

How to Raise the Guest Awareness of Your Congregation

Every church in America has a guest problem. They may have a huge number of guests showing up each week (a *great* problem). They may not have had any guests in months (an *awful* problem). **But if the “regulars” in the church aren’t aware that guests are among ’em, that’s the biggest problem of all.**

Here’s why: in either case (lots of guests or none at all), **regulars need to be regularly reminded that the weekend isn’t all about them.** In a lots-of-guests church, that will create an environment of openness and welcome (think “no more territorial rights in pews”). In a little-if-any-guests church, that’ll breed an expectation that guests *should* be there. And according to the greatest theological movie of 1989, *if you build it, they will come*.

So here they are: **ten practical ways to raise the Guest Awareness Culture on the weekend.** (None of these are new or world-changing, by the way. I’ve mentioned most of them on other parts of this blog many times over, and you can click the links to read more. But hey: who doesn’t love a list?)

- 1. [Develop a First Impressions Team.](#)** It seems simple enough, but far too many churches don’t have one. And before ye protest, four guys in matching ties handing out bulletins at the door does is *not* a First Impressions Team. You need a robust crew of people who are responsible for everything from the parking lot to the pew (or if you don’t have pews, from the street to the seat).
- 2. [Remember that the sermon starts in the parking lot.](#)** Think outside in when it comes to developing your team. Since people decide whether or not they’ll return to your church within the first ten minutes, it makes sense that you’d do whatever it takes to make the *first* of those ten minutes the most welcoming. Put plenty of people – at least 40% of your team – on the outside of the doors.
- 3. [Reserve the best spots for your first time guests.](#)** Yep, I’m talking designated parking. With clear signage. Up front. Obnoxiously close and convenient. Way closer than the pastor or the bishop parks. And speaking of...your staff, volunteers, and other leadership should make a habit of parking *farthest away*.
- 4. [Have a tent.](#)** Forget about your Welcome Center that’s inside the building, past the lobby, down the hallway, take two lefts and a right, and *maybe* you’ll find it. Nope, but a big obnoxious clearly marked tent right in front of your big obnoxious clearly marked “reserved for first time guests” parking lot. Having a safe place that guests can stop by before they enter will reduce their anxiety and make them feel like they know what’s about to happen.
- 5. [Have a tell.](#)** Figure out a way to identify your guests. And no, that’s *not* by making them stand up in the service or slapping a name tag on them that says “guest” in red letters (kid you not, a friend tweeted me that experience as I was writing this post). We use a basic gift bag with our church’s logo on it. It’s not a gift as much as it is a way to pay special attention to those

experiencing their first weekend.

6. [Talk to 'em.](#) From the stage. Every week. Multiple times. Again, that's not singling them out for embarrassment, but acknowledging that guests are present. Talk to your guests so much that your regulars are sick of hearing your spiel, and that'll be just about the time that the light bulb will come on and they'll realize...by golly...guests are present.

7. [Create a newcomers event.](#) Whether that's a meet-and-greet after every service or a full fledged monthly meal and class, do *something* to help guests take a next step. And talk about *that* from the stage every week, too.

8. [Clean up your junk.](#) You've long since forgotten about the layer of dust on the communion table or the smudges on the front door's glass. But your guests haven't. Prepare for them every week by keeping your facility in top shape.

9. [Encourage volunteers to "attend one, serve one."](#) Here's the problem with point #1 above: a First Impressions Team does little good if they disperse four minutes after the service begins. If you have multiple services, ask vols to fully worship in one, and fully engage / serve in another. And if you don't have multiple service, that's the best reason I know of to add one.

10. [Pray for them.](#) Pray that God sends them. Pray that the ones God sends, he will save. Pray that you'll be proactive in treating them well and inviting them back. Pray that you'll simply be friendly. The things that you keep before God's throne, he'll keep on your heart.

That's my ten. It's not exhaustive, by any means. What would you add?

> [Read more from Danny.](#)

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Want to learn how to create an EXCEPTIONAL Guest Experience at your church? [Check out Auxano's Guest Experience Boot Camp in Cincinnati, OH on August 7-8](#)