

12 Strategic Summer Activities to Keep Volunteers Connected to Ministry Vision

Summer scatters your congregation and is typically a season of lessened activity, with groups on hiatus or a simplified service schedule. Most leaders surrender to the summer and count on one to two weeks of furious activity in late August to prepare their leaders for the high-impact season of ministry in the fall.

But what if there was a better way? What if we did not have to surrender to the summer scatter, but instead strengthen the support system of ministry with super-focused activity? What if the true foundation for fall is formed by fellowship in foundry-like heat of June, July and August?

Here are 12 strategic summer activities to keep volunteers connected and excited about your ministry vision:

- 1. The After-Church Cookout** - Dinner on the grounds is an idea as old as the church... in fact, I am sure that some translations of Acts 13 include the first potluck dinner after the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas in Antioch. After the fasting of course, there had to be some feasting for the send-off. Everyone signed up to bring their favorite olive, hummus or lentil side and the church supplied the fish. Whether you exercise your modern-day grill skill or grab some finger-lickin' chicken, take advantage of your fellowship hall or front lawn for some food and fun after church one Sunday.
- 2. The Community Treasure Hunt** - If you really want people to pay attention to your emails, find a way to make them engaging. I know it might be hard to imagine how your hastily copy/pasted list of announcements might not completely captivate your ministry team... but they don't. So spice up your communication this summer by hiding a gift card somewhere in your community. Don't cheap out... pony up at least \$100 and drop hints and clues to it's location in every email you send. The "oh I missed that email" moments will decrease dramatically, guaranteed. The craftier among us can drag this adventure out over the whole summer.
- 3. The Weekly Devotional** - Leverage your upcoming theme for the fall season of ministry - you do have a theme for each season or ministry-year, right? Create a weekly devotion that prepares your leaders spiritually for the ministry work ahead. These devotions are a great way to reinforce the actions of ministry in the word of God while keeping your leaders connected to the vision. You also have the opportunity to exercise spiritual leadership above the weekly crush of organizational leadership. Inject personal stories and moments of imperfection that reveal your humanity and personal growth in Christ.
- 4. The Home Visit** - Get to know your team on a completely new level by visiting them at home. In other cultures, pastors rely on visiting their congregation's home to cut through the "everything is awesome" facade of Sunday worship attendance. Of course, make sure you schedule well ahead of time and clearly define the purpose of your visit; nobody likes surprise visitors, especially from a pastor. Be sure to also bring something

with you, maybe a potted plant or other thoughtful household gift that says thank you for spending the last two days scrubbing and cleaning the whole house for this 45 minute social call.

- 5. The Dinner Gathering** - This is the excuse to clean your house. In groups or as a whole, invite the team into your domain for dinner and a chance to connect with you as a person and a leader. Make it fun with a sundae bar, everyone bring your favorite topping, or play timeless games like Pictionary or charades that fuel extrovert interaction and introvert annoyance - even though they will probably win. The team that laughs together and eats together, well they may do the same ministry, but not in the same way. Your home becomes the great equalizer.
- 6. The Planning Party** - Instead of just planning, make it a party. The number of great ideas is directly proportional to the amount of sugar, caffeine and chocolate ingested whilst conceiving of said ideas. It's science... look it up. Unless you live in Texas or South Florida, get out of the typical class or conference room planning location and take advantage of summer weather. Gaining a fresh perspective on ministry from an unusual location or a fresh infusion of ideas from a festive presentation is a great chance to break out of the strategic planning rut ministry can create.
- 7. The Remodeling Effort** - It's time to get the finger paint smudges and jewel-toned paint off the walls. Maybe even "accidentally" paint over that awkward mural of creepy Jesus that haunts your dreams each night. Save the involved renovations for the pro-carpeting, plumbing or anything involving wires and the chance of death by electrocution- but bringing your team together to paint, deep clean or construct puppet stages builds bonds stronger than the "kid" smell down the preschool hallway. Give your leaders a chance to own the vision beyond teaching a lesson or opening a door and mark the investment increase that comes as a result.
- 8. The Monthly Vision Meeting** - That seems boring just reading it, but it doesn't have to be if you decide on a topic or theme, and then go WAY overboard in demonstrating, decorating and developing it. Do not just talk about building strong families, bring in the Power Team, compete in feats of strength or meet on a construction site. Make your vision so tangible, palpable and exciting that your leaders beg you to meet weekly. Okay - that will not happen, but you get the point. Don't settle for another boring meeting agenda - God wants to do more in your ministry than you could ever ask or imagine, so please do not run meetings that make people ask "why" or imagine themselves somewhere else.
- 9. The In-Service Celebration** - Bring the whole church into the great work that God is doing in your ministry. Find a way to celebrate the contribution of individuals or impact on certain groups. Tie these efforts into the overarching vision of the church and extend an invitation that allows others to jump in on the fun. If your Sunday worship environment allows, create an awards-show type moment and get everyone laughing and smiling, but clear this with the pastor first. Nothing says "I've already lost the crowd" like following a fun team-centered vision moment with a sermon from the book of

Job.

- 10. The Virtual Book Club** - Take advantage of the beach and pool time your leaders will be having over the summer months by providing some good reading material. Be sure to tie the book choice into your ministry vision and give small segments to read. This does not have to create those Middle School “summer reading” misery flashbacks, but can be a fun way to engage your team. Think of fun books by an author like Jon Acuff, and create an online discussion center in which you ask thoughtful questions that prompt good literary digestion. The book could even be a work of fiction... what matters most is the ongoing connection to vision and community that emerges.

- 11. The Family Movie Night** - Meet at the theater or fire up the church projector for a movie night. Give everyone a chance to fill those long summer evenings, connect as a team and have fun as a family. Nothing says your contribution is making a huge impact like buckets of buttery popcorn and the unhealthiest snacks you can find. Give yourself bonus points for every dad you can catch snoring on the floor or lawn. The point is, have fun together and get to know your team as people with families, not just names on an organization chart or volunteer list.

- 12. The Coffee Shop Hang** - Block off a pre-set time and just hang out at a local coffee shop. Answer those complaint emails you have been ignoring or post-date some purchase orders from last month's retreat while you wait on folks to drop by. Be consistent and, over time, more and more people will make time to say hi. Get out of your office and get interruptible, modeling your ministry impact after Jesus. Leverage social media to announce the when and where each week, and invite people to stop by. Also, if your church business manager is out of town, go ahead and buy coffee or lunch for whoever shows up. You might be surprised at the real ministry that emerges from simple availability.

There is no time like the present to keep ministry volunteers connected and excited about your ministry vision. Spend the next 10 minutes in prayer and on your calendar and decide which of these, or other, strategic actions you will take in June.

And which in July.

And which in August.

Sowing strategic actions for summer in the springtime reaps an abundant harvest come fall.

> [Read more from Bryan.](#)

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