Movie Theatre preview ads (Manassas Hoyts theatre)
- Inserts (to local newspapers)
- Canvassing (door-to-door)
- Video brochures (CDs)
- Indoor banners

- Newspapers (small ads promoting specific events and opening day)
- Speaking Engagements (community organizations)

We will probably not use the following marketing techniques:

- Radio
- Television
- Billboards
- Blimps and other mid-air advertising
- music (theme song)
- Targeted email

New Life's specific niche is to create a safe environment (seeker sensitive) where messed up people feel comfortable sharing their lives and asking questions about God; a place that takes God seriously and ourselves much less seriously (humor breaks down barriers); a place that uses creative communication and a dash of cynicism to break down barriers with a skeptical culture. Our corporate identity is shaped by the values we live out. These include:

- Communicating the Truth in love: people hearing God's word in fresh and relevant ways.
- Excellence: people honoring God by giving their very best.
- Fun: people enjoying God and each other.
- Servant Leadership: people leading and discipling other people.
- Life change (spiritual growth): people understanding, pursuing and taking their next step toward maturity in Christ no matter where they are spiritually.
- Prayer: people sharing every joy and need with God
- Relationships: people connecting relationally and caring for one another through genuine Christian Community.
- Seeker-sensitive culture: people building bridges to reach a lost and skeptical generation
- Service: people using their gifts to honor God and build up the church.
- Faith: people trusting that God as they step out on faith and seek to cooperate with what He is up to.
- Reaching lost people: people sharing and modeling their faith with others.
- Worship: people experiencing God through worship.

Our initial marketing priorities include:

- a. Advertising summer events (backyard VBS, etc.)
- b. Developing and printing a new "first touch" brochure
- c. Implement a "new movers' program (send letter and cards to new movers) (need cards to mail and good list)
- d. List of all Community/HOA/developer newsletters – what are the opportunities?
- e. Summer sports sponsorship/Fall sponsorship (baseball and soccer?)
- f. Update Yellow Page Ad

- g. Web page up and ready for visitors (Haymarket page)
- h. Initiate monthly flyers to neighborhood (tri-fold letter)
- i. Finalize marketing giveaways and order (pens, magnets, etc.)
- j. Battlefield HS advertising for fall – investigate possibilities
- k. Establish a “testimonial next step journal”
- l. Networking (via Networking Plan) to better define marketing opportunities

Approximately 15% of our total budget will be spent on marketing through launch day.”