

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

3 Strategies for Connecting New People to Faith & Church - Episode 161

The New Front Door of the Church (Part 1)

The COVID-19 pandemic moved churches online—but that shift wasn't really our choice. While some churches are already returning to pre-pandemic attendance levels, most mid-size and larger churches are realizing that's still many months away. And reaching *new* people? How do you reach new guests when most people are staying home most of the time? The need for a digital strategy isn't going away anytime soon. In this episode, Tony and Amy share three critical strategies churches need to engage to open up the new front door of their churches.

The Early Shifts

- In the initial shift from analog to digital, churches moved services, groups, classes, giving online. That was a good thing. It was a necessary change.
- But we're seeing a few problems...
 - Most churches are primarily replicating in-person experiences online, even though our data shows 4 out of 5 churches were stuck *before* COVID; in other words, their in-person strategy wasn't working, and then they moved it online.
 - Almost all of this effort to shift ministries online was to accommodate people already connected to the church, not designed to reach new people.
 - And, most of these experiences could be summed up as online versions of in-person experiences. There's no online strategy designed to reach an online audience.
- The people who love Jesus and were previously connected to our churches will not be as impacted by gaps in our digital strategies. For the most part, churches have done an admirable job trying to replicate online ministries for their existing congregants.

3 Strategies to Reach New People

1. **A Strategy to Mobilize People to Reach Other People**
 - a. This is the original strategy for reaching new people, the one Jesus gave us. Whatever this looks like for your church, it needs to be connected to your discipleship path.

- b. It's not enough just to encourage people to engage in a missions experience or in outreach projects. What's more important is that you coach, encourage, and inspire people to engage in a strategy to reach their neighbors.
- 2. A Weekend Service Strategy (Either In-Person or Online)**
- a. These services likely won't help someone who is far from God cross the line of faith or connect with your church. But, according to what Paul said to the church of Corinth, we should anticipate unbelievers joining us in our worship gatherings. We need to design our services with them in mind.
 - b. Going forward, services will be a *next step* rather than a *first step* for most people.
- 3. A Digital Strategy - The New Front Door**
- a. This will be the primary way we connect with people who are currently not interested in faith or are spiritually curious. But just because your service is online doesn't mean you have an effective digital strategy to reach people outside the faith and outside the church. You just have an online service.
 - b. Rather than expecting people to engage with the online versions of our in-person experiences, we'll need to clarify who we are trying to reach and then design an entirely new digital strategy to engage that person. It needs to be a strategy designed specifically for an online audience.
 - c. And, the digital strategy will need to offer smaller first steps, designed around what's currently most important to them, rather than just inviting them to watch an online service. We will need to nurture connection, engagement and relationship online before they're willing to connect with our church in person.

You need all three strategies if you are going to effectively reach new people.

Next Steps

Sign up for [Unstuck Leadership Coaching](#).

We've had a lot of pastors reach out asking, "Am I the right leader to take us into the future?" The leadership you were prepared for may not be the leadership your church needs going forward, but God gave you the role you have for a time like this. And you're not alone.

For the last 10 years, we've been providing pastors with an ally—coaching them as they lead churches towards a new vision for the future, with the goal of continually reaching new people and helping them take next steps towards Christ. We want to walk with you and be an ally in your corner. We can help you change the way you lead as you lead change. [Learn how to get started](#).

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