

SO YOU'RE HAVING A CRUSADE!

New Ideas for Winning More People to Christ and Gaining More Members through Event Evangelism

Four major areas to cover for a successful meeting.

1. Prayer. Prayer for your church members; prayer for your community.
2. Getting the word out (Marketing).
3. Conducting the meetings effectively.
4. Follow-up -The latest research.

PRAYER

On the subject of prayer, that is your area of expertise, and we would not presume to try to give you instructions on prayer. We mention prayer only because we see it as indispensable in anything we attempt to do for God, and could not omit it. We will join with you to pray that many will come to know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior during the upcoming meetings.

MARKETING

This can be the most exciting, most informative and the most well presented crusade ever seen in the country, but if you don't tell anyone beforehand about it, no one is likely to show up but your own church members. Even if you had Billy Graham there, and didn't tell anybody outside of your church, who would come?

So step one is to advertise what you are doing. We call this "Marketing". We are going into the market place to convince men and women, boys and girls, to come to a place that many of them have rarely if ever been – your church!

Our purpose is to reach the un-churched, and to somehow persuade them to enter the doors of your church.

The "un-churched" is just another way of identifying the world. If we want to reach them for Christ and His message, we need to look at the methods that the "world" is already using successfully to reach their own,

because we want to reach the very same people.

So the first question is this: How does the world, the commercial world, reach and persuade people to respond to what they want them to do? The answer is clear: targeted marketing and advertising. So what does that mean for us?

It means that we put our "marketing message" in places where the world can see it! This includes utilizing the established media, the efforts of our own church members, and it means doing some creative marketing, too. Let's take the challenge of marketing a meeting or series of meetings that features men and women who use powerful feats of strength to gain the attention of their audience, and then make a powerful presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. How can we promote this to the un-churched?

First, we must define our target geographically. If you are in a small town, newspaper, radio and TV make sense. If you are in a large metropolitan area, this makes sense only if you are promoting an event big enough to fill the civic center or sports arena. For most communities, limited advertising in the newspaper is helpful, as is limited advertising on TV or cable TV. But the more effective approach is also one that requires more dedication and more work: the distribution of posters and flyers in a radius of 2 to 3 miles of your church. Get a map. Draw a circle with a 3 mile radius of your church. This is your mission field.

This is your target to reach!

FOUR WEEKS OUT

Put up posters around your church and Sunday School. Use flyers as inserts in your worship bulletins, and if you mail a newsletter, use them as inserts there, too. In any assemblies, promote the coming meetings. Use the “10 Most Wanted” lists. Stress that the purpose of this crusade is to reach the un-churched – the lost – it is not for reviving your members.

THREE WEEKS OUT

Promote the use of posters out in the community through your Sunday School. This should be timed to begin the third weekend prior to your crusade meetings. Obtain commitments from your members to go out after lunch that very Sunday and ask merchants, service stations, restaurants, etc. for permission to put up a poster where people can see it. Provide each of these workers with a roll of scotch tape to use. Ask your people to commit one and a half hours to this mission, or to tape up 17 posters where they can be seen, whichever comes first. Why 17? Because they won't forget that number, nor that they made a commitment to tape them up.

Notice that I did not say to distribute posters by asking the stores to put them up. If the approach is to leave a poster and ask the merchant or employee to put it up, you can save yourself a lot of time and effort by simply throwing all of your posters in the trash to start with, because that is where 99.99% of them will wind up with that approach.

To get them up, we have to put them up ourselves.

TWO WEEKS OUT

On the second Sunday out, repeat your poster program as above. This is two weekends before your scheduled meetings. You can even assign the same geographic areas as

before, but send each of your teams to an area different from where they went the previous time.. You will be surprised by the effectiveness of covering the same areas twice. It will bear fruit.

ONE WEEK OUT

On the weekend before your scheduled meetings, have your church members come to the church at 9:19 am on Saturday morning. (9:19 because they won't forget the time.) Before they come, buy or obtain city maps, and circle areas for each team to cover. Hint: your local U.S. Post Office has already figured out the most efficient way to walk the streets of your city, so ask the carrier supervisor to show you the carrier route maps. In my city, each carrier covers an average of 725 addresses in a shift, and he spends the first 2 to 3 hours casing the mail before he leaves the Post Office. That means that he covers 725 houses in about 5 hours by himself.

What I am going to propose to you is at least twice as efficient as the post office method. Here it is: Assign your people to teams of three, with one vehicle. You need one adult driver with the map, and two walkers on each team. Your walkers can be any able bodied person from 12 years of age up. Use the Post Office carrier route map, or if that seems too ominous, break each carrier's route into two. One team member goes down the right side of the street, and one goes down the left side of the street. The driver simply follows behind, and is right there with additional flyers when the walkers run out.

A word of caution: The Federal Government will not let us put flyers into mail boxes, and most cities have ordinances that prevent us from putting flyers on automobiles, especially on automobiles parked at the malls. Private property, you know. But in most places it is completely legal to wedge flyers into the doors and door handles of homes. So that's where they go. If you are including apartment com-

plexes in your distribution, you might want to obtain the apartment manager's approval, as some complexes have posted policies against unauthorized distribution.

In addition, some churches have been able to tape flyers to the boxes that pizza places use for delivery, and some have gotten permission to stuff flyers into the bags at a Wall-Mart or grocery stores. The pizza thing has been fairly productive, but the bag thing has the problem that it takes an enormous amount of work, and most customers will take home from four to twelve bags. Whatever you do, don't try to let the store method replace the walking from door to door. **Putting flyers in the doors has been the single most effective marketing method we have seen.**

CONDUCTING THE MEETINGS Your visiting team will coordinate the details with you to your satisfaction.

FOLLOW UP What we are doing here is called "Event Evangelism". Billy Graham has shown the world how effective "Event Evangelism" can be. More people are won to Christ through Event Evangelism than through any other known method. But many pastors have become disenchanted with this approach, not because souls are not saved, but because in their experience, not enough of those saved became members of their church after the meetings are over.

Is the problem with the fact that Event Evangelism was used, or is the problem something else? In my experience, the cause of the disenchantment of some pastors is the result of simply not knowing and following an effective follow up strategy. There is no reason to reinvent the wheel here. Business and industry solved this problem years ago, and we have only to look at what they have learned to find our own answers.

When the representatives of these giant corporations make a presentation, do they just go home and wait for their prospects to call them, or worse, do they expect the prospect to show up at company headquarters for more information? Not on your life! Yet, is not this what we do at some of our churches? We tell them about Jesus, and somehow expect them to beat a path to our church doors. We forget that to most new converts, the "church" is a strange place, and often perceived as hostile to themselves. Well, that business prospect is going to get a phone call AND a letter the very next day! Then the following day, that prospect is very likely to get another phone call from the representative, apologizing for forgetting to tell him something of importance, and again asking leading questions and again trying to close the sale. If this doesn't work, the prospect is likely to receive a package through UPS or FedEx containing a small gift and more literature about the company and its products. If all of that does not produce results, about a week – yes – one (1) week after the first contact, the representative goes to see the prospect again. Why one week? From experience, our leading corporations have learned that the likelihood of closing the sale diminishes from hot to cold over the course of one week! One week. In one week a prospect can go from being 99% ready, to zero! They know that if they are going to win this prospect, they need to do it within one week.

Can we build as good a strategy as the commercial world? Yes, we can, but will we? It may require us to think outside of the box, or we may find ourselves doing the same ole-same ole, with the same ole results.

Here are a few suggestions, and I guarantee you that these are methods that have proven to work in our churches.

- **The Letter**

Every morning following your services the day before, send out a personalized letter to every person who made a decision. That may be 50 people, or 100 people, or more. How are you going to send out letters to 50 to 100 people who made decisions last night, and get all of these letters out in one day? It's called "Mail Merge". If your church is not already using this powerful and labor-saving approach, it may be time to start. Actually, it is a relatively simple procedure in Microsoft Word. First, you type in a mail merge list of the names and addresses. Second, you type the letter – one time. Use the Help section of Microsoft Word to get complete instructions. Or, you may be able to find someone in your church who can teach this to your staff. One secretary, using this method, can get all 50 to 100 letters out in less than two and a half hours.

- **The First Phone Call**

This is SO important, and the timing is even more important. Arrange for volunteers to man as many telephones in your building as possible, and hand a list of names to each caller. Needless to say, the callers need to be trained before the week of the meetings. It is suggested that you or your staff prepare an outline or guide for each caller to go by. Have your callers record on paper a summary of each call, and to write down any questions and commitments. Meet with your calling team at the end of each days calling session for review.

- **The Second Phone Call**

Get your volunteer calling team on board and trained long before the meetings start.

This is the "I forgot to tell you something?" call. Tell them something important about what your church can do for them, and see if you can interest them in visiting your church again. But please note that studies have shown that a prospect for attending a new church is 15 times more likely to visit if you

actually go pick them up, take them, take them out to lunch afterward, and then take them back home.

- **The Package to be Mailed**

Most churches already have a package for visitors and prospects. You can use this, but be sure to enclose a personal letter. You can make this important package even more effective by enclosing any advertising specialty items like imprinted pens, coffee cups or calendars that have your church name on them.

- **The Visit**

We all know the value of personal visits to the homes of prospects. If your prospect is still just a prospect, and has neither accepted Christ nor returned to your church, it's time to visit.