

Top 10 Rules to Connect More People in 2019 Edit

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You know how there are rules or laws that are always true in life? Newton's laws, Moore's law, the Pareto Principle, and Occam's Razor? How about Murphy's Law? You probably know some and always obey them or follow them because they are true (at least most of the time)

I want to suggest a set of rules that if you follow them will help you connect more people. And for the record---although I originally posted these in 2018---they are always true.

10 rules to connect more people in 2019:

1. Keep track.

Begin the year by taking a snapshot of the total number of existing small groups and their membership. Depending on the number of groups in your system and the ease of updating rosters, this may seem daunting, but it's worth getting an accurate picture. It will make progress more satisfying.

This foundational practice should always be part of what you do. After all, you will have a difficult time planning the route to where you are going if you don't know where you are.

2. Plan your year.

Thinking about the full year ahead allows you to anticipate and take advantage of a wide range of connecting opportunities (and leadership training opportunities). If you're a visual thinker, take advantage of a dry-erase wall calendar (It helps me to see the full picture).

See also, [How to Build an Annual Calendar](#).

3. Leverage variety.

In the same way different fish respond to different bait or a different lure, you won't catch every unconnected person using the same strategy every time. A variety of connecting opportunities catches different groups of unconnected people. This is why we run a church-wide campaign every year (using both the "if you've got a couple friends" and small group connection strategies). We also hold a small group connection in late January or February, promote a menu of short-term on-campus studies after Easter, and often a "book club" approach in the summer.

See also, [Overview: Here Are Our Four Strategies for Launching New Groups](#).

4. Leverage alignment.

Take advantage of alignment possibilities whenever possible. Every opportunity to sync your connecting opportunity with the weekend message, church events, or seasonal themes will make connecting people more natural and a no-brainer step. For example, when we learned our January '17 series was called Margin we added a short-term on campus study using Bill Hybels' Simplify.

5. Leverage Senior Pastor influence.

Whenever possible, take advantage of the most influential person in your church to promote the step you are offering. Equip your senior pastor to include small group references into as many messages as possible. Help your senior pastor skillfully drop in message references that encourage unconnected people to sign up for their next step (this often includes scripting what you want them to say).

See also [TOP 5 THINGS EVERY SENIOR PASTOR NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT SMALL GROUP MINISTRY](#)

6. Leverage repetition.

Never lose sight of the fact that unconnected people are almost always infrequent attenders. Their infrequent attendance requires promoting the upcoming connecting opportunity more than once (generally a 2 to 3 week minimum).

See also, [4 Ingredients of an Effective "Ask" \(that Recruits Small Group Members\)](#).

7. Leverage a range of marketing tools.

Promotion of the upcoming connecting opportunity should include as many of the following as practical/possible: (a) senior pastor mention in the message, (b) announcement during service, (c) inclusion in the bulletin/program, (d) website (ideally an above the fold graphic), (e) church-wide email to unconnected adults, (f) posters in strategic places.

8. Leverage the power of story-telling.

No form of marketing is as powerful as personal testimony. "This is what my group has meant to me and my family." Look for the best life-change stories and best opportunities to tell them. Live testimony works very well (consider using an interview approach). Video allows the story to be strategically positioned on your website or embedded in a church-wide email (with a link to sign up for the upcoming connecting opportunity).

See also, [To Do List: Film Video Testimonies That Inspire Action](#)

9. Take advantage of word-of-mouth invitation.

Two add-on strategies leverage the power of word-of-mouth. The "if you've got a couple friends" strategy allows people to personally fill their own group with friends, neighbors, co-workers and family (inviting even a couple of friends to "do the study" forms an organic group). Encouraging people who sign up for a connecting event "to bring a friend" increases attendance and makes attending less intimidating.

See also, [Saddleback Changed the Church-Wide Campaign Game...Again.](#)

10. Include designed follow-up every time.

No matter the connecting strategy, including a designed follow-up process encourages more of your sign-ups to show-up. For example, signing up for a small group connection should generate an immediate "thanks for signing up" email with everything they need to know (when, where, what time to arrive, how long, childcare, etc.). A reminder email can be sent 3 days prior to the event. A quick personal phone call reminder the day before makes a difference, even if a voice mail is left.

Takeaway:

How many of these rules are you following? Here's a suggestion:

1. Evaluate your current strategy against this list.
2. Add the elements you are not currently following.
3. Subtract the practices that seem to violate one or more of these rules.

Trust me. You will connect more people in 2019 if you follow these rules.