

Five Tips for the Lead Pastor of a New Church State

Planting a multi-site church is one of the most effective ways to create new spaces for new faces. What are some tips for senior/lead pastors who supervise a church planter at a multi-site campus? Church planters in Virginia shared their top five recommendations with us.

1. Finances

Don't plant unless you have the financial backing from the mother church. Guide the mother church to a place where it will agree to give a certain amount of financial support to the plant over a scheduled time to move the plant toward sustainability. Don't create any narrative that says the mother church will never have to financially support the plant. Talk about how finances will be managed and about expectations.

2. Visioning

Empower the planter to set the vision, choose the staff, and innovate in ways that are not necessarily the same as the mother campus. Do not impose pre-selected musicians or leaders or agendas. Be as supportive as possible of the planter. The planter is the visionary for the new campus. Let that person lead. Allow time for regular check-ins with the planter. Don't be too busy with the mother campus or uninterested in the daughter campus to know what's going on at the daughter church.

3. Celebrate

Speak about the daughter campus every chance you get at the mother campus. The lead pastor must be a cheerleader who sees planting as a foundational evangelism strategy. Don't let the mother congregation forget about this mission. Provide regular updates to the mother campus. Maintain excitement about what is happening across town; lead the congregation to feel they are a part of something big by supporting the daughter church. Be publicly supportive of the plant, so that everyone sees it as something worth celebrating. Communicate and celebrate unity around the shared mission rather than around leaders, specific events, or style. Be the introducer of the plant and the loudest voice (besides the planting pastor) advocating for the plant.

4. Main Campus Reaction

Train staff at the mother campus who are or might be affected by the daughter campus: communications, administration, and finance staff. Help them consider the work of the daughter campus as important as the mother campus. If staff complain, shut the complaints down quickly. Create a culture that embraces and gets excited about doing the work of the plant. Remind staff that the way the daughter campus does things may not be the same way the mother campus does things. Don't assume that all the learning will occur from the sending congregation to the new congregation. Don't blame the church planter for issues at the sending church. Some of the issues might be connected to the effort and energy of planting. Decide what staff could/should be shared between churches and who is site-specific (and help with finding/hiring site-specific staff). The lead pastor must encourage members of the church to be a part of the launch team.

5. Lead Pastor/Planter Relationship

Don't make the planter attend unnecessary meetings. Clarify the relationship between the church campuses, how resources are used, who is leading, and so on. Listen to the church planter's view of

contextualization and necessary adaptations to the vision, since he or she is the person most familiar with that community. Let the church planter make contextualization decisions. Make time to check in with the planter. Release him or her from responsibilities outside of the plant. Periodically, visit the plant and talk with the people for first-hand knowledge that will aid advocacy. Create a playbook, so that there is continuity between campuses. The lead pastor must understand that the context of the new faith community and the gifts/passions of the faith community may differ from the established congregation. The lead pastor must understand that what may work at an established church may not work in a planting situation.

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