

Putting a Church Outreach Plan Together

Consider taking the following steps to develop a simple church marketing plan:

1. **Read through this document.** There are several good books on outreach and service projects (“Conspiracy of Kindness”)
2. **Talk with other new churches.** Steal their best ideas. Adapt as necessary. **Contact Church Planting Solutions** (non-profit church marketing organization) at 866-342-5264 (toll-free).
3. Start with understanding your demographic/target family. Complete Church Planting Solution’s template demographic plan. Church Marketing Solutions can help with free demographic reports. **Conduct demographic studies (hard and soft data)** – find out what makes your customers tick so that you can learn where to find people just like them.
4. Brainstorm a **list of every possible outreach event, community felt needs class, and service opportunity** you can think of. Develop three different lists (events, classes/seminars, service opportunities). Examples include:
 - a. Events (typically larger and more costly, but reaching far more people – often city wide events, but also includes community specific events). Examples include:
 - Carnivals (e.g. moon bounces, kids programming, etc.)
 - Co-sponsor large community events (partnering with local communities and civic organizations)
 - Free community skating party
 - Special 9/11 Memorial Service
 - Celebrity Golf Tournament
 - Public servant recognition day (for police, fireman, etc)
 - Free movie sponsored by the community
 - Free concerts (series of summer evening concerts)
 - Vacation Bible School (or Backyard Vacation Bible School in numerous homes)
 - Neighborhood cookouts and pool parties
 - Community/neighborhood block parties
 - Family movie nights (free movies with popcorn and drinks)
 - Sporting tournaments (e.g. 3 on 3 basketball tournament, flag football league, etc.)
 - Sponsor classic car show
 - Special Christmas Eve service
 - Community New Year’s Eve party
 - Fireworks on July 4th
 - Information meetings (free meal and presentation about new church)
 - Parent’s night outs (fun activities for kids at local school while parents go out)

These types of events will typically take more effort, coordination and money than service projects but they will reach more people. NOTE: Give strong consideration to doing a large event within one week prior to launch Sunday. In identifying events, consider researching local community/city and neighborhood association plans. Look for ways to partner/participate in events already planned by the community.

b. Classes/Seminars (typically target specific felt needs of the target demographic—can target large or small groups of people). Examples include:

- Parenting seminar
- Newcomers Guide to the Community (practical seminar to get new people in the community familiar with the services and features of the community)
- Marriage workshop
- Estate planning workshop
- Personal finances/budgeting workshop
- Time management workshop
- College Preparation for Parents Seminar (getting ready for the college years)
- Basic computer skills
- Job interview and resume skills
- Basic landscaping seminar

The key to prioritizing classes and seminars are to ask “who will we reach?”, “how big is the felt need (i.e. how many people is this likely to appeal to)?”, “where will the class be held?” and “who will lead it (i.e. get a community leader with credibility – the local high school principal to lead a parenting seminar)? Get innovative. Use these seminars to network in the community. The best contacts you make may be in finding seminar leaders and facility locations.

c. Service Opportunities (typically smaller scale and low cost – usually target localized groups of people). The **Random Acts of Kindness Institute** maintains one of the best free lists of community service ideas. Their 18 page list of ideas can be found at http://www.actsofkindness.org/file_uploads/files/11_pdf.pdf. Service opportunities are almost endless and include:

- adopt a highway for cleanup
- volunteer service a local schools
- car wash
- pumping gas and car window washing
- carrying groceries to cars
- Giving away bottled water to commuters
- Giving away stamps at the post office
- Visiting people in nursing homes
- Taking fresh baked goods to local police and fireman
- Handing out snacks or hot chocolate to people standing in line at the Department of Motor Vehicles

Service opportunities take very little planning and very little money. Each small group should be challenged to make service opportunities a regular part of their focus. Imagine groups that do a weekly service project.

5. **Prioritize the items** on each of the three lists from highest to lowest priority (e.g. priority #1, #2, #3, etc.) based on consideration for community needs, cost, effort required per person reached, number of people to be reached, and what other community minded organizations are or are not doing. Also, consider the “brand identity” and “niche” that you are trying to establish as a church (see Church Planting Solutions’ Marketing Strategy Template for more information). If you want to become known as a church that helps single parents or the homeless or community cleanup, etc., bias your outreach that specific direction. Note: remember, every outreach event is an opportunity to market the new church to the community. In prioritizing the events, ask the question “will this event allow us to get at least 3 positive marketing touches to the local community?”

6. **Establish standards/expectations** for how many events will be conducted up through launch. Decide very early (as soon after being hired as possible) how many events you want to be held accountable for. For example, an aggressive outreach strategy may involve one major event per month in the three months leading up to launch (3 total), one class or seminar per month in the three months leading up to launch (3 total), and one service opportunity per week in the three months leading up to launch (12 total). These 18 touches each have multiple marketing touches per event and will help establish positive name recognition in the church.

7. Based on 5 and 6 above, **schedule events** on your calendar. Do this as early as possible to give time for planning. Challenge your launch team to take ownership for the events. For each event, identify specific marketing opportunities.

8. Identify the level of **music support** required for the events. For example, will a church band be needed? When? Will sound equipment be needed? Will a DJ be hired? Will music CDs be played?

9. Identify any **special equipment needs**. Examples include moon bounces, popcorn machines, snow cone machines, cotton candy machines, sports equipment, kid’s games, etc. Determine whether to rent or buy equipment. In some cases, it will make sense to purchase equipment rather than rent based on the number of planned usages.

10. Identify **special needs for serving food**. In many areas, special permits are needed to serve hot food. Based on planned events, determine any special permitting requirements.

11. **Establish a budget** for each planned event.

12. Issue a **written outreach plan** that includes (most items are taken from the work above):

- a. Identify the purpose of your outreach plan
- b. Identify the standard/expectations for the number of events to be held
- c. Identify list of top priorities for the three types of outreach (events, seminars, service)
- d. Identify schedule of events
- e. Identify organizational structure for coordinating events

- f. Identify special needs (music, equipment, food, etc.)
- g. Identify budget for events as a percentage of total expenses through launch

Example: New Life Christian church – Haymarket Campus

“The purpose of the New Life's outreach plan is to provide a safe and fun environment for seekers to experience New Life before they try our Sunday morning services or life groups. These fun, relevant events, seminars and community service activities offer a safe environment for people to build trust with New Life and provide great opportunities for our launch team to invite their friends. These events start conversations about New Life and Jesus.

Our outreach plan will begin in earnest in June 2004 and extend through launch on Easter Sunday in April 2005. We will conduct at least one major event per month in June 2004 through March 2005 (in some months the number will be well in excess of one --- for example, during the summer months, several backyard VBS events will be held). We will conduct at least one high-quality felt-needs seminar per quarter (July – Sept 2004, Oct – Dec 2004, and Jan – Mar 2005). (i.e. at least 3 community seminars). Life groups will be challenged to plan and participate in at least one community service project per month.

It is a priority to maintain consistent themes throughout our outreach so that the community can connect the dots as we build name recognition. Specific themes include family, children, service, fun, and WOW!

Top priorities for events include:

- Family movie nights (ongoing and regular – e.g. 1st Friday night of every month)
- Information meetings (one per quarter to share vision for new church)
- Backyard VBS during the summer months
- Fourth of July picnics
- Fall Carnival – Just before Halloween (not as big as Centreville, but bigger than anything in Haymarket)
- Spring Easter Eggstravaganza just prior to launch Sunday (normal full-size event)
- Christmas Eve Service in school where we will be meeting
- Saturday or Sunday evening concerts in early Fall (after heat but before cold)
- 9/11 memorial and/or Public servant approbation right after new school opens

Top priorities for seminars include:

- Newcomers Guide to the Community (practical seminar to get new people in the community familiar with the services and features of the community) (this would be ongoing – one day each month)
- College Preparation for Parents Seminar (getting ready for the college years)
- Estate planning workshop (out of the workshop we get people plugged into a second seminar/workshop on finances/budgeting)
- Parenting seminar (lead by a local school principal who is a Christian in cooperation with New Life)

Top Priorities for service projects include: Launch team/small groups to select ongoing service projects. Bias will be to the new high school where we will be meeting and to an adopted community charity/cause (e.g. adopt a highway or road).

The specific schedule of events includes (NOTE: This list does not include Support Care groups or student ministry events. These will be added later):

June:

- Backyard VBS
- Neighborhood/community cookouts/pool parties
- Service Project (small group/launch team)

July:

- Backyard VBS
- Neighborhood/community cookouts/pool parties
- Service Project (small group/launch team)
- Community Concert
- Friday Night Fun Night

August:

- Backyard VBS
- New Mover Seminar/Workshop
- Concerts (several Saturday or Sunday nights) in the park
- Friday Night Fun Night
- Service Project (small group/launch team)

September:

- Booth at Haymarket Days
- Parenting Seminar/Workshop
- New Mover Seminar/Workshop
- Family Movie Night
- Service Project (small group/launch team)

October:

- Estate Planning Seminar
- Fall Fun Fest Carnival
- New Mover Seminar/Workshop
- Family Movie Night
- Service Project (small group/launch team)

November:

- Information Meeting (share vision for new church)
- New Mover Seminar/Workshop
- Family Movie Night
- Service Project (small group/launch team)

December:

- Christmas Eve Service
- New Mover Seminar/Workshop
- Family Movie Night (pictures with Santa Claus)
- Service Project (small group/launch team)

January:

- Estate Planning Seminar
- New Mover Seminar/Workshop
- Information Meeting (share vision for new church)
- Family Movie Night
- Service Project (small group/launch team)

February:

- New Mover Seminar/Workshop
- Parenting Seminar/Workshop
- Family Movie Night
- Parent's Guide to College Preparation Seminar
- Service Project (small group/launch team)

March:

- New Mover Seminar/Workshop
- Information Meeting (share vision for new church)
- Family Movie Night
- Service Project (small group/launch team)
- Community Sock Hop/Dance

April:

- Easter Eggstravaganza
- New Mover Seminar/Workshop
- Launch Sunday
- Service Project (small group/launch team)

Communities/neighborhoods directly surrounding the new high school (Dominion Valley and Piedmont subdivisions) where we will be meeting will be targeted with a higher priority than other areas (but not exclusively).

Karen Pope and Bill Oliver will have the lead for overseeing the coordination and implementation of this outreach plan. A volunteer events team will be formed. The team will be lead by a volunteer team leader. Karen and Bill will provide support/coaching to the volunteer team. The launch team will be relied on for manning the events team. . Karen and Bill's responsibilities include assistance in recruiting team members, communicating regularly with team leader, ensuring the church calendar is maintained up to date with planned events, ensuring proper coordination with marketing, keeping New Life staff informed of upcoming events, ensuring the New Life Events Checklist is used for each event, and providing general support and oversight of the events process.

New Life bands will play at as many of the scheduled events as possible. No new equipment is anticipated. A dedicated events band will be considered (potentially the same band that will be used on Sunday mornings). New Life's existing events equipment (e.g. moon bounce, popcorn machine, snow cone machine and cotton candy machine) will be used. No new major equipment is required.

For events and seminars, we will market via handout flyers (door-to-door and placed in local businesses), posters, outdoor signs, invitations mailed to homes, and ads placed in community newsletters, community web sites and on community bulletin boards. We will consider a direct mail card that identifies the upcoming 3 months of events. We will have a high-quality newcomer package to hand out to people at these events. Karen Pope will have the lead for coordinating marketing activities and newcomer packets. The launch team will be relied on for getting the marketing into the community (e.g. flyers, posters, ads in HOA newsletters, etc.).

Short-term priorities include:

- Scheduling events through the summer (including Backyard VBS – being deliberate to have some events near the high school in Dominion Valley)
- Consider daytime kids events (like we did in Ashburn)
- Consider Friday Night Fun Nights (few times during summer) – prelude to Family Movie Nights starting in fall)
- Establish expectations with the launch team for summer service projects
- Developing a “newcomer seminar” (content, speakers, locations, partnerships, etc.)
- Pin down dates for major events (fall fun fest, Easter Eggstravaganza). Confirm plans for Christmas Eve service in Haymarket
- Establish expectations and plans for bands to support summer events (cookouts and concerts)
- Begin planning for Family Movie Nights (they start in the Fall)
- Begin planning for Seminars (they start in the Fall)

We will spend up to 15% of our total expenditures through launch on outreach events.”