

## Don't Lose Clarity in Your Church Communications

Clarity is the highest goal of all church communications. Our role is to cut through the clutter and deliver the message we are giving with as much precision as possible. In order to do that we employ a wide variety of tactics to persuade people towards the goals that we've set. **In an effort to persuade our communications can slip to a place where they stop being clear and become just clever.** We can become too self-impressed with how we're communicating the message that the content of the message is lost.

Here are a handful of times that I've seen churches lose clarity when communicating with their community:

- **Family Ministry Environment Names //** When a first time guest sees the names of your kid's and student's ministries do they make sense? If I have an infant do I take them to "WhizBangLand" or "GrowUpGang"? Too many churches employ clever ministry names that don't make sense to people outside of the church. It's the ultimate insider focused tactic to use names that are not self-evident to guests. Make sure people can clearly understand the signage and printed materials about your family ministry environments without having to interpret what they mean.
- **Campus Location Labeling //** Too often churches attempt to be clever by naming campuses using relative locations to the original campus ... Crossroads Church North, St. Paul's East ... the problem is that naming convention assumes that the new campus is a small satellite of something larger. Quickly after you launch people will attend the new location that have never been to the original campus ... when you use a naming convention that points back to the first location it diminishes the work in the new campus. Pick an approach to labeling the new location that casts vision for the community for want to reach ... Crossroad Church Essex County, St. Paul's Uptown.
- **Graphic Design //** Can I speak to the graphic designers for a minute? There is a difference between something looking amazing and it communicating clearly. Most of the great art I've ever seen is ambiguous and hard to understand what the artist is saying. The fact that I need to wrestle with the meaning of the piece is what makes it art. Your role as a graphic designer is to use elements of design to communicate a message. Communication leads ... art follows. It would be prettier to have the super slender font on that flyer ... but people wouldn't understand that it's talking about. This isn't a tension to be managed ... communication comes before beauty ... function before form.
- **Next Steps //** Once people start attending your church for a while they will be looking for their next steps to getting connected. Often I've seen churches call their first steps for new people some fancy name that just doesn't make sense on the surface ... Discovery Class, Engage, Connection. By definition, people who are new to your church don't have any sense of your "integration process" and are just wondering what they should do first. At our church we call this environment [First Step](#) because we want it to be the

first thing people who when they come to our church. This is also the case when you ask people to take any sort of “next step” in their spiritual journey. Make the right next step obvious and clear.

- **Financial Reporting //** Report your finances in a way that can be easily understood by “non-financial” people. Use plain language, simple charts and clear commentary when talking about the financial state of the church. Financials are not self-evident to most people. We need to provide simple commentary that helps people benchmark what is happening in the life of the church. Bold clarity in this area will build trust with your donors and ultimately encourage them to give more to your ministry. If people don’t understand this part of what happens at your church they will be less likely to give. Active obfuscation of the truth is the shortest route to financial ruin of a church.
- **Online Calls to Action //** Your church’s website probably has too many options on it. When people arrive at your site what do you want them to “do”? Are you focusing their attention on just a few next steps rather than a wide variety of options? Every ministry wants to be “featured” on your site ... but if you “feature” them all you will just generate clutter and noise for your guests. Often we use our websites to move people to action in our church ... asking them to donate, join a small group, volunteer for a team, connect with our team, etc ... but when we pile on the “calls to action” each new ask erodes the impact of the last.

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