



presents

*25 Free Marketing
Tools You Can Use
Right Now!*

*by
Chris Forbes &
Robert DeVargas*

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Meet the Coaches

Chris Forbes

Ministry Marketing Coach™ founder Chris Forbes has been in the ministry since 1989, serving all over the world. He developed the Ministry Marketing Coach™ Seminar Surprisingly Simple concepts while serving in real ministry situations while working as an international missionary, strategy leader, media strategist, and marketplace researcher. Chris has a passion for developing and implementing ways to use media in the work of the ministry. He has a vision for helping your church or ministry share the Good News in ways that get attention and invite response from the people you want to reach.

Chris is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (M. Divbl.) and the University of Central Oklahoma (BS).



Dr. Robert DeVargas

Ministry Marketing Mindset Seminar™ co-author Robert DeVargas is an assistant professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in the departments of Communication Arts and Foundations of Education. Dr. DeVargas teaches in the areas of multimedia development, writing, communication strategies and marketing. Dr. DeVargas' desire is to empower ministries to communicate the Gospel effectively and to harness their resources to reach more people.

Robert is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Ph. D., MA) and Texas A & M University (BS).



25 Free Ministry Marketing Tools

You Can Use *Right Now!*

In this e-book we have put together 25 free ministry marketing tools that you can use right now for your ministry. Ministry marketing is our passion! We're providing these tools as a service to you. We hope to encourage you to ever greater ministry marketing. We want to help you reach more people than ever before!

As ministry marketing coaches, we have helped ministries of all kinds. It has been our privilege to observe the ministry marketing of many churches through our consulting practice Ministry Marketing Coach. We have also worked with universities, state and national denominational agencies, humanitarian relief organizations, churches and community service charities. We have spent years coaching ministries in the development of marketing strategies, writing plans, coordinating the development of promotional materials, conducting marketing research, advertising and fundraising.

One observation we have made is that many ministries overlook the basic things that can help their ministry marketing the most. They are more likely to look to advertising and promotion strategies and spend thousands of dollars failing to see that ministry marketing is more than just placing ads and talking-up programs and events. The truth is that little things can make or break your marketing. What you need most often is not an ad or some special program, but an attitude, an action, a way of thinking. And what you need often won't cost you any money.

It has been said, "The best things in life are free." We know that is true. But the best marketing is also free. Many people are surprised when they learn how easy it is to start marketing better right away. We have put together these things that are all free. You don't have to spend a lot of money to do good marketing. You do need to get active, however!

You should try all the things we mention in this book. Start right away! All twenty-five tools are things you can start doing right now to improve your marketing. If you are feeling discouraged that you can't afford to market your ministry, cheer up, you can start marketing better right now!

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #1

Have a Marketing Plan

Many times ministries strike out into the marketplace and begin pursuing marketing activities without proper planning. They work feverishly trying to reach people, but they don't really know what they are doing or why they are doing it. Often they are even surprised by and unprepared for success. Usually, though, when they "fly by the seat of their pants" they lose more than they gain.

For churches that don't plan their marketing, there is little connection between one marketing activity and another. Plans happen like a huge parade passing by. Each float looks interesting and eye catching, but is not connected to the one in front of it or behind it. Marketing planning will help you connect your marketing into a meaningful integrated whole.

Here is a simple piece of advice that will put you in the top 5% of ministry marketers: *have a written marketing plan*. It's not really as complicated as it may sound. Just write down what you are going to do each week for the next 12-18 months. If you can put your plans into words, you will build more integration and purpose into your marketing. You will be able to share with other people on your ministry team what the marketing plans are so they can help you.

Here are a few advantages to having a marketing plan:

- You can easily make a marketing budget and present it to the ministry finance committee
- You'll save money on rush printing jobs and last minute advertising rates because you won't be planning your media and marketing materials at the last minute
- And everything you do can be coordinated and focused.

Decide today you will start putting your marketing plans into writing. Simply state your goals and plans on a piece of paper. This will take your marketing further than most ministries ever go! Soon you will be communicating better and more effectively reaching your community.

Action Point!

So here's your action point: Sit down by yourself or with the other leaders in your ministry team and write down the specific goals that you want to see accomplished through your marketing in the next 12-18 months. And then, convert those goals into objectives, strategies, and weekly action plans that you can accomplish to see your goals come to life.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #2

Pick a Target Audience

A target audience is your *focus group*, the people to whom you are going to communicate and focus your attention. Usually churches are afraid to identify a specific target audience because they fear it will seem like they are going to shut some people out. After all, the gospel is for everyone, why can't we just create a *one-size-fits-all message*?

In marketing, if you don't focus you won't be able to communicate effectively with anyone. By not having a target audience you risk shutting out more people than if you do. Have you ever heard someone say, "*If it is everybody's responsibility--it's nobody's responsibility.*" That's because if you are not specific about responsibility, people will assume others are supposed to be the ones responsible, not themselves. The same works for marketing communications, if no one knows to whom you are talking, they don't know that you are trying to speak to them. They don't pay attention to your marketing unless you speak to their needs specifically. Having a target audience will help you learn more about the people you want to reach and will help you understand them better and communicate to them more effectively.

You can't afford to market to everyone in your community—imagine what it would cost to send a letter to your whole city! Not everyone reads the same things, or watches the same television shows or listens to the same radio stations. You'll have to pick a target audience eventually. You can identify a specific group and go after them. Frankly, your church can't minister to all the people in your community. You need to match your gifts and calling to the specific people God wants you to reach.

The greatest problems today with ministry marketing come when churches don't select a target audience. You see them *preaching to the choir* even in their advertising using churchy language even when talking to the general public. You need to know to whom you are talking when you are writing your marketing plans and preparing marketing communications.

Action Point!

Sit down by yourself and the other leaders of your ministry and identify who it is specifically you are trying to reach. Who is your target audience? Write down characteristics, demographics. Learn as many things as you can about them. When you've done this you'll have a better chance of crafting a message that will meet and suit their needs.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #3

Choose Themes that are Benefit-Oriented

It doesn't cost a thing to think more strategically when you are writing out program themes, sermon titles, and headlines on your brochures or newsletters and advertisements. Take the time to make them *benefit-oriented*. Benefits make your marketing communications more appealing to people. The reality is, people usually only notice what will benefit them in some way. For example, imagine a church is having a ministry retreat for men. Usually the publicity or announcement will say something like this:

*"Men's retreat this weekend. Cost \$40.
Meet at the church at 8 AM Saturday morning."*

While the information is factually accurate and will help a person who's already coming to arrive at the right time, it won't give them a reason to make plans to come. If you take a little more time with the wording of your promotions, you can make your publicity more emotionally appealing and *benefit-oriented*. People notice things that benefit them more than they notice things that are mere information. There is so much information trying to get people's attention each day, that people have developed the unconscious mental habit of drowning out things that don't benefit them specifically.

What if the retreat for men were advertised in this way:

*"Learn Six Easy Ways to Improve Your Marriage
Men's Retreat This weekend, Cost: \$40.
Meet at the church at 8 AM on Saturday morning"*

That is a *benefit-oriented* theme that is very attractive and powerfully draws people's attention because it speaks to a specific need. Who wouldn't want to improve their marriage? Even if things are going great at home, men would still be curious enough about what the retreat is about to ask for more information. Many more would notice the publicity and make plans to come!

Action point!

Experiment with some old publicity materials you have, take an old bulletin or the announcements from your church and rewrite them, not just with facts and what you're going to do, but write them in terms of the benefit to the people that those announcements are for. You will see the difference!

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #4

Telephone Etiquette

Ever call your church office? In our line of work, we talk to ministries on the phone all the time. Sometimes we are amazed at the difference in attitude when we call ministries verses when we call businesses. Usually, when we call a business, the person who answers the phone has a cheerful and professional sounding voice. Often when calling a church, the person on the other end sounds bored and has a dull sound to their voice. Sometimes, the people who answer church phones can be downright impolite.

When people call a church office and get someone whose tone of voice makes them seem like they are annoyed by the call, they form an unfavorable impression about what the church is like. On the other hand, when people hear a welcoming and uplifting voice on the other end of the line, they feel happier and enjoy talking to the person on the line. If they have a positive experience on the phone, they form a positive opinion of what it might be like to visit the church.

No matter who calls your church, you should have good telephone etiquette. There is no reward in heaven for being kind to your church members on the phone. (Many churches wouldn't be eligible for it anyway!) Of course be kind to the members of your church when they call the church office. But remember, anyone calling to ask about your church should get the *five-star telephone etiquette* treatment. But you should also take pains to be polite to people when their call is not ministry-related. Salesmen, repairmen, vendors, and other people who call your church through the course of the day are potential members. Even if they are not, they will form an opinion about your church based on their contact with you. Realize that if they are given the opportunity to tell their opinion about your church, for better or worse, they will!

Here is a simple trick you can try when you pick up the phone. You don't have to have a gimmicky slogan when you answer the phone, just try this one thing: *smile when you answer the phone*. Imagine all the times you have experienced a person answering the phone, not smiling and monotone, "Hello, First Church." However, when they smile when they answer, you feel better. It's a lot more pleasant to talk to the person on the other side. You can actually hear them smiling! "Hello, thank you for calling First Church! How can I help you?"

Action Point!

Next time the phone rings, smile before you pick up the phone. If you have any answering devices that your church or ministry owns, make sure that the people who record the messages are smiling, and speak in an upbeat and pleasant voice.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #5

Use Testimonials

Want to lend credibility to your church programs, ministries, and publicity? Add the power of personal testimonies from satisfied people in your church! There is no charge to ask someone to share a word or endorsement of your ministry in writing, on recordings, or even video. Many times people will be so pleased and honored that you asked them to share a word of endorsement or praise for the church, ministry, or what God is doing in their lives they will look at it as a watershed moment in their lives. They may even become a more active supporter of the ministry.

Testimonials are the lacking element in most ministry marketing communications. A simple word from a “regular person” has so much more credibility with people who are outside your church, than all the fancy-worded, clever advertisements you can produce! Regularly ask people to share their testimony in the church service, in writing for brochures, newsletters, websites and other material that you produce.

Not only will your people be more excited about the ministry. The people you want to reach will sit up and take notice, too. People outside the church like to hear about the real experiences of others. It helps them experience vicariously what it might be like to be in a right relationship with God. Listening to others just like them who are involved in your ministry helps them imagine themselves a part of your church. When people see a layperson sharing a word of testimony or encouragement in the church it really draws them in emotionally.

Think about it, why are *reality shows* so popular these days? It's because people, find other people's problems interesting. People like to hear from people who have come from the same place, with the same struggles and found a way to overcome. Testimonies work by showing people how other “regular people” found God's love, received encouragement from others, or won victory over their problems.

Action Point!

Ask someone to write out his or her testimony endorsing the ministry of the church. In fact, make a habit of asking people to share what God is doing in their lives through the ministry of the church and get permission from them to use those testimonies in your promotions and publications.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #6

Have a Follow Up Plan

Ministry marketing can help your church reach more people than ever before. When it works, marketing will bring you into contact with new people to whom you can minister. That's why it always amazes us when we find churches that want to do marketing, yet don't seem to want to emphasize follow-up. We know follow-up is hard work and it takes away from other things ministers feel are important. In a real sense, marketing *is* your ministry; since marketing can help you build relationships with people who need the Gospel.

So many times churches let ministry activities keep them so busy through the course of the day and the week that they forget to follow-up on the people who come. If your church wants to make ministry marketing work for you, you will have to move beyond how most churches plan their follow-up. If a typical church has 25 visitors on a Sunday and only people 5 show up to help contact and visit, they will only visit 5 people. That leaves 20 people who still need to be contacted. Then, next week, another group of new contacts are made and a number of them get neglected too. So the *prospects* and *contacts* list grows colder and colder.

The situation is so bad, that most churches have lost touch with more than half the people who have made contact with their ministries. Don't let this happen in your church! Every ministry endeavor should be planned with the follow up in mind first. You don't want people to "fall through the cracks" in your ministry. Make sure each person who visits your church receives follow-up within 36 hours of their first visit to you. Have a plan to keep contacting them for several weeks after their visit.

Action Point!

Evaluate your follow up ministry. An easy way to do that is to take the names of the people who have come and visited for the last four weeks and to follow them up, give them a call, give them a visit, or send them a note or email to make sure they have been contacted in some way.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #7

Have Clean Restrooms

It may sound silly to think of cleaning the restroom as ministry marketing, but it is! Marketing is every contact your church has with people. It is so important that you keep all of your facilities clean! A clean restroom says a lot to a family. If a restroom isn't clean and well stocked it sends a wrong message to people. Many times churches don't take that extra effort time really clean and polish everything in their church. Don't let your church become cluttered and dusty. Keep it clean.

But don't stop at how clean your church looks! Have you ever been to a church that has a strange aroma? If your church smells strange, musty or unclean it will run people off also. A lot of advances have been made in deodorizers and cleaners that can help you put the shine back into your facilities. Keep your church smelling fresh and clean.

Walk around outside your church too. How do the grounds look? Are the gardens kept in good condition? Do you have weeds growing up through your sidewalks? Are the windows and paint on the outside looking like they need work? Now, take a walk through the streets where the people you want to reach live. You will usually find that people care very much about their homes and gardens. When they come to your church and see your unkempt lawn and come inside to find a dirty, strange smelling church, won't they feel you don't pay attention to details? Won't they wonder, "What is wrong with these people?"

The little things do matter! When visitors come they notice things more than you realize. Sadly, you may not notice the problems at all because you have been surrounded by them and have become immune to them. But even though you may not notice how things look and smell at your church, visitors will. So before you start advertising outside the walls of your church make sure you do a once over so your church facilities are spic-and-span!

Action Point!

Because you are use to the way it looks and smells invite another person who doesn't attend your church to walk around and ask them what kinds of things they see and smell that you can take care of. It could be ceiling tiles that are broken or missing, stains on the wall, the smell, landscaping. Get an honest outside evaluation of the look and smell of your church.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #8

Have Enthusiasm!

I would like to teach churches a new version of an old song: *"If you're happy and you know it—alert your face."* Have you ever been to a church where the people seem to be sour and unhappy? Many people have been run off by bad experiences they have with rude people in churches. We know your church wants to be one that people consider friendly. In fact, most churches we talk to sincerely believe their churches are friendly.

We don't doubt that insiders at your church sense the warmth of friendliness. But to outsiders, is there another story? We have visited churches unannounced as *"secret shoppers"* and found that in most cases we were never welcomed by anyone. People failed to acknowledge us, let alone smile. It doesn't take much—just a slight grin that says, *"I'm glad you're here today!"*

If you go to one of the local businesses in your town, you are sure to get a smile. People seem happy you are in their store. They are glad you dropped by. Are they being phony? No, they know when customers come to their stores they expect polite and friendly service. Don't you? What if you went into a local retailer and found a bunch of sourpusses working there? Wouldn't you climb into your car after the experience and think, *"I wonder what the deal with them was? I don't know if I want to come back again"*

We know it's hard for many people to greet new people, but that doesn't make a difference when you are new. If your members don't smile at new people, it makes the church feel like an unfriendly place to outsiders. Help the members of your church learn to smile at others, by setting an example. Show your smile and your enthusiasm. No need to be cheesy and pushy. Just smile and greet people. Practice smiling in the mirror until you can do it naturally and comfortable.

Just smile. It's totally free! You'll be amazed at the responses you'll get. Teach all the leaders who work in your ministry to smile and be upbeat. Enthusiasm goes a long way in helping a ministry become an exciting place to be. If you reach out to people be sure to have enthusiasm!

Action Point!

Your action point can be stated in the words of the famous Mr. Roark of *Fantasy Island*, "Smiles everyone, Smiles!" There's got to be enthusiasm! Look around your ministry and encourage the people that are a part of it to have enthusiasm, to have smiles, to let their teeth shine. Encourage them to share the joy that really they should have and share with the people around them.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #9

Visit Other Churches

Proverbs 27:17 says, *"Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."* In the same way that other people can sharpen your character, other churches can help you sharpen your ministry. Make visiting other churches part of your ongoing marketing research. Whenever you can, learn what others are doing and why they are doing it.

Simply visiting another church will help you sharpen your ministry by making you aware of things you didn't know you needed. You will learn see things from the perspective of an outsider. A visit might even jog your memory about changes you need to make in your own church.

We're not advocating merely imitating other churches. We think you should let your own strengths shine! Too often people look to other churches for programming ideas they can transplant to their ministries. Instead, what you need to look for are *principles* that you can adapt and apply in your church. After all, your church has its own context and personality. Your ministry needs to be a fit for where you minister.

But many times ministers are unaware of the image their church or ministry is casting because they're so used to it. There are thousands of great principles others can teach you by your observations and conversations with other ministries. Nobody has all the answers, so become a lifelong student of ministry excellence. Getting outside your own church walls and visiting other churches will help you get a new perspective in your ministry. Also, be willing to share your insights with others. Your good ideas may be just the thing that will help another church make more impact in their context.

Action Point!

Try to take some time away from your own ministry, even if that means taking a Sunday off. Visit another church somewhere and get another outlook on how people are doing ministry.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #10

Gather a Mastermind Group

The term *mastermind group* may suggest something sinister and scheming at first glance. But don't worry. We're not talking about *mind-control* or anything of that nature. The idea of a mastermind group is very biblical. Proverbs 15:22 tells us that "*plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisors they succeed.*" A mastermind group is a group of people who act as your counsel. They are people you admire and respect who can help you in your ministry.

Don't try to be a Lone Ranger ministry marketer. Learn to get and take advice from others. We all have friends and colleagues that we admire. Don't be afraid to ask them to help you think through your ministry. Keep in touch with several people who can help you via telephone, letters, emails, lunch meetings, etc.

If at all possible, schedule a round table meeting with your group. Ask for prayer and insights from your mentors. If you will get together with a group of people that you respect, you can listen to them and share ideas. Often, having the power of several people on the same wavelength helps create new energy and new ideas. It's almost like your brains are linked together as one. Your group becomes a master mind!

Also, don't be afraid to contact the people who are well known. We have found that the so-called "famous people" are people, too. They can become a part of your mastermind group. Raise your standards to a new level of excellence. Seek help from someone you admire for their godliness and ministry excellence. Consider people who have written books or have great ministries as potential members of your mastermind group. How do you know that the author of that book you really enjoyed wouldn't be interested in talking to you? Sure, they may be hard to reach. But you may be surprised at how open they are to helping others.

Action Point!

Call two or three people that you respect to help you think objectively and creatively about your ministry. Probe and explore ideas and watch as the synergy between you grows. Don't be afraid to include people who are well-known. God is no respecter of persons, neither should you be.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #11

Send News Releases

You want to get word out about your special event or activity but you can't afford to purchase an advertisement in the local paper. Don't give up! One of the biggest sources of free marketing is publicity. If you will learn to write news releases and then send them out to the media outlets you will be surprised how many times they pick up your stories. Did you know that 50-70% of what's in most newspapers is generated because someone sent a news release?

You can send news releases, too! Think about it—everyday the newspaper in your town has to fill scores of pages with local information. The odds are in your favor. If you keep sending out news releases they will use something from you. Be sure to send them news releases regularly.

You don't need to be a Pulitzer Prize winning reporter to send out a news release. Simply take out some letterhead from your ministry and write out the "who, what, where, when, why, and how" of your ministry event. Be sure to include contact information, too. Then send it off to the editor of your local newspaper. You will be surprised how often reporters will pick up your news and write or talk about your ministry in the local media.

A few tips to help you relate with reporters

- Reporters are people too. Pray for them and make friends.
- Always be polite, even if they get the details of your story wrong. (As someone said, "*Never start an argument with someone who buys their ink by the barrel.*")
- Don't ask them to contact you when your story runs.
- Be newsworthy. Send them news releases that relate to some current event of local interest
- Don't tell a reporter anything you wouldn't want to read in the paper the next morning!

Action Point!

Contact the local news media channels, both print (newspapers and magazines) and electronic (TV, radio, website) and find out where and to whom you can send your press releases.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #12

Use Email Footers

You have a powerful opportunity to send out a little “commercial” with every email you send. It’s called an “email footer.” E-mail footers are that signature line at the bottom of your email right under your name. Usually, you can set your email program to add them automatically to all your outgoing messages. You won’t even have to think about them. Just set them up one time. When you do, put your church name and your ministry web address. When people read your email they can click through and visit your website and learn more about your ministry. This way of getting the word out through common communication channels is called “viral marketing.”

Don’t underestimate the power of the email footer! Some businesses on the internet used them to get the word out about their new products by adding them to subscriber’s emails automatically. *Hotmail™* became an internet giant by using the lowly email footer. We are not suggesting your church will explode with growth just because you use them, but why wouldn’t you want to take advantage of this powerful free tool?

You send emails to hundreds of people each year. Not all of them are to members of your church. Though, many of the people who get your emails will not be prospects for your church, chances are great they know someone or will meet someone who will be. If they visit your church’s website, they will know a little more about you and will be able to tell others what you stand for.

Also, ask some of your church members to send email footers at the bottom of their emails that say “Check out my church” with a link to your church’s website. You will be pleasantly surprised at how many people will come to your website to learn about what your church is all about.

Action Point!

Begin using signatures and footers at the bottoms of your emails and encouraging your staff and other members of your ministry to start using them as well. Be sure to put the web address of your ministry on there so people can click through and visit your ministry online.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #13

Have Well-Trained Greeters

When people visit a church, especially for the first time, they want information. They want to know where the service is, where the children meet, where the restrooms are, etc. If you will train your greeters to provide that information, people will see your ministry as being helpful and concerned about them. Greeters are the key people who can help you make that good first impression with newcomers. It doesn't matter if your church is large or small, you should have a greeter ministry!

Many times churches recruit greeters but they seldom train them. Don't assume the people you recruit to be greeters know how to greet. Show them how to say "hello," smile, and greet people properly. Meet with your greeters each week before the church service starts and let them know what's going on in the church. Give them a good word about something new or interesting that is going on in the church they can tell the people they greet and meet. Keep your greeters informed about what's going on and that will help the new people when they come into your church.

The greeter's job is one of the most important jobs in your church. This is not the ministry to give someone who is shy or awkward with people. You don't want to fill this role with someone who doesn't fit anywhere else in church leadership. These people need to be outgoing "*people persons*."

Consider finding a special way to identify your greeters. Give them a badge or a vest or something that singles them out as a person who is there to represent the church. Learn as much as you can about how to help your greeters become excellent at what they do. Visit your local Wal-Mart™ and see how the better greeters do their jobs. In fact, stop and talk to them about their work. They'll give you insights into people. Also, be sure to notice the types of people who are good at being a greeter and those who aren't. Learn what makes the difference and apply what you learn to your greeter ministry.

Action Point!

Begin a greeter ministry if your church doesn't have one. And if you do, make sure the greeters are trained on how to approach new people, how to direct and help them with their questions, and how they can make visitors feel comfortable and welcome. Also remind your greeters to have the kind of enthusiasm that makes people want to come back to be a part of your ministry.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #14

Have Parking Lot Greeters

While we are on the subject of greeters, consider having greeters in your parking lot too. Your church may have greeters in the building, or just inside the doors, but don't stop there! Another excellent idea is to put them outside in the parking lot. Did you know that when a person visits a church, the church experience starts in the parking lot? Sometimes new people will pull into your parking lot and then lose their nerve to go inside. A parking lot greeter can wave to those people and show them a warm welcome right when they drive up. We think having a well-run parking lot with greeters is as important as having greeters inside the building.

Set aside some spaces near the door reserved for "Our Guests" and assign greeters to help new people find their parking places. Don't forget to inform your parking lot greeters of everything going on in the church. It is just as important that they know what is going on inside the doors as what's going on outside. Also encourage them to show a smile as they greet people. There's nothing worse than a gruff parking lot attendant.

People will appreciate the attention to details of having a parking lot greeter. In one situation the greeters had to turn down tips from people who were pulling into the church. Apparently the visitors thought it was such great service they were willing to pay for it. Greeters can be creative, too. One church parking lot greeter took the initiative of offering valet parking to the senior adults of the church. You know they appreciated that!

When you have a great parking lot greeter ministry, it sets a positive tone for your church. Because of this, people will already be excited about the things going on at the church when they come inside.

Action Point!

Expand your greeter ministry to include parking lot greeters who will welcome people right when they drive onto the property. Make sure these people are outgoing people who are smiling and can give friendly direction. Keep them up-to-date so they can be knowledgeable about where to park and where to go, and what entrance to use, etc.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #15

Have an Information Desk

For new people, information is a key need! They have very little information about your ministry. They are visiting to see that they can see about your ministry. So make it as easy for them as possible to get what they need. If your church does not have an information desk, then create one and put it near the entrance of your church. Create more than one if you need to. Place one by each entrance to your church since you never know what door people will come through. After all, new people don't know what door is the "main" entrance.

An information desk should provide visitors with all the needed information about the church and its activities. It should go without saying, but make sure that the people working at the information desks actually have information. We have seen many churches with little more than a warm body behind the desk. The people who are responsible for the desks should be well-informed about what is going on in the church.

Another seemingly obvious point is to put a sign in plain view. Signs with the words, "Information Desk", "Guests", or "Welcome" easily direct visitors to the right place. Don't assume people will know what the desk is for. Guests are new and won't necessarily know its purpose. An unmarked information desk is useless to new people. So mark it well.

Recruit people to work the desks who have a pleasant disposition toward others. Some churches we have worked with had information desk people who treated every question as a problem they had to solve or an imposition on their conversation time. Also, train your workers to keep the area clear of members who just want to hang out and talk to the person behind the desk.

Action Point!

Set up an information desk if you don't have one. Make sure there is a clear sign that identifies its location as a place for information. Train your greeters to be enthusiastic and keep them knowledgeable about the activities and information of the church.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #16

Plan a Special Event

Has your church ever been in the slumps? It happens to even the best churches. Routine gets to us all. Sometimes churches get caught up doing the same old things over and over again and they lose that *pizzazz* and excitement the church once had. You can renew the excitement if you plan a special event!

Doing something new, a special emphasis of some kind can bring back the excitement. You can have an event, an unusual program, or perhaps a sermon series that you can use as a draw to invite new people. There are many possibilities, invite a special speaker, or host some citywide event, even a funny contest. It depends on the personality of your church and leadership.

By having a special event, you give your members an excuse to invite their friends. You may be surprised how much it encourages the church members to start reaching out and begin to talking about their church again. A special event need not be related to a holiday either. We have seen special events pack churches at all times of the year.

Here's the key many churches miss. You can't have something special every week. In order for it to be special it must be *occasional*. Think about the stores you know that are having a "sale" all the time. After a while people stop believing there is a sale. The announcement of a "sale" doesn't have the same impact it once did. The same goes for churches that roll out a special event every week or so. People stop believing in them. Despite the hoopla generated by the leaders, members don't get excited and don't invite their friends when the "special event" is really "business as usual."

Sure, we want to make every worship service and every gathering special. But limit your special events to make them really special. Make them times when you break off and do something truly different. The emphasis will generate new energy in your church. And when you do, people will tell their friends about it and invite them to your special events. Be strategic with your special events!

Action Point!

Look at your calendar and determine a good time when you can do something out of the box. Think of something different, something truly special that will excite your members in a meaningful way and draw interest to your ministry.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #17

Use Web Forums

The internet is a powerful marketing tool that can help your ministry stay in constant contact with people—if you know how to use it. The other day I was surfing on the Internet and was surprised that the number one website in my city also had free forums and bulletin boards. After a simple registration process, I was able to post information about my ministry on that bulletin board absolutely free. I was even able to put a link back to my ministry on that website. Now the thousands of people who use that website also have access to my information.

The exciting thing about web forums is that they represent a tremendous opportunity for free marketing. With a little time and effort (and no money) you can post links to your church, talk-up your programs, even submit news releases to the most popular websites in your town. Often, the information you post is “live” in a matter of seconds.

As you post your information on the web, keep one thing in mind, to benefit your ministry most, *think local*. A marketing principle that will help you is understood from an old saying, “It is easier to be a big fish in a small pond, than a big fish in the ocean.” Your internet ministry marketing can easily become a “big fish” in your local area with a just little research and action. There are many national and global sites on the web, you want to be on the ones that people in your town are most likely to use. So when you get on the web, make sure you use the local media as much as possible. Look for locally popular websites. Often, the sites for the local newspapers or TV stations are the most popular. And they usually have an ample number of links to local websites.

Action Point!

Find those local, popular websites. They might be the local newspaper websites, or local radio and television station websites. Explore these sites and see if there is a forum where you can post your church's link and event information on a regular basis.

If you're not *web savvy*, then your action point is to get web savvy or find someone who is who can help you.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #18

Use Community Event Calendars

Have you ever read your local newspaper and seen the listing of church events in the religion page, and wondered, "How did they get so lucky to have their information there?" Or have you received a community calendar that comes from the city government or Chamber of Commerce in your area and seen church events listed there and thought, "Why didn't my church make this listing?" If you ever wondered how ministries get their information in these calendars, we'll give you the simple secret: ministries *send* their information to the city, the Chamber of Commerce and the local newspaper.

Newspapers and community organizations will often post information for free about local events like the ones in your church. The service is there for your ministry because having community events information adds value to their publications and resources. They like to have as much good information as possible. So they will welcome your information if you send it to them.

Don't expect that every thing you want to list in these calendars will make the final edit. In fact, it is best to send only the special events that have the most obvious community significance. If you have a relevant, local, special event to send to these organizations, often they will gladly put it in their publications. So be sure to look out for those special opportunities to publish your events in community calendars.

Some chambers of commerce will require you to become a member before you can post calendar information. Since a membership costs money, we wouldn't call that a free marketing tool. But, we consider it a "next-to-free" marketing tool. An annual membership for a nonprofit organization is usually a nominal charge. Once you are a member of the chamber of commerce, they can help you by including your church's information in their directory. They will also list some of your events in the public calendar. Besides all these great services, the chamber will have useful information about your town and will host networking meetings several times per year where you can get to know local business leaders, a great opportunity to tell people about your church and share your faith with others.

Action Point!

Research to find out what community calendars exist in your town, find out where you can mail, email, or fax your events to be placed in those community calendars so they can be published for free. Look into becoming a part of your chamber of commerce.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #19

Rethinking

You've heard the phrases, "thinking outside the box" and "push the envelope" a lot in the past few years. In fact, these are almost meaningless clichés these days. As we look at many ministries, we think it is time for them to "push the box" and "think outside the envelope!" What is lacking in many ministries can be attributed more to routine and boredom, than to lack of spirituality. Sometimes, what is holding us back is our struggle as creatures of habit. We seek the security of routine.

When we look at things in a certain way, the same way, over time, they become familiar to us. Eventually we start to assume that everyone else sees things in the same way we are seeing them. We miss opportunities that exist for ministry marketing because they are "invisible" to us, merely because our thinking habits have blocked them out.

Often a new look at an old thing will spark a new idea that can lead to real genius. Some of the greatest ideas have come from people who had the habit of looking at things from another angle. Did you know that just rethinking about the things you take for granted can help you increase the awareness of your ministry and improve your marketing?

For example, one church leader was having trouble attracting people to a ministry for children and mothers called *Mother's Day Out*. It seems the people in the area where the church was located weren't familiar with the term *Mother's Day Out*. The church leaders did some rethinking and changed the name of the program to *The Day Camp for Children*. The people the church wanted to reach were better able to understand what a "Day Camp for Children" was. Consequently, the people in the neighborhood became more responsive to the ministry and the church was able to help more children and more mothers than ever before.

Churches all over the country have "*Mother's Day Out*" programs. The term is so ingrained in church culture today that it took a real jolt to help the church realize the ministry could be known by another name. We'd say it was a stroke of genius! And all it took was a change in thinking on the part of the church. It wasn't a spiritual lacking that was holding back the church's ministry, it was the routine way of looking at the program that was the problem. Change your routines—improve your ministry marketing!

Action Point!

Think about the different ministries and services your church provides and perhaps take for granted. Rethink how you may be able to offer those or change those so they'll be more attractive to the people you're trying to reach.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #20

Be Flexible

Being flexible may sound like it's not a marketing tool but it actually is. Having the ability to be flexible on the things that are non-essentials to the faith will help you become more creative than you've ever been before. You may have heard the statement that the last seven words of the church will be, "We never did it that way before!" Churches are among the most rigid when it comes to accepting changes. Ministers may like to think of themselves as change agents who are not as bound by tradition as some of their members. Yet, often they are also resistant to changes that could improve their ministry marketing.

If you can learn to become flexible, you will begin to think about your ministry in different ways. You will see opportunities you never noticed before. You will also help your ministry speak more meaningfully to the people you want to reach. Someone once said, "If you don't like change you're really going to hate irrelevance." Many times our ministries are so locked in to doing things the same old way that they become resistant to trying anything new. They are so inflexible and unchanging, they soon become irrelevant.

Many of the principles you can learn from marketing will take you into new territory. You will find you need to grow into new habits and learn new skills. Do yourself a favor. Be more flexible when it comes to the ways you think about doing ministry communication. Opportunities are out there to help you reach more people. But you will have to change. Think of the definition someone gave for insanity, "Doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results." That should never be true of you and your ministry. If you want to become good at ministry marketing and outreach to your community you're going to have to become more flexible and willing to accept changes.

Action Point!

Develop an attitude and spirit of flexibility as much as you can. One way to do that is to break your routine that you normally have through out the week. For instance, you might want to choose a different route home. Maybe you'll read a book in an area that is completely unrelated to your normal interests. The point is, try to break routine, to do things differently to develop the flexibility you need for an effective ministry marketing mindset.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #21

Community Involvement

Is your church *inwardly* focused? Here's a quick way to check if your ministry needs to develop an *outward* focus in ministry. Ask yourself, when doing your ministry's annual planning, if your plan includes at least one event that is compatible with the community calendar? (No fair using Christmas and Easter!) If your church doesn't take into account the community calendar in your city, you may be too inwardly focused.

Every city has some kind calendar of events. Many of these events present tremendous ministry marketing opportunities for your ministry. If your church is inwardly focused, all the activities and planning take place without considering the community events. With an outward, community focus, your church has a chance to reach many more people.

We know churches are always busy with activities. There's always something going on within the walls of our churches. Ministries are often overwhelmed with activity. But we have noticed that many ministries are unaware of what's going on in their communities. They are just not involved. Sometime churches even reinvent ministries that compete with existing community programs. It is counter productive to develop a ministry in your community that already exists outside your church. Why not get involved in the community event and meet new people?

For example, we know a ministry that was interested in starting its own cycling club. We found in that same town there was already a very active community of cyclists. It would be so much better for the church to get involved in the community of cyclists instead of creating their own community. Most likely the church's ministry would only serve to draw out believers from the outside cyclist community into its own. Get involved in your community and think outside the walls of your church.

Action Point!

Find a community event or club organization that your church can become a part of and get involved in your community. Find something your church can get behind that is compatible with your mission and that you can really support. You'll meet new people who could become part of your ministry, too.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #22

Time Your Ministry Events

Did you know one of the most powerful marketing tools you have is one you use everyday—perhaps without thinking about it? It's your calendar! The calendar is a powerful marketing planning tool that can have a positive and important influence over your ministry. If you are like most churches, you have noticed your highest attendance happens during Easter and Christmas. Other holidays also become natural times to plan important outreach events and programs.

Rather than planning for each event as they draw closer, why not plan your entire year's outreach in advance? Many organizations plan far ahead. You can plan Christmas in July! Why not have your media and promotion strategy so developed and ready, that you are ready to roll with it long before it arrives. Timing is everything!

Don't worry that having your plans already laid out will make you less flexible. Quite the opposite, you will be ready to make needed adjustments because other details will be done. Your marketing will advance light years ahead of where you are now if you can discipline yourself to prepare in advance. By being more prepared, you might even find you enjoy the holidays more than ever before! Imagine not rushing and working through the holidays like you are "cramming" for a final exam each year.

Don't just consider the timing of holidays. Plan your ministry activities thinking about other timing possibilities that exist. All around you are people going through important stages of their lives. For example, there's an opportunity for ministry when couples get married. There's another opportunity when those couples have babies. These kinds of opportunities with people depend not just on the calendar but also their personal stage of life. Another example is when new people move into your community. If you can find out who those people are, you can begin to minister to them at a time when they feel they need it most. If your timing is right, there is a better chance that they will become involved in your ministry.

Action Point!

Find out who the newcomers are in your community. They're at a stage in their lives when they are probably more open to looking for a church home. Find those names, contact them, and invite them to be a part of your ministry.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #23

Create New Units

Another great marketing tip to help your church reach out to your community naturally is to create new units. What is a unit? It's a funny word to use in a church. But it's not meant to be impersonal. Instead it is a technical way of thinking about the groups that meet together in your church. A unit is simply a group or gathering in your church.

Your church is a larger group that is composed of several smaller units. You may have several small groups for adults, a few for children, a group for youth, etc. You also have groups that meet for specialized reasons, such as a Ladies Bible Study, a Missions Group, or a ministry group for men. Each one of the small groups in your church contributes in some way to the growth and outreach of your church. If you can create new groups, or cause the ones you have to grow, your church will also grow in outreach.

For example, imagine your church has a Sunday school class or a Bible study that has grown large. Perhaps there are 25 people in the group. If you can take that group and grow it into two groups, often you will find that the two groups will grow more than when the group was a single unit of 25 members.

Consider it almost as a law of nature that when a new unit is created it starts growing faster than one that's been around for a long time. Growing smaller groups are geared for outreach. Members in new groups naturally want to get the word out about their group. People like to be a part of something that is growing. Many times members will take new outreach initiatives when they are involved in a smaller new group than they would in a larger and older group.

In a larger group, people unconsciously feel there is little need for outreach. After all, the entire group is large. Adding more people would only make it harder to manage and get to know others. It is important for your ministry marketing to be ready to start new units as your marketing begins to draw in new faces to your church. When you create a new unit, you are helping your church naturally become growth oriented. New units also give new people a place to fit in. It is much easier and more natural to find a "place" in a new group than an old one.

Action Point!

Are you holding your church back by letting the units become too large? Make a commitment to making a new unit in the next thirty to sixty days out of one of your Sunday school classes, Bible studies, or ministry groups.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #24

Strive for Excellence and Attention to Detail

Here's a funny, yet sad true story. It came from a missionary who went overseas to serve the Lord. Ten years later he returned to visit his home church. He was amazed when he reentered the old room where he used to be the Sunday School Director. Sitting on the table in the exact same place was the same box of books he had left ten years earlier.

It is a terrible mistake for churches to fail to pay attention to details. Whenever we do things we should remember the motto, "Anything worth doing is worth doing well." This is especially true for ministries. We are serving the Lord and our best efforts should shine forth. In ministry outreach and marketing, attention to detail really matters.

There is no shortcut to excellence. You will have to make the commitment to make excellence your priority. The shopworn expression heard among some churches. "It's good enough for church work" is not the kind of thinking that makes for good ministry marketing. Excellence need not come from a perfectionist mentality. We are not encouraging you to have a "zero tolerance of mistakes" policy. The church is in the business of grace. We believe in the second chance!

Excellence means you will chose to honor the Lord by striving to put your best efforts into your ministry. In ministry, it is the lack of craving for excellence that keeps ministries from really reaching their communities. Look for excellence, make it your standard and it will show in your work, in how you treat people, in the way your facilities are managed, even in how you do marketing.

Remember when life is through, we are looking forward to hearing the Lord say, "Well, done my good and faithful servant."

Action Point!

Commit yourself to excellence and although we can't be perfect in all we do we certainly can honor the Lord by being excellent in what we do. We can live by a higher standard and pay attention to the details that really do make the difference.

Free Ministry Marketing Tool #25

Use a Database

One of the best tools that you can use in ministry marketing is to keep a database. A database is a collection of information that you can use to make decisions. There are many computer database programs on the market that help you keep track of ministry information. But your database need not be a sophisticated computer program. It could simply be a list of names in a note book, or just a card file in a box.

Whatever you choose, the trick is to use it. Keep accurate records and refer back to them when making key decisions. We know most churches keep attendance records. But when's the last time someone actually read the records? When did they read them to inform a marketing decision?

With accurate records, you will be better able to plan outreach and follow through on your church's communications. You can design a follow-up plan or system that helps you make sure nobody slips through the cracks in your ministry. Keeping track of your communication with the people you want to reach will help you develop a deeper understanding of them.

Unfortunately, many churches are more adept at keeping track of every *penny* that comes through the church than they are of every *person* who comes through. Why is that? It's because laws keep churches accountable for their money. We don't know of any churches that don't keep financial records. We meet many who say they can't afford a membership database, yet they have sophisticated church accounting software. The issue is churches know they should hold themselves financially accountable to be good managers of the church's money. After all it really is the Lord's money!

Why not lead your church to use the same stewardship standards for people as is does for money? To become accountable in outreach in your community, start using a database by tracking your activities and the responses of the people who come to your ministries. You'll see how it improves your ministry marketing.

Action Point!

Use your database to create a list of birthdays of those involved in your ministry so you can send out birthday greetings and to pray for people. If you don't have a database then your action point is to create a filing system that you can use to track information about the people involved in your ministry.

Stop Short-circuiting Your Ministry's Outreach!

Does This Sound Familiar?

You are good at communicating powerfully to people once they are inside your church, but you have trouble attracting unchurched people? You are good at preaching and planning ministry activities. But you have trouble keeping your members involved and motivated to bring their friends?

Wouldn't it be great to get your message outside the walls of your church and to the unchurched people of your community? How would you like to get your church members so excited about your church that they get more involved and invite more people?

Some marketing actually frustrates communication

Everywhere we go we see pastors, church planters, missionaries and ministry leaders of all kinds making the same communication mistakes. We see them short-circuiting their outreach by the things they are doing. The sad part is, with a simple change in their way of thinking—*their mindset*—they could be reaching out to more people and getting their members more excited than ever about the ministry.

Tackle Your Toughest Marketing Problems!

We are going to teach you how you can learn the real needs of the people you want to reach and show you how to develop ministries and communication tools that get attention and attract people by speaking directly to their real needs.

Ministry Marketing Mindset Seminar

Creating a slick new identity is not your ministry's greatest marketing need! You don't need generic materials—you need sound disciplines! The *Ministry Marketing Mindset seminar* will help you learn how you can develop a strategy for reaching the people in your area or focus group. The one day seminar will help you build the skills you need to apply marketing to your context. You'll be surprised how fast you understand the *marketing mind-set* and start applying it in your ministry.

This seminar is for you if you are..

- A Pastor
- Church Planter
- Missionary
- Evangelist
- Denominational leader
- Media/Communication Leader
- Age Group Ministry Leader
- Non-profit organization
- Graphic Artist
- Media Producer
- Any minister!

You will learn to move beyond canned communications. Your marketing playbook will grow as you learn how to effectively use marketing principles. The seminar is not designed to sell you postcards—this is *real ministry marketing help* using sound marketing principles!

A Few Things You Will Learn:

- 7 Ways To Stop Short-Circuiting Your Ministry's Communications
- The One Simple Principle that Will Help You Reach More People
- Get Inside The Minds of The Unchurched People In Your Community
- Two Powerful Tools To Help You Get In-Touch With Your Congregation And Your Community
- How to Communicate to People in Ways that Get Attention and Invite Response
- 25 Free Marketing Tools You Can Use Right Now.
- 12 Low Cost Advertising Tools that Get Response
- How to Build Positive Awareness of Your Church in Your Community
- Develop a Personalized Playbook for Reaching Your Community
- Three Simple Ways to Close the Back Door of your Church
- See a Return on Your Marketing Spending
- How to Spy on Yourself to Improve Your Ministry
- Take the Guesswork out of Advertising Your Ministry in Your Community

What people are saying about the ministry marketing mindset seminar...

"The seminar caused me to get real and to see what I am doing right and wrong and even ignoring in reaching my community" -Chris Elledge, Church Planter

"One of the most helpful conferences I have attended in 40 years of ministry. Excellent presentation. Gave me a 'birds eye view' I couldn't have gained any other way in an equal amount of time" -Gary Ellis, Associate Pastor of Educational Ministries

"This conference was very relevant & informative. It will definitely help us focus our marketing efforts in a more specific way"- Rebecca Ellison, Director of Communication Services

What the Ministry Marketing Mindset Seminar Includes...

- Eight practical sessions
- Group Interaction
- Note taking guide
- Case Studies
- Take home activities
- Coaching Available

Stop Wasting Money on Advertising!

You could easily spend thousands of dollars on advertisements, direct mail, websites, and other promotional activities and still not reach your community--believe us, we have seen it hundreds of times! There are countless ministry marketing groups out there who want you to buy their templates, banners and postcards. We want to help you take your ministry communications into your own hands. Only you can follow the vision God has given you. Who knows more about your ministry than you?

Schedule a Seminar Today!

If you knew you could stop short-circuiting your ministry outreach with a change in mindset, wouldn't you want to invest in learning how? Schedule a Ministry Marketing Mindset Seminar for your ministry.

The Ministry Marketing Mindset Seminar is available to you as

- One day seminar
- 2-3 day conference keynote sessions
- Convention break out sessions
- Staff planning retreats
- One-to-one consultation and coaching
- Six week coaching teleconference
- Sponsored event for your organization

Contact Ministry Marketing Coach Chris Forbes 1-888 HEY-COACH to schedule a seminar for your ministry, a group of churches, or convention gathering.

About the Seminar Leaders

Chris Forbes

Ministry Marketing Coach™ founder Chris Forbes has 15 years experience in ministry, serving all over the world. He developed the Ministry Marketing Coach™ Seminar Surprisingly Simple concepts while serving in real ministry situations while working as an international missionary, strategy leader, media strategist, and marketplace researcher. Chris has been developing and implementing ways to use media in the work of the ministry since 1989. He has a vision for helping your church or ministry share the Good News in ways that get attention and invite response from the people you want to reach.

Chris is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (M. Divbl.) and the University of Central Oklahoma (BS.).

Dr. Robert DeVargas

Ministry Marketing Mindset™ Seminar co-author Robert DeVargas is an assistant professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in the departments of Communication Arts and Foundations of Education. Dr. DeVargas teaches in the areas of multimedia development, writing, communication strategies and marketing. Dr. DeVargas' desire is to empower ministries to communicate the Gospel effectively and to harness their resources to reach more people.

Robert is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Ph. D., MA) and Texas A & M University (BS).

