

Everything About Your Church Communicates Something

The very first rule of church **communications** is that everything is communication. Church communication specialists are popping up in churches across the land. I see this as a good thing. I am glad the church is recognizing the creative gifts of those who understand media, design and the intersection of faith and culture.

If we aren't careful, however, we will develop a mindset in which *church communications* will be a term we apply only to the creative design process of getting the word out about something. We will associate communications with **social media, marketing, promotion** and, strangely enough, information technology. So let's set the record straight: Everything is communication.

The landscaping and the condition of the parking lot, the front doors of the church building, the layout of the church lobby, the color and decor within its walls, the seating and the staging all communicate something about the church's culture and values. The same can be said of the children's ministry areas, the personality of the leaders who greet and speak, and, yes, the printed and online informational materials the church produces.

To look at it another way, if a church can afford a specialist in the area of church communications, that's great. But even if not, the pastor, the staff and all key lay leaders need to think about what is being communicated about Jesus and about the church through everything they do.

So, what are the values and characteristics every church needs to be mindful to communicate well? Here are just a few of the primary ones:

1. We need to communicate that Jesus is the beginning and end of our ministry. Nothing matters more. There are plenty of great organizations in our communities that handle needs related to anger, education and family crises. The church should certainly have a role in those areas, but at the end of the day, the reason the church exists is Jesus. What sets the church apart from everything else is Jesus. So His name deserves prominence in every facet of what we communicate.

2. We need to communicate that we take people seriously. The idea of being an attractional church has drawn plenty of criticism in recent years. But the opposite of attractional is not missional. The opposite of attractional is *unattractional*. So it is imperative we communicate that we value people, just as Jesus did. Greeting, serving and preaching to the needs people have are all key elements of communicating this value.

3. We need to communicate that we have faith in a powerful God. The tone of the church, from the pastor's sermons to the appearance of the bulletin, communicates what we expect God to show up and do. So if we are never challenging people to take risks, we are communicating God cannot be trusted with an audacious faith.

We can become critical of the **marketing** methods of the modern evangelical church—the slick promotional materials, the polished performances—or we can see that our surrounding culture needs us to adopt its native language and speak in tones that make the gospel clear and accessible.

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