

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

5 Mistakes You're Making With Your Guest Services (Replay) - Episode 328

Our Best Episodes of 2023

A positive guest experience is one of the key areas that sets growing, healthy churches apart.

In this popular episode, we have a conversation around creating an intentional guest services experience featuring Chad Hunt, Unstuck ministry consultant and Lead Pastor of Victory Hill Church (Bowling Green, KY).

Mistake #1: There is no dedicated leader (no one "owns" it).

In many churches, it feels like either everyone owns guest services (meaning no one really owns it), or the worship team owns it. When the worship team owns it, oftentimes the guest service experience gets neglected due to the priority of the service itself. Additionally, most churches rely on "organic hospitality" vs. creating intentional hospitality.

In order for intentional hospitality to happen:

1. There has to be a leader for it and a team for it.
2. We need to also focus on post-service hospitality.

Mistake #2: The church is friendly but not welcoming.

Gary McIntosh said that friendliness is the number one reason that people come back to church for a second time—but it's very possible for our church members to be friendly with each other and not be friendly with others.

Encourage your church to look for people who they do not know by name (because once a church gets past a certain size, you can't recognize new guests). Without that intentionality, the people we're trying to reach will be in the loneliest place for a person to be: in a large room full of Christians talking only to their Christian friends, feeling utterly alone. And that makes it easy for them to make the decision not to return.

Mistake #3: There aren't enough people on the team—and it's unclear who's who.

You have one shot to make first time guests feel welcome. When we don't have enough people on our team, it means we're not prepared for the guests who aren't here yet. So while door greeters are important, hospitality has to exceed the front door: We need to think about our lobbies, auditorium doors, ushers in the sanctuary, a help desk, etc.

On the flip side, it does two things when we have an easily identifiable team who is focused on intentional hospitality:

1. **It teaches our church that we value guests.** When they know how well we value our guests, they're more motivated to invite their friends.
2. **It bleeds into the culture of the church.** One invite can change a life—and if we believe that, then we need to be ready for when. We need to make sure that people are engaged in the right places, in the right spaces with the right conversation, and that there's the right steps for those people to take.

TIP: Go to another church that's outside your faith tradition and experience that for the first time through a guest's eyes. It will give you a fresh perspective on the intentionality that your church needs to have as well.

Mistake #4: You are not prepared for young families with kids.

Going to a new church comes with a lot of unknowns for parents: Will my child be safe? Is the space secure? Will my child have fun?

Ultimately, there are four things we have to get right for kids ministry:

1. **It has to be fun.** We have to create irresistible, compelling environments that children want to go to.
2. **It has to be safe.** Parents need to feel that safety the most.
3. **It has to be gospel-centered.** We want kids to have fun *and* learn about Jesus.
4. **It has to be organized.** This is key for the sake of those volunteering in the kids ministry.

“If you win the kids, you win the city.” We need to create an experience that kids want to come back to, because many parents will shop churches and determine their church home based on what's in it for their kids.

Mistake #5: You ask guests to take big steps rather than baby steps.

Guests aren't coming to buy the car—they come in to kick the tires. That's why the people we're trying to reach need low commitment first steps that have low relational requirements.

[Victory Hill approaches their next steps path this way:](#)

1. **New to Victory:** This is the first step for new guests and simply involves a 5 minute post-service gathering.
2. **Discover Victory:** This is a 15-minute meeting (with treats included) to provide more information about the church and answer questions.
3. **Grow at Victory:** This is a 30-minute meeting (with lunch provided) to help people learn about small groups, serving and other opportunities to get involved.

When we're designing next steps for new people, we have to create steps that are low committal and low relational enough that they can take it. And every time we can create one step for someone to take, it will give them courage to take a deeper step and finally become connected to the life of the church.

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