

## If You Build It, They Won't Come

Dear Church Leader,

I've wanted to write this letter to you for a while now but I never knew exactly how to say this. However, we're heading into an incredibly critical season as a church and want to be as clear with you as possible. **Just because you passionately build some new ministry initiative doesn't mean that anyone will actually show up to be impacted by it.**

I've made this mistake so many times in my own leadership. I remember early on staying up so late working on a new project at the office that we actually set the alarm off and the cops showed up to find out what was going on. This became a sort of proof that we were working hard enough on this new deal to reach people in our community. **But in the end the turn out to this new project was incredibly low from our community.** Or there was the time I thought that this new "newcomers" class would actually be the thing to help people get connected to our church. We gave it a new name . . . changed the format . . . worked to ensure that the leaders were ready to lead it. **But our first time guests didn't want the "new" newcomers class anymore than the "old" new comers class.** [Just because you build it . . . doesn't mean they will actually come.](#)

It's our responsibility as leaders to not only build the ministry initiative but also the communication plan and system to ensure that people will actually want to be a part of it. Rather than do this I've seen us respond to this reality in a handful of ways . . .

- **Deny It** - We will deny that there is a need for us communicate well and simply hope (or maybe pray) that people will somehow find out about this thing and want to become a part of it.
- **It's "Their" Fault** - I've seen this time and again with various ministry over the years . . . we blame parents for not getting involved with the student stuff . . . we look down on the people for not taking time to come to our event designed to help them grow . . . sometimes we even get self righteous and look down on people from a pious perch.
- **Silver Bullet Thinking** - When it's all said and done and we're ready to roll out this "shiny new thing" we think if we can just get the Senior Pastor to mention it from the stage . . . or if we send a direct mail piece to the right group . . . or if you invite people to a Facebook group . . . we think there is one magical communication form that is going to "do the job" and get people connected.
- **Despair** - You didn't get into ministry leadership to "sell stuff" . . . you just want to be with the people . . . this communications stuff isn't your deal . . . the cycle of despair is powerful and when things don't go quite as we planned we can find ourselves spinning around and around.

***So why am I writing you today?***

In the coming weeks you are planning on rolling out some new stuff around here. You want to see more people connected to the good things happening in your ministry. **Fantastic – we all want to see that.** But I want to be straight with you . . . you haven't spent enough time working on the communications plan. We need you to spend more time working on how people are going to find out about your new initiative and to make it as simple as possible for them to get connected with it. Here are some starting points to be thinking about . . .

- **Think Drips not Explosions** // Stop looking for that one massive communication piece that is going to convince people . . . you're going to need to reach people at least 4-5 ways in the weeks leading up to the big event. [[Check this out.](#)]
- **Timing is Critical** // When you communicate is almost as big of deal as what you communicate. Are you reaching people at a time that they are open to thinking about your initiative?
- **Make it Easy** // You know that form that you ask people to fill out to register . . . it's not simple enough. I know it makes it easier for you to get all that stuff up front. But it needs to be easy for the people we are trying to reach . . . even if that makes it a little harder on us.
- **Think Visually** // It's not that people can't read . . . they just don't. How is this new thing going to look to people? (I know the irony that when this letter is already over 600 words!) [[More on this.](#)]
- **People Make Decisions with Emotions** // I know you have a bunch of logical reasons why what you are doing makes a lot of sense for their spiritual growth. People don't make decisions with logic . . . they use emotions when making decisions. How can we find that hook that will communicate to them? [[Interesting study on this.](#)]

I've probably written enough on this already. I'm cheering for you! **I've seen all the hard work you've put into this new deal.** I want it to succeed and make the sort of impact that you desire but I'm concerned that all of you and your team's work will go to waste if we don't address this communications stuff.

**Can we sit down and work it through together?**

In your corner,

Your Leader

Read more from Rich [here](#).