

Turn Up the Volume

Guide for getting the word out for big events

Even if you build it, they won't come unless they know about it

While it's true that extra ammo is usually needed to get the word out about big events, **a plan of action is what matters most.**

There's plenty of resources available with premade campaign graphics and tool templates, but knowing how to get the most out of them is another story.

We're going to walk you through the key ingredients of a successful strategy to leverage those tools to your advantage. (And if you need ideas for tools to expand your reach, we've got you covered as well)

The famous marketer Seth Godin said, **"Attention is the currency of the future. It's not scalable,"** and **this is the key to getting your message heard above the noise.** But how, when so much is competing for attention?

*"HOW YOU SPEND MONEY
ON MARKETING IS
MORE IMPORTANT THAN
HOW MUCH YOU SPEND"*
— MARK CUBAN

1) Practical is powerful

Every time you print, send, or share anything related to promoting your event, ask yourself **what do you want them to DO with this information?** Sign up to serve? Learn more at the website? Tell a neighbor? Bring a friend?

While "all of the above" would be great, asking your audience to do multiple things at the same time typically leads to them not doing anything. It's better to have multiple avenues and "calls to action" than trying to stuff everything into a one-size-fits all solution.

Here's three questions to consider with every messaging opportunity:

**** Bonus ****

*This works for all communications,
not just event promotions*

1) **What do they need to know now?**

Don't try to tell them everything, especially early on. It'll feel overwhelming & they're going to forget

2) **Why should they care?**

Or what's in it for them? People won't remember the 'what' until they care about 'why'

3) **What do we want them to do next?**

Specifically as a result of this ask— Less is more here. Ideally, it's just one thing but no more than two

2) Repetition builds retention

By the time you're getting sick of hearing about it, your audience is just beginning to hear it. The key is to consistently say the same thing in different ways— Not the exact same thing the exact same way hundreds of times. And the reality is, no one really sees or hears everything you're sending. They only hear/see *some* of it. So volume and frequency are important even if it feels like overkill.

3) Social media extends your reach

Share pictures and quick videos of what's happening before, during, and AT the event. It doesn't have to be fancy or flashy—almost everyone has a phone. Use it! **Even if your church isn't active online, your congregation is.** (Yes, even the seniors. How else do they see pictures of their grandkids?) Encourage people to come and invite their friends through their/your social media channels, website and streaming service. A few quick ideas of content to capture:

- Take pictures/video of the set or decorations being installed for a sneak peek of what's to come
- Share short stories of volunteers or team leaders part of the effort
- Daily countdown starting 10 days out with ideas like:
 - Who are you inviting to (event)?
 - Remembering why this is important
 - Tag a friend you'd love to join you for (event)
 - Reminder (event) is this weekend
 - Can't wait to see you this (day/time)
 - There's still time to join us at (address)! Fun begins at (time)
- Take pictures of people setting up coffee for the first service and remind them there's still time to make it
- Shoot B-roll or background shots of the crowd in between services, letting folks know you'd love to see them there
- Capture snippets of the music or pastor speaking and let them know when the next service starts or where they can watch online

Boost your efforts with targeted social ads to your community (*Remember to keep the radius to a drivable distance unless you're targeting an online audience*)

4) Don't underestimate your people

After working with ministries of all shapes and sizes to get the word out about important happenings, one thing still works better than anything else— Personal connections. When people are invited by someone they know, they're more likely to come. **Word of mouth is the most powerful communication tool in your arsenal.**

- Encourage & expect your congregation to invite others for the event—even if your people aren't known for inviting others often, this is the time to be intentional
- Be specific in your ask. Set an example with senior and staff leadership of what to do
- Tie the initiative to your ministry's overall vision. Remind them of the importance of the event itself as well as why it matters to them
- Adding a "street team" can take your efforts to another level*



- These are people who are especially excited to amplify your efforts and willing to officially take on the responsibility
- You can find them by announcing you're creating a special, "Event Name Street Team" and are looking for a small team to work with you to get the word out (Create a signup form for those wanting to learn more)
- Make them feel important and part of this special operation—more on the inside track than everyone else. Equip them with tools to tell others and check in frequently for feedback

5) Make it easy

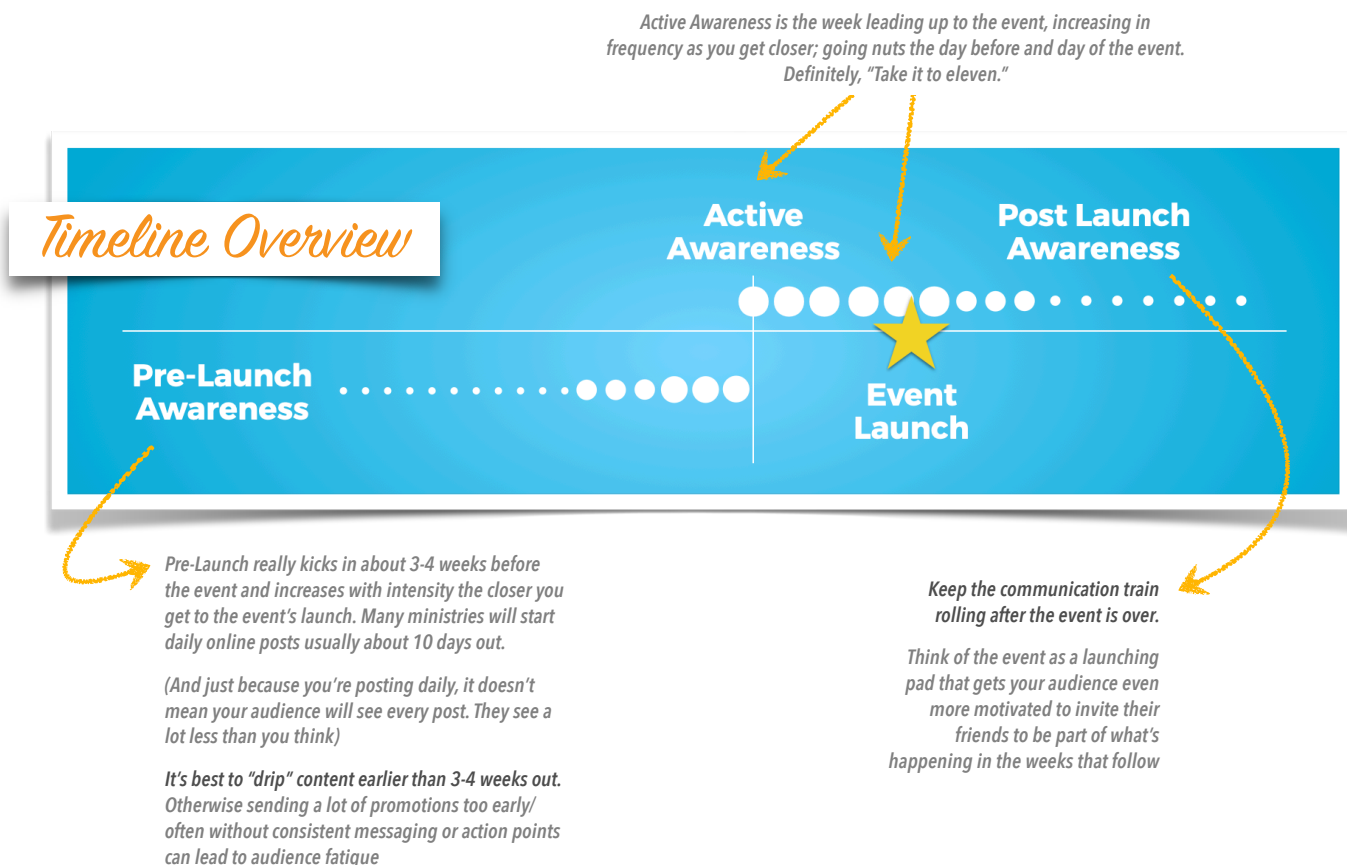
Even the most enthusiastic supporters have lives of their own, so make it easy for them to spread the word. Equip them with tools to share both online and offline.

- Create posts for popular social platforms that are simple to share & repost to their own circles
- Encourage staff and key volunteer leaders to share through their channels as well so it's easy to repost
- "Digital" invitations that can be easily texted to friends also work great, especially for younger crowds
- Oversized postcards can do double-duty as part of a mailed campaign and physical invitations that can be handed out to friends

6) Who says the fun stops when the event ends?

The purpose of most ministry events is to get people connected and involved ongoing. **So once they show up, give them a reason to come back and a tool to help remind them.** Studies have shown new people who attend services three weeks in a row have a higher chance of sticking than those who don't. So timing the start of a new message series the week after the event is one way to encourage people to come again.

Sharing pictures, videos, and message snippets of the event afterward is another way to extend your reach. Not only is this content useful to promote the next event like this one, but it can encourage those who weren't able to make it to come the next weekend.



Ideas In Action

Christmas in Chicagoland

One of our long-time ministry partners is located 5-15 minutes away from three large, active shopping malls in the Chicago suburbs. (Yes, these do still exist in some parts of the U.S.) They wanted to take their outreach efforts for Christmas to the next level post-COVID. After brainstorming with the team it was decided to leverage the church's creative talents in music and design to capture attention in new ways.

They created giant portable letters that spelled out the word "Joy" and took them to the malls. Not only did people want to take selfies to share on social, but they wanted to know the next time the "Joy letters" were coming so they could bring friends.

The church had opportunities to ask people what joy meant to them this holiday season while people waited to take selfies, shoot mini "man on the street" shorts to share online, and hand people invitations to the upcoming Christmas services.

Flash mob-style performances of spontaneous Christmas carols were also part of the plan, which would be shot/shared online as well.

They used what was available to them—gathering places of harried shoppers—to literally bring joy to the community to capture attention and connect with the community in new ways.

Quick Next Steps

Start with your inventory & assets

- What has worked well for you in the past to get the word out?
- What have you seen others do that you could adapt & make your own?
- What's working in your favor that could help amplify or accelerate your efforts?

Check what's happening in your community

- Are there opportunities or events happening that align with the timing of your event?
- How might you leverage these benefits to reach people you're not currently connected with?

Tool Ideas

Possible workhorses to include in your armory

Microsite / Dedicated Web Page

Including a dedicated page on your website or a separate “mini site” is a great way to provide more information than most communication channels allow. (And it’s easy to promote) Imagine the possibilities— a short video talking about the vision behind the event, include a FAQ section, specific opportunities to serve or get involved, provide ongoing updates for bigger events, list contact details if people have more questions. This can be promoted with a dedicated url (EventName.com) short url (ChurchName.com/Event) or QR code to keep things simple *(Launch as soon as possible)*

Invitation Cards

These can be physical, digital, or both. They differ from ongoing invite cards, as they’re focused on the upcoming event. Some ministries make direct mail pieces work twice as hard by also serving as invitations. While direct mail is expensive, it can be a great way to cast a wide net. The key is to use this channel with great intentionality—include a specific call-to-action to track your efforts with messaging that captures attention. (Never just announce the event)

Hand stacks of these out to everyone and ask them to share with everyone they know *(2-3 weeks before the event)*

**** Quick idea:** Encourage recipients to turn the mailer in for a small gift (e.g, free drink at your cafe or local coffee shop) and/or include Direct Mail as an option in the “How did you hear about us” section of your guest connection card during the campaign to track performance of this channel.

Door Hangers, Yard Signs, & Community Flyers

These are exactly what they sound like. Cards that hang from doorknobs, signs in yards, and flyers for community bulletin boards. (Think Starbucks) The messaging and graphics will be consistent with the invitation cards, (with date/location prominent) and should direct people to the microsite or dedicated web page for more info. To distribute these, you’ll need to recruit a team of willing volunteers to canvas homes in a tight radius around the church. (Great for Street Teams!) It’s up to you how big that radius will be. Most churches focus in a range of 1-3 miles, but feel free to expand as you’re able.

(Plan to distribute these about 1-2 weeks before the event)

Banners

A fantastic, inexpensive way to capture attention leading up to the event. Graphics should match the campaign, with date & times prominent. *(Installed 3-4 weeks before the event)*

Sponsored Social Advertising

Second to word of mouth, social media truly offers the best bang for your buck—when done right. *(Typically amplified the last two weeks leading up to the event)*

Apparel / “Swag”

Definitely pricier than just printing invitation cards but can make a huge impression. Imagine a sea of staff + volunteers wearing matching t-shirts with the campaign graphics. For capital campaigns and donor-driven events, giving away embroidered golf shirts, jackets, hats or water bottles are a great way to thank those who’ve gone above and beyond to help get you where you’re going *(Typically worn or distributed at launch)*

Billboards

Like direct mail and apparel, billboards can be pricey but can make a huge impact, depending on the goals of your event. The level of success can be greatly influenced by location and message creativity. (Make sure they notice, and more importantly remember your message)

(Typically installed 1-2 months before the event)

Newspaper/Local Publications

Believe it or not, ads in your local paper or publication can still be effective—especially for holidays when listed in the Community Events section. *(Ads run 1-2 weeks before the event. Publications may have longer lead times, so plan ahead)*

Fun Bonus Items

“Tchotchkes” or trinkets can seem cheap, (and lame) so let’s not do that. Instead, think of “fun bonus items” that tie into your campaign theme. One church in southern California—literally deemed surf-city USA—rolled out a capital campaign, complete with a retro-surfer theme called The Next Wave. Bonus items included surf board key chains with the campaign logo and oversized surfboard-style decals. *(BTW: Decals are a great, inexpensive way to ‘personalize’ anything)* These were handed out at the campaign’s kickoff date.

A charter school in Texas that reintroduced itself to the community offered fun stickers and coloring sheets for kids at town hall-style meetings for parents new to the community to learn about the school. These tools matched the rest of the campaign and acted as reminders of what set the school apart. *(Distribution timing varies, but typically aligns with key campaign milestones)*