

Project for the Month - How to Grow Your Church by Retaining More Visitors



Millions of Americans today are not members of a church, according to Tom Clegg, consultant for Church Growth Institute and Church Resource Ministries. Yet an overwhelming percentage of local churches are either hitting a plateau or declining. And thousands of churches are closing every year. Clearly there is a problem. And even when people do drop in, congregations are not offering the kind of timely visitor follow-up that keeps them coming back.

Cultivation of prospective members has to begin immediately upon their contact with the church. Every week that passes after a visitor or church prospect's first visit to the church reduces the likelihood of that person joining the church by 50 percent. In other words, if I visited your church this past Sunday and your church does not follow-up with me during this week, then there is only a 50 percent chance that I will visit your church again. After two weeks, there is only a 25 percent chance that I will return. After three weeks, there is only a 12.5 percent chance that I'll visit your church again. You get the picture.

It is interesting to note that both growing and declining churches encourage their members to invite others. However, unlike many plateau or declining churches, one factor that is common to all growing churches is that they are committed to a regular, organized visitation or follow-up strategy. While the exact nature and formats vary, they are intentionally organized for weekly follow-up of visitors or church prospects.

It is important to realize that 20 percent of those who visit a church will never return no matter what follow-up is done. Another 20 percent of those who visit a church visit again. However, the remaining 60 percent of visitors need nurture and follow-up if they are to return. Statistics have shown that those visitors who are most likely to join a church are those who have been contacted within 48 hours after their first visit. This statistical information leads us to examine our own commitment to helping the Church grow by fulfilling Christ's commission to go and teach and baptize all nations. To this end, the project for the month is designed to help grow your church by showing you how to retain more visitors using a **48-Hour Newcomer Response**.

Project/Action Items Summary

48-Hour Newcomer Response

To ensure quick contact with newcomers, set a standard for quickly following up on a visit. Early contact is significant as contact-effectiveness drops significantly when it occurs outside this early window of opportunity. Plan to process information on newcomers the next day so that within 48 hours contact can be made by letter, phone or in person. The purpose is to welcome people and offer the church's services should they want/need them.

Project Date - Not Scheduled
Responsibility - Not Assigned

Time to Complete - 0.00 hour(s)
Cost - \$0.00
Category - Not Assigned

Complete Action Item	Action Date Responsibility
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 APPOINT COORDINATOR AND A-TEAM Recruit a person who has administrative skills and who relates well to people. Recruit an A-Team to work with coordinator and with skills to oversee various areas of ministry.	Not Assigned Cost: \$0.00 Time: 0.00 hour(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 ASSESS CURRENT APPROACH With a group of ministry leaders identify the strengths and limitations in the current approach. Identify gaps and get recommendations. Gain a commitment to 48-hour service. Identify what will have to change and the resources needed to achieve this.	Not Assigned Cost: \$0.00 Time: 0.00 hour(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 MAKE THE COMMITMENT Set the 48-hour response time as your standard. Let other staff and lay people know, and promote it vigorously. Let them know that resources will be available to do it.	Not Assigned Cost: \$0.00 Time: 0.00 hour(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> 4 DETERMINE RESPONSES Identify if to use calls, visits and/or letters and how. Consider what is most acceptable to the community and to different types of prospects. If you have the resources use each method for different situations. Develop them one at a time.	Not Assigned Cost: \$0.00 Time: 0.00 hour(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> 5 PLAN PROCESS In writing, develop a 48-hour service process for one method at first. Identify the contacts to make it work. Identify the resources needed. Assign responsibilities.	Not Assigned Cost: \$0.00 Time: 0.00 hour(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> 6 GET CONTACT NAMES Arrange with those who meet newcomers to get names to team immediately. Establish a place to leave information and a contact in case of questions.	Not Assigned Cost: \$0.00 Time: 0.00 hour(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> 7 ARRANGE LOGISTICS Book work space and time if a volunteer is doing the follow-up. Get equipment and materials in place. Provide orientation in using equipment and office procedure.	Not Assigned Cost: \$0.00 Time: 0.00 hour(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> 8 PREPARE MATERIALS Write, design and produce information on the church and its ministries. Develop template letters. Get postcards. As an aid, script calls, but allow callers to adapt as needed.	Not Assigned Cost: \$0.00 Time: 0.00 hour(s)

<input type="checkbox"/>	9 TRAIN A-TEAM	Emphasize that you want to express friendship and interest. Teach team to make sure that recipients understand their intentions, to be sensitive if the call seems unwelcome and, not to push or be defensive because their approach determines openness to future contacts. Review the procedures for making contact and keeping records.	Not Assigned Cost: \$0.00 Time: 0.00 hour(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	10 FOLLOW-UP	After two weeks review the effectiveness of the approach and the procedure. Revise as necessary.	Not Assigned Cost: \$0.00 Time: 0.00 hour(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	11 TRACK FOLLOW-UP	Note responses from recipients. Pass on information to ministries involved in the process of assimilation.	Not Assigned Cost: \$0.00 Time: 0.00 hour(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	12 EVALUATE	Every six months review the ministry's effectiveness. Revise procedure, approach and materials. Inform congregation as appropriate of outcomes.	Not Assigned Cost: \$0.00 Time: 0.00 hour(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	13 ADD NEW METHOD	Annually, or more frequently, add a new method to your responses.	Not Assigned Cost: \$0.00 Time: 0.00 hour(s)