

The Positive Benefits of Ministry Calendaring with a Systems Approach

“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most out of every opportunity, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15-16).

It’s that time of year again. Nothing prepares us for a new year like good planning. **If you lead or help lead a church, a systems approach to calendaring brings with it a number of positive benefits.** It allows you to...

- **Avoid the attendance roller coaster** – This may be one of the biggest advantages to understanding your calendar. Imagine getting off the attendance roller coaster. Understanding the growth rhythm of church attendance makes this possible.
- **Maximize growth** – There are a limited number of days each year that you grow in weekend attendance. Understanding this allows you to maximize growth.
- **Create margin** – We all could use some margin in our lives. Good planning promotes margin.
- **Steward God’s vision** – Good planning allows us to steward God’s vision well for our church and life.
- **Lead with clarity** – When we lead others, clarity matters. There are two ends when it comes to leadership. There is vision and execution. Leaders lead with a clear vision, and at the same time they get things done. A systems approach to our ministry calendar allows us to schedule the implementation of a clear vision. A must in leadership.

Understanding Your Growth Rhythm

Understanding your growth rhythm as a church is a must when it comes to calendaring. **A common misconception is that healthy churches experience consistent growth.** In reality we only grow a few weekends each year. Here are the days a church typically grows with weekend services.

- Weekend after New Years
- Easter
- Mother’s Day
- Weekend after Labor Day
- Christmas

On the other hand, here are some days a church doesn’t typically grow.

- New Years
- Memorial Day
- Father’s Day
- Independence Day

- Labor Day
- Weekend after Thanksgiving

In addition, the school calendar greatly impacts your growth rhythm.

In reality a healthy growth rhythm looks more like a healthy bull market on the stock exchange. It's goes up and down based on the time of year, holiday, school schedule, etc. Knowing this can allow you to maximize growth.

A healthy exercise is to plot out your actual growth over a period of several years. When you build a graph by layering each year you will begin to see the actual pattern of how the church grows.

A good calendar builds on the foundation of your growth rhythm. Let me suggest that your overall church calendar is actually a collection of key calendars. A systems approach to calendaring should include the following, in this order:

- Preaching Calendar
- Personal Vitality Calendar
- Giving Calendar
- Ministry Calendar
- Leadership Calendar

Here's a brief description of each of these calendars for your consideration.

> Preaching Calendar

I recommend you start with your preaching calendar. As noted you only have six to eight big days per year when your church is likely to experience a huge spike in weekend attendance, if utilized. Here's a list of things to consider when planning your preaching calendar.

- Pre-plan your preaching calendar.
- Plan the entire year.
- Plan it around 10 to 12 series a year (4 to 6 weeks long).
- Plan it around your growth rhythm.
- Start new series on high days.
- Develop new preachers on low days.

> Personal Vitality Calendar

Now that you've identified those high growth ties, move on to your personal vitality calendar. Utilize the natural low days to take breaks for developing new communicators. Early on in ministry I failed to plan well when it came to taking time off. For some of you this may be a no brainer; for others, like me, we have to be proactive.

- Schedule holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, and special days.

- Schedule your family vacation(s).
- Schedule your day off.
- Schedule your evenings.
- Pay attention to your annual, quarterly, weekly, and daily rhythms.

> Giving Calendar

When it comes to calendaring we often over look our giving calendar. Financing the mission isn't automatic. Giving is a discipleship issue and needs to be schedule around the five seasons of giving. These seasons include:

- New Year – can be an onramp to financial stewardship.
- Pre-Summer – an onramp to automated giving.
- Summer – a time to invest in your leaders and key givers.
- Fall – a time for sacrifice or giving with vision.
- End-of-Year – a time for that end-of-year gift.

> Ministry Calendar

Ministry calendar is another way of calendaring around your disciple-making assimilation. To do this you need to map out your assimilation process. This usually involves the following:

- Newcomers events – depends of your need.
- Groups – start up, breaks, training, launching of new groups, etc.
- Volunteers – orientation, training, appreciation, etc.
- Missions & Service opportunities – includes local and global opportunities to engage in planting the gospel.

> Leadership Calendar

A healthy church needs to calendar a number of leadership events. They may include:

- Ministry Team Meetings – good meetings are the playing field of great teams. There are a number of team meetings you need to schedule. Don't leave your team guessing.
- Vision Nights – excellent times for communicating vision and direction to your church body. Plan four or five nights a year for rallying the body.
- Training Events – Volunteers and group leaders need a heavy investment.
- Staff Retreats – Plan several times a year to work "on it" with you team. Let's face it we need a break from working "in it".

>>Tips for a Good Calendar Meeting

Taking time to plan your annual calendar can yield incredible results. They also can be overwhelming. Here are some tips for a good calendar meeting.

- Set aside a long day (noon-to-noon make for a good overnighter).

- Involve your team.
- Make sure they are well prepared.
- Offsite locations are best.
- Make sure you have access to all the information (Wi-Fi is a must).
- Use large visible calendar (Taped together desk calendars work best).
- Use different color sticky notes for maximum flexibility and creativity.
- Assign someone to take notes, photograph, and create a public calendar.

Celebrate and enjoy the fruits of a well-planned year!

Read more from David [here](#).