

Raise More Money

Lesson Six: Two Essential Practices to Increase Giving

1. Leverage your traditions

Every church has traditional giving practices.

What are yours?

Is it a weekly offering bag? Is it a monthly missions' offering? Is it an annual building pledge? Is it at the end of the service people put their offering in a particular box or, you know, a facility where they can leave their offering in a secure place?

Two things about this.

1. Energize them. Revitalize them. Revisit them and say, 'people are used to giving like this so why don't we just amp it up.'
2. Ask yourself, can we start a new giving tradition? Is there a way to have a second offering every now and again in your service? Is there a way to start a special projects offering or an annual building pledge? Start new giving traditions and then gradually they'll become an old tradition and they won't have any resistance in your church. You'll just say that's the way we do it around here.

Every giving tradition you have in your church was once a new thing. It was once resisted. It was once not wanted. People probably said, 'I don't like the way they're bringing those offering bags into the service, why can't we just give the money at the box at the back or why do we have to have the offering plate passing in front of us.'

New things eventually become old traditions.

So revitalize what you've got and ask yourself, 'Is there a way that we can start a new tradition that embeds in our church over a couple of years as just the way we do it?'

2. Analyse your finances

Analyse your income and expenditure in your church.

It's very important to watch trends. The trend is your friend. It will indicate significant or gradual changes in various areas of your church.

Year-to-year comparison of giving

Look at April, May and June last year and compare it to April, May and June this year. What's the trend? Are we tracking above last year or are we tracking the same? Are we below?

Then consider the reasons for any growth, decline or plateau.

You can do it with your general giving, your missions giving, and your building program.

It's good to get a feel for how you're growing as a church or how you're declining as a church so you can respond appropriately.

Maybe our membership has grown but our giving has declined. There's something wrong there. We need to heat up this value, talk to our leaders. See what's going on out there. Maybe there are some needs in terms of employment. There might be people struggling in business. There might be something pastoral you can address because of that trend that also obviously is a point of prayer.

Giving per head

Take your average weekly offering, divide it by your average weekly attendance and that's your giving per head across your church.

Then talk to pastors in the same demographic zone as you.

Maybe in the same city or maybe in a very similar sort of city to yours but make sure you ask the pastors who are in a similar demographic zone. If you are in a middle class area, don't compare with someone who's in a very wealthy area but find someone who's in a middle class area.

Chat with a few pastors and do some comparison.

A word of caution here: compare in the same demographic zone otherwise you won't be comparing apples with apples.

Also compare the giving per head year to year just like you looked at the trend of the giving overall.

Consider why the giving per head has grown or dropped.

Analyze that. Is there a lack of financial discipleship? Is there a high percentage of new believers? Are people withholding due to financial distress? Or do we have just a bundle of new people I haven't disciplined yet? Analyze your results.

How much should you spend on salaries, buildings and operations

Bill Hybels' church, Willow Creek Community Church, a megachurch in Chicago, USA has these guidelines and I think they're helpful. Remember it's a megachurch so resources are different but it gives you a bit of an idea.

50% on staffing including benefits to all staff

10% give away

10% reserved for whatever God is blessing at their church or they'll put it in the cash reserves

15% allocated to ministry budgets

15% for the facilities, for servicing debt and for utilities

These percentages can be a general guide for you.

I'm not a big fan of 10% giving away but some churches do it. Feel free to do what you like in that area.

I think there's a great deal to be said for limiting your staff expenditures to 50% however you may want to raise it during certain seasons.

However, remember that 55% to 60% for staffing is never sustainable and there will be things that will be damaged in your church because of that high level of staffing.

I like the idea of putting extra money into what is really going well in the church, into what's growing and booming.

I think it's important to keep the servicing of debt to a minimum. 15% is quite good for that.

You may at various times want to make it higher because you've taken on extra debt for a reason but you know it's not going to be there for long, so I think that's wise.

How much should you have in cash reserves?

I think churches should hold a cash reserve of two to three months of operating expenses so that if something unforeseen happens you're ready for it.

A cash reserve helps you get through the seasonal fluctuations that happen in cash flow. It also helps you manage a crisis. If suddenly there's an economic downturn or extensive building repairs or emergencies you've got some cash reserves to throw at it.

I think there are also unforeseen opportunities. Suddenly something starts working in your church. Maybe small groups take off and you think let's put a couple thousand dollars into

more training and more development of that vision because that's really firing and that with the cash reserve you can do.

Download and Complete the Check List

Revitalise a giving tradition

Launch a new giving tradition

Compare your year-to-year giving

Calculate and compare your giving per head

Analyse your expenditure areas

Establish a cash reserve