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# The Summer Outreach Planning Guide (and 5 Ideas)

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As a church leader, the summer can feel like an overwhelming onslaught from a powerful enemy.

During the spring, you see the summer months coming, and a tinge of anxiety strikes your chest.

You see what's about to happen.

Your attendance declines.

Giving decreases.

Your ability to reach your community feels thwarted.

In these moments, you'll feel tempted to hide for cover, close your doors, and bury your head in the sand until school starts again.

Be encouraged!

[I know the summer can be a challenging time.](#) But I'm here to tell you it can also be a fantastic opportunity to reach your community for Christ!

Below, I'm going to share a handful of outreach events your church can use.

Before I share those details, I think it's essential to talk about two things first:

1. 5 common mistakes to avoid when launching an outreach event
2. How to plan your next outreach

Let's get started!

### *5 common mistakes to avoid when launching an outreach event*

Launching a new outreach event is exciting.

The thought of connecting with new people, sharing the gospel, and making disciples is awesome.

In your excitement, it's easy to make mistakes in the rush of launching something new.

Before you dive headfirst into your next outreach event, take a moment to learn these common mistakes. This will help you to avoid stepping on any potential landmines that can blow up your progress.

#### **1 - Moving too fast**

I just alluded to this first mistake:

Getting caught up in the moment and launching something too soon is a common mistake.

In other words, it takes time, planning, volunteers, and money to make most outreach events work.

What is more, if you try to launch something in the next few weeks or months, you may not be able to secure the support you need or have enough time to promote your event to the community.

When planning your next outreach event, be sure to forecast the amount of time you'll need to make it a success, which leads me to the next point.

## **2 – *Misguided vision***

Pop quiz:

What's the goal of an outreach event?

Time's up!

Have your answer?

It's to reach or serve your community.

When thinking through how to reach your community, keep in mind that your goal is to connect with non-Christians or people who are unaffiliated with a local church. Your outreach event needs to be about just that: outreach—not (only) about doing something fun for your church family.

Launching an outreach event unanchored to a clear purpose of serving your community will naturally lead your plans to become simply an event for your church.

Before getting started, clearly identify your goals, think through who you want to reach, and make sure every staff member and volunteer is in the know.

## **3 – *Lack of promotion***

Who are you trying to reach in your community?

How will they find out about your outreach event?

If you're not thinking about these two questions, then stop what you're doing.

If you don't have the time or resources to promote your event, then don't plan on anyone showing up other than your church members.

To reach your community, you have to do more than build something and expect people to come. You have to make a plan and provide people with a compelling reason to show up.

#### ***4 - Expecting one person to do everything***

Don't expect one person to do everything that needs to be done.

Running an outreach event is no joke.

It takes a village of people to run a successful event.

This doesn't mean that you shouldn't have a [project manager](#). What I'm saying is that you can't expect for only one person to accomplish all of the tasks that need to be completed.

Whomever you assign to spearhead your outreach event, encourage him or her to build a team of volunteers, be open to ideas and input, and empower everyone to pitch in a helping hand.

#### ***5 - Mismanaging your outreach event***

It's easy to be inspired by an idea.

But implementing an idea through to completion is a different ballgame.

When (not if) you run out of steam, there's a good chance your outreach event will derail.

Why?

If your only motivation is inspiration, and you don't make a plan and work your plan, then your outreach event will go nowhere fast. Excitement can only take

you so far. You need to clearly define what needs to be done to get ready and to get your community excited.

With these common mistakes out of the way, let's take a look at how you can plan your next outreach.

### *A checklist for planning your next outreach*

I know you're pumped about launching a new outreach.

Before you get caught up in a whirlwind of excitement, stop for just a moment.

You'll need to take a moment to think through the nitty-gritty details. I know this stuff isn't exciting. But like I just mentioned, it's a huge mistake to overlook planning, organizing, and managing any outreach event.

We've covered project management for churches elsewhere. So I don't want to get into the weeds here. However, I'd like to share with you a few quick practical tips for launching a new outreach.

Here's a 7-step checklist you can use for launching any outreach:

1. Figure out who you're going to reach
2. Pick a tactic
3. Assign a leader
4. Make a plan
5. Build a team
6. Launch
7. Follow-up

Let's take a look!

#### ***1 – Figure out who you're going to reach***

Who are you trying to reach in your community?

Are you interested in making inroads to local schools?

Is there an at-risk community who you feel burdened to reach?

Are you trying to think of ways to reach families in your area?

I know talking about this can feel awkward. But you have to know who you're trying to reach so that you can identify the best ways to serve this group of people—to build relationships, share the gospel, and invite them to your worship service.

Here's why:

The outreach tactic you choose will influence who you want to reach, which leads us to the next point.

## **2 – *Pick a tactic***

From the list of events below or elsewhere, decide what you're going to do.

I know this sounds obvious.

But many church leaders (maybe you?) struggle with merely pulling the trigger.

If you wait too long to make a decision, then you'll miss out on reaching your community.

As a friendly reminder, keep in mind whom you're trying to reach. ?

## **3 – *Assign a leader***

Who's going to run point on your outreach event?

Someone on your staff? Or do you need to tap on the shoulder of a volunteer?

Whoever it is, just be sure it's not your senior pastor or teaching pastor. I'm not saying your senior leadership is above managing an outreach event.

Far from it.

But at Church Fuel, we believe senior leaders must focus on the things only they can do, such as preaching and teaching and casting a vision.

#### ***4 – Make a plan***

Know what you're going to do?

Great.

Now it's time to get to work.

To make a plan, there are a number of essential things you need to nail down:

- When is your event?
- Where is your outreach taking place?
- What's your budget?
- How many volunteers will need to help?
- What tasks need to be completed?
- How are you going to promote your event?
- Do you need to print anything?

These questions will help you to start thinking about what you need to do.

Now, as I pointed out above, everything that needs to be doesn't fall under the responsibility of one person.

## **5 – Build a team**

Alright, so you know who you're going to reach, what you're going to do, and have a pretty good idea of what needs to be done. Now it's time to build your team.

This process doesn't necessarily have to start at this step.

This is something you can (and should) do while you're thinking through who you want to reach and what you need to do to reach them.

As you build your team, think through everyone you'll need to not only launch an event—but to reach the people you want to reach.

## **6 – Launch**

Launch your outreach event with a bang!

For anything you do for your community, you have one opportunity to do it well.

Don't hold anything back.

Give it everything you've got to make it pop.

## **7 – Follow-up**

This is an essential step and it's easy to overlook:

Follow up with your community and your church.

Here's how:

Be ready to follow up with new guests by collecting information (if relevant). Also, consider planning a follow-up event to lead them one step closer to



getting involved with your church. From launching a relevant sermon series to promoting your children's ministry, there are several ideas you can pursue.

For your church, share stories, images, and videos from your outreach event. Let your church know how everyone together—donating and volunteering—made the outreach possible.

### ***5 summer outreach events***

The outreach tactic you pursue will depend on three things:

1. Your community
2. Who you're seeking
3. Your resources (time, volunteers, and finances)

Below I'm going to share several ideas you can consider.

As you pray through your next outreach, run through each idea with this lens.

Let's dig in!

#### ***#1 – Do something sporty***

Sports can reach one of two groups:

1. Adults
2. Children

Depending on whom you want to reach, there are several different approaches you can take.

For adults, you can either gather a team of players to join a preexisting league (e.g., softball) or start a sports ministry. For this latter option, you can tap an expert in an area (e.g., archery, MMA, aerobics) and offer classes.

For children, you can pursue similar opportunities. For example, you can recruit a team of children (both affiliated and non-affiliated) from your church community to join a preexisting league. What is more, you can also consider launching a sports ministry where you offer basketball, soccer, or baseball lessons.

In both of these scenarios, don't stop at offering sports training alone. Be sure to provide a great experience, offer refreshments, and find ways you can collect contact information and invite people to visit your church's worship service, small group, or Bible study.

## **#2 – *Watch a movie***

There is one thing most people in the United States have in common:

They LOVE watching movies.

During the summer months, watching movies is one of the most popular activities. So, why not tap into this crowd-pleasing activity and reach people in your community? Besides, your church probably has a sweet audio and visual setup or at least access to a legit location to host an outdoor movie.

Now, if you go for hosting an outdoor movie, be prepared to have a backup plan. It's impossible to forecast the weather, and you want to be able to pivot on the spot (go inside somewhere) or at least postpone the movie for another day.

Regardless if you host an outdoor or indoor movie, go all out to create a movie theater experience.

Get a popcorn machine.

Buy boxes of candy.

Provide drinks.

To manage this, provide attendees with a ticket for one popcorn and/or candy. As for drinks, you can keep them flowing. If there's plenty of snacks leftover, then offer people seconds and thirds.

### **#3 – Host a book club**

#### [People read books.](#)

I know that reading, in general, is on a downward trajectory. But depending on whom you want to reach, starting or joining a book club is a great way to connect with your community.

You can start a book club for men, women, or both.

You can start a book club to read through a “spiritual” book focused on an introduction to Christianity like *The Reason for God* by Timothy Keller or *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis. Or you can pick a famous book people in your community are interested in reading. If you go this latter route, read ahead and find ways you can naturally weave into your conversations discussions about Jesus—but don't force this if it doesn't fit.

### **#4 – Provide a date night**

#### [Parents need to go on dates.](#)

Just because people get married and have kids doesn't mean they don't want to or shouldn't go out.

But here's the deal:

It costs a lot of money to go out on dates, and the cost of childcare can make it cost-prohibitive for many couples. Give parents a night out by providing free childcare, and ensuring their children have a great experience too.

Here's another thought:

Provide a gift card to a local restaurant or elsewhere for couples. This can be a total surprise for parents. But a tremendous blessing.

### ***#5 – Serve schools and families***

During the summer, your church has two BIG opportunities to serve the schools and families.

First, is there a school in your community you can serve? Is there a school in need of restoration?

Identify the local schools in your area, and reach out to them to see how you can help them during the summer months. From cleaning to painting classrooms to providing general repairs, unearth the problems they have, and then reach out to your congregation to see how you can help.

In this scenario, see if a member of your church can spearhead the work. He or she can work with the school to nail down what needs to be done, then he or she can put together a list of what you need to purchase, and then you can get to work raising the money and recruiting volunteers.

Second, you can purchase school supplies for families.

Let's be honest:

It's expensive for families to get ready for an upcoming school year.

From purchasing new clothes to buying the supplies they need, the expenses add up.

As a church, you can provide real, tangible support by purchasing the school supplies families need.

Here's what you'll need to do:

- Coordinate with local schools
- Get a list of supplies
- Set a goal for how much you want to purchase
- Raise financial support
- Go to the store!

After you collect school supplies, you can donate these to families in your church, or you can work with the local schools or shelters in your area to coordinate delivery.

The summer doesn't have to be a time of retreat.

It can be an opportunity for you to make forward progress with the gospel.

For additional ideas, check out [7 Summer Outreach Ideas](#).