



Marketing Your Church

By Topper Reid

Part One of Two

First of all, I want to stay away from the controversial idea of marketing in church life. Some say that marketing one's church is not Biblical, and I by no means want to promote anything that is counter to spreading the Gospel.

Therefore, rather than write about marketing church, and tread the wake of controversy, I only want to take a closer look at "common sense church strategy." With that in mind, let's focus on how your church can create a positive mindset in the community's perception of your church.

As a starting point, a good question to ask oneself might be, what type of image does our church convey to the people in our community? When one thinks of your church, what pops into his or her mind? In commercial marketing, this concept is sometimes called "branding."

However, in commercial branding, the idea is that the public automatically recognizes the brand; the perception is that positive thoughts are generated in the public's mind regarding the brand. The key is recognition and positive thoughts regarding that brand.

So, the idea is what do the people of your community think of when your church comes to mind? The focus in this article centers on what a church can do to help its community

think good and positive thoughts about its church.

The church is responsible for taking the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost world of its community and to the ends of the Earth. Let's start with taking care of home first. Before a church invites any one to visit its campus, it must ensure everything is in its place. If you were inviting friends over for dinner Friday night, you would make

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sure the house was clean and in perfect shape for company. Most of us would never invite guests over to our homes unless we made sure we were ready for their visit. So, how do we get ready for people that will visit our church?

First Thing's First

Before inviting guests, ensure God's house is neat, clean, and in order. What does the outside of your campus look like to guests when they arrive? What type of curb appeal does your church have?

A better question to ask might be what does the inside of the building look like? Is everything fresh and in its place? Make sure all clutter is cleaned up. Do you have a collection of umbrellas by each door?

What do your bathrooms look and smell like? Your guests will remember the smell of the bathrooms long before they remember what the sermon was about! Do your adult classrooms have their casserole dishes on display below the bulletin boards with last year's curriculum posters and other dated material?

Walk around your building and see if you notice any light bulbs that have blown. Better still, walk around your building with the "eyes" of a first-time guest and see what you notice.

Actually, this is a good exercise to practice every month to keep God's house looking its best. Experts tell us we do not notice something after we have passed it several times. Remember, this is God's house, and it should always look great. We should always fully maintain it.

Lasting Impressions

So much for outside and inside curb appeal! That was the easy part. Before our guests arrive, we must make certain we are ready to make our best impressions at our welcome centers, at the doors where our greeters are located, in each Bible study group, and particularly in the preschool area.

Our biggest concern in these areas deals with our leadership. Do each of our leaders know what is expected of them, and have they been trained to do their ministry?

Everything should be done with excellence. Therefore, we want our facilities and the impressions our leaders make to



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be the best possible. We will never have the opportunity to make another good first impression.

One of the biggest mistakes we can make is to entice people to attend our church and not "deliver the goods" when they attend!

Have you ever eaten at a restaurant you heard great things about, only to go there yourself and have a bad experience? When someone asks you about your experience, you may not have the best recommendation to share, and this may impact your friend's decision to visit that restaurant in the future. The same is true for people's experience at our church.

A Warm Welcome

The absolute best marketing plan for any church — or business for that matter — is positive, "word-of-mouth," one-to-one publicity. George Barna wrote about this very concept in his book *Marketing the Church*, where he made the statement, "When the average person in the pew is happy and satisfied with his church, given the opportunity in the market place, he will say something good and positive about his church to his friends." This is word-of-mouth publicity, and we must strive to make this happen in our church!

Remember, do not get people to attend your church before you are ready for their visit. Spend a little time and get God's house ready for company. Your guests will talk about you, and it will be good stuff! ♦

In our next issue, we will look at some ways we can get people to attend our church.

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