

Interpreting Church Attendance Data Leads to Church Growth

From ACS Technologies, Partnering With Churches for 25 Years By Lauren Hunter

Most churches faithfully record information about membership, involvement, and attendance, but few make the information recorded work for them in order to create an impact on the overall growth of their church. To truly grow an organization, it necessary to use membership data to its fullest potential by assessing areas of weakness, as well as areas of strength to develop a growth plan to help visitors and members become more involved.

The first step to managing your membership for maximum church growth is to employ a church management software package to record and track



Action Steps for Converting Attendees to Members

By Pastor Steve Treash, Black Rock Congregational Church, Fairfield, Conn.

▶ Make the Membership Process as 'User-Friendly' as Possible

Black Rock used to have an eight-week long membership class. After realizing that the massive time commitment was an issue for people, we changed the membership class to a Friday evening and Saturday morning to make membership more accessible.

▶ Track Attendees

By tracking attendees using ACS, we're able to keep up with people and find out their frequency of attendance. Also, Black Rock is better able to get a sense of where people are in the process of becoming regular attendees, a requirement to become a member.

▶ Plan 'Meet and Greet' Events

We have a monthly informal welcome dinner at the home of a church member where I introduce myself and the other pastors and answer any questions that people might have about membership.

▶ Attach Benefits to Membership

At Black Rock, members receive monthly calls from our ministry staff asking them if they have any specific needs or prayer requests. Also, there are services available through the church to members that aren't available to attendees. Members also have priority access to the church's pastoral staff.

▶ Preach the Benefits of Membership

Whenever I preach on the benefits of membership, our membership spikes by 50 percent. Choose a few strategic Sundays a year to preach on membership and how it means you are truly committed to the church.

▶ Celebrate New Members

We print a bimonthly newsletter and include the new members' photos with a brief description about them. This encourages others to join. Also, we introduce new members at specific Sunday services throughout the year.

attendance, visitors, and involvement if you aren't tracking it already. An integrated program can offer specialized solutions to not only record information; it can create customized reports that analyze important data. By analyzing your membership data, you'll be better equipped to determine growth percentages, attendance numbers, and other valuable information that can help your church flourish.

One of the best ways to put your data to use is to identify your peak attendance times—and use them. By figuring out when you have the largest audience, you can determine when the best time is to introduce new initiatives or to cast your ministry vision. You can take advantage of the larger crowd to generate some enthusiasm and excitement and really make these high traffic periods a time of impact.

Another crucial way to help your church grow is to track your outreach efforts. Set up a system to make sure that visitors are contacted, thanked, and invited back. For example, Community Bible Church in San Antonio, Texas, has set up an Assimilation Department to help increase their outreach efforts to visitors. They have a staff that contacts visitors and invites them to attend again and also encourage them to get involved in a small group Bible study within the church. They also send out materials on the various church programs to provide them with details on all the church activities. The staff then logs the communication steps taken in each person's data file in the computer. The church administrator can then track their efforts and how it affects the overall membership growth.

The next area to focus on is sporadic attendance. Most churches have a number of people who attend on an infrequent, but regular basis. By reviewing your attendance records, churches can identify these people and invest some additional time and effort to help them become more consistent in their church involvement.

Another way to evaluate your ministry impact is to study your return on investment. Take a good, hard look at numbers for the various ministries at your church. Critique the amount of time and money it takes to run them, and the value they bring. Of course, many aspects of ministry can't be measured in mere dollars and cents, but you may find some ministries that really could do a lot more if they got a little more attention and funding.

Overall, by reviewing the ways that you track membership information within your church, you can harness your data and put it to work for you. Although the church service and message from the pulpit take precedence over just about everything, by taking a closer look at the information your church collects on a weekly basis, you can ensure there are more people present to hear the Sunday sermon. ❖

Lauren Hunter is a trade writer and public relations consultant specializing in the faith-based and nonprofit technology markets. She currently consults to ACS as public relations manager. ACS Technologies has been in business for 25 years this year, and currently serves over 12,000 client partners. For more information on ACS, please visit www.acstechnologies.com or e-mail lauren.hunter@acstechnologies.com.
