

OCCG-014: Evangelism Thru Side Door Events

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: A small percentage of prospects entering your facility will actually be converted. Hosting Side Door Events is a great way to have more prospects repeatedly come to your facility in a way in which they are comfortable. This makes Side Door events one of the best evangelistic tools we have.

KEY WORDS:

Side Door

Personal evangelism

GLOSSARY:

Side Door Event: A secular event intended to bring prospects into your facility.

Secular: Denoting attitudes, activities, or other things that have no religious or spiritual basis.

REPORT:

A Side Door Event is a secular (non-religious) event designed to bring visitors into your facility, in most cases repeatedly.

There is a correlation between the number of prospects who come into your facility and the number of prospects who become members of the church. In the extreme case, if you have no visitors, you will have no converts.

The Great Commission teaches us that we have a responsibility to take the Gospel to the world (i.e. have converts), and if we have no visitors we will likely fail. The question addressed here is simply how to get more visitors or prospects into your facility, and not just once but multiple times.

After they are in your facility, you still have the responsibility to follow up and teach the Gospel, but at least you will have some primed candidates who in many cases will listen. Many of us prepare for the personal evangelism encounter all our lives, and it functionally never comes. When we have engaged our relatively small set of personal contacts, we are done. In today's society it is impractical to stand on a street corner and preach, and it functionally doesn't work. We need a better approach than this.

This paper is suggesting that appropriate Side Door Events will provide you with an ongoing supply of new prospects, which you likely do not have at the present time.

Another aspect of Side Door Events is that they require member involvement. This involvement is from setting up the events, attending the events to meet and greet visitors, teaching prospect, to maturing new converts. If all of those activities are not done, the cycle of church growth will not happen.

There are likely an infinite number of possible Side Door events which are possible for your congregation to use. Following are some examples of possible events. What is important is that you find an event(s) which match your resources and your neighborhood.

Some potential events are:

1. **SPEAKERS ON SPECIAL TOPICS**

Not another standard Sunday morning topic. Something to get attention started. Examples might be Family counselling, homosexual conduct, creationism/evolution, neighborhood emergency procedures, resolutions that stick, Arthritis, Diabetes, Islam, flood control, and insurance. In most cases there are speakers happy to come make the presentation, you just do the coordination and follow-up. Typically, short duration.

2. **TEACHING SPECIAL TOPICS**

Teaching topics, such as English or another language, home maintenance, auto maintenance, computer usage (all levels), painting (house and canvas). Sometimes you will be able to get teachers who are prospects to come do the teaching. Typically, longer duration.

3. **FINANCIAL COUNSELLING**

Many prospects potentially need financial planning assistance. Several congregations use a program called "Financial Peace" which literally charges attendees for coming. It works at getting prospects into your facility. It doesn't make the converts for you, you still have to work at that.

4. **SCHOOL TUTORING**

Offering school tutoring is a good way to get prospects in your facility. Sometimes you will be able to get teachers who are prospects to come do the tutoring.

5. **SECULAR EVENTS**

Many events such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Kiwanis Club, Lion's Club literary club, reading club, technical society meetings, exercise club need a

base of operations. Most are capable of making donations to offset facility wear and tear even though you would not charge for the usage.

6. **PRESCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

Mother's Day Out: Many of our smaller congregations have a surplus of older members. The ladies can offer a Mother's Day Out and allow area mothers to drop their children off for a short time while they go shopping, go to the doctor, or a number of other activities difficult to do with children.

Preschools Brings some prospects in for an extended period of time, and can charge to cover costs and teacher's salaries.

Playground: Some of your surplus grounds can be changed into a neighborhood play area for children.

7. **MONTHLY PARTY**

A regularly held party hosted by a group such as alternating Bible Classes to make sure you have critical attendance. This would allow any member to know he or she can invite someone to a controlled social situation to assist in their personal contacts. The group can coordinate special activities to include the prospective visitor, e.g. a 42 game.

8. **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

Emergencies are an excellent opportunity to engage your community. You need to be prepared for an emergency such that you can involve your neighborhood in doing good works at your facility. When an emergency happens, it is often too late to get good community involvement with your congregation and be coordinated on the follow-up.

9. **FAMILY PHOTO STATIONS**

Offering professional quality family photographs possibly in a frame might

not seem like a lot to some of us with fancy cameras and color printers, but it has been used very effectively in some situations.

10 NEIGHBORHOOD DISCUSSIONS

A soft spot to consider is whether your congregational mix is now the same as your neighborhood mix. If the socio-economic mix of your service area has changed, any growth you see will likely come from that socio-economic group rather than your old one. If you keep acting like and appealing to the historic socio-economic group you are going to die. When you tell Jesus you were not comfortable with the new socio-economic group, you may well find that Jesus is color blind. Asking new neighborhood groups to come in for discussions can be a very useful thing to do.

11 SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Chemical dependence
Suffer with chronic pain
Bed-ridden parent
Children with learning disability
Are pregnant
Affected by homosexuality
Cancer
Hearing impaired
Depression/Anxiety
Domestic abuse / trauma victims
Grief share
Weight loss
Heart health
Diabetes

Empty nesters
Single parents, dads and/or mothers
Newlyweds
Widowers
Retired
Are raising grandchildren
Moms of teenage daughters
Married to spouses who travel a lot

Children in blended families
Unemployed
Spouse or child in jail
Spouse who is not a believer

Ride motorcycles
Own an RV
Enjoy reading/writing books
Fishermen, hunters
Softball
Managing finances
Scrapbooking
Quilting
Radio controlled airplanes / drones
Camping
SCUBA diving
Cycling
Singing
Dogs and/or cats
Photography
Gardening
Bridge, dominos or other games

When you hold a Side Door Event:

1. There must be members in attendance who understand it is their job to engage the prospects and learn about them
2. There should be posters placed appropriately to assist in your teaching program (See ocgthinktank.org, Project Papers, Teaching Papers, Teaching Posters for ideas)
3. There must be members who understand it is their job to follow up with visitors (can be the same members),
4. There must be members and programs to mature new prospects to repeat the process.

A prospect who attends a Side Door Event and never comes back doesn't do you much good. A prospect ignored while they are in attendance and/or not followed up doesn't do you much good.

A percentage of the prospects who come thru your doors will be converted. The

more visiting prospects you have, the better your chance for assisting in the Great Commission.

Side door events bring prospects into your facility multiple times. This makes Side Door events personal evangelism tools. In today's society, they may well be the most evangelist tool we have.

Do not try them all. There is likely a limited number of activities which fit your congregational and neighborhood situation. Many small congregations will need to select one or two and focus where you are likely to succeed. It is probably best to do only the events you can do well.

Another consideration is that some Side Door Events stop bringing in prospects

after a time. It is estimated that 90% of groups saturate after 2 years. Some may need to be terminated just like any other outdated ministry. Consider starting some events to stop after a designated time.

There is a high degree of correlation between congregations whose members are no longer involved and congregations which are lukewarm. Side Door activities promote member involvement, which can be good not only for the prospects, but also for your members and your congregation. This means everybody wins.

Side Door Events appear to be one of the best options we have today to increase visitor traffic and to increase member involvement.

References:

1. Side Door, Charles Arn, Wesleyan Publishing House

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