

Canada Conference 2023
Guests & First Impressions

Introduction: This lesson is designed to help you rightly relate to the harvest God is sending to your church:

Have You Ever Had a Bad Customer Experience?

- As churches go, there is not one church in your community that can compete with your product.
- Sometimes people come to our churches and never come back, not because of the product, but because of the experience.

What is a First Impression?

- A first impression is an initial observation that creates a lasting opinion.
- A first Impression sets the tone for everything that happens thereafter.
- Forbes magazine suggests that it only takes 7 seconds to make a first impression.
- The moment people walk into your buildings, all 5 of their senses are on full alert.
- They are immediately picking up clues that communicate your culture and values.
- **In 7 seconds, a guest establishes an opinion about your church.**
- Experts say that within 15 minutes the guest will either prove or disprove that opinion.
- The concrete hardens in 15 minutes! (Pastor is not preaching within those first 15 minutes.)

Ministries that impact the guest's 5 senses in the first 15 minutes are first Impressions ministries.

- First impressions ministries impact what a guest sees, what they smell, what they touch, what they hear, what they taste
- Question: Which ministries impacts the 5 senses of the guest in the first 15 minutes. (Grounds keeping, Cleaning, Ushers, Greeters, Welcome Center, Promotions/Print Pieces, Media, Nursery, Sunday School, Music, The Service Leader, Coffee Bar)

Question: Have you ever been at a restaurant, or a store and you thought to yourself, *“Wow! That looks bad, that smells bad, do they ever clean that? Why don't they see that?”*

- It's easy to see the negative touch points in other places but it's not so easy to see our own churches.
- Why? Because it's home to us.
- It's a place were familiar and comfortable with
- It's a culture we're immersed in.
- We don't always know how we're coming across to guests!

3 Ways to Stay Sharp with First Impressions

- 1.. Ask Guests About Their Experience**
- 2. Ask someone to come and be a “secret shopper”**
- 3. When You're Out of Town, Visit Other Churches**

TRAINING OUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS TEAM

****Our guests deserve a WOW experience in our Apostolic Churches so we must train our First Impressions Team for the WOW!**

- We live in a strong customer service culture.
- The biggest industry in North America is the service industry.
- This would include, restaurants, hotels, dry cleaning, spa's, recreation, vacation experiences, grocery stores, delivery services, car dealerships, car services, medical treatment centers, spas, are all oriented toward the costumer experience.

- Guests come into our churches with customer service expectations.
- They know when they're getting good customer service, and when they're not.
- **These same people do not check their customer mentality at the door when they walk into a church for the first time.**
- **The good news is that most of our Guests do not have complicated expectations; they simply appreciate it when you sincerely demonstrate that you value them and are prepared for them.**
- The guest recognizes our attitude and attentiveness.
- Our attitude and attentiveness can powerfully communicate this message, "I don't know why you are here, we are just glad that you are here."

QUESTION: If you could dictate what people are saying about ATC after visiting what would you want them to say?

- *I'm coming back*
- *I found my home*
- *I'm beginning a new faith journey*
- These outcomes will likely NOT happen if we aren't intentional about training the ministries that impact the guest in the first 15 minutes.

IN THE FIRST 15 MINUTES I WANT A GUEST TO SAY OR THINK 3 THINGS:

1. **WOW! (In other words, this is way more than I expected)**
2. **I'm Impressed! (This church is prepared, they are competent, I see excellence)**
3. **I Like What I Feel (I may not understand everything that's happening, but my heart is stirred, I'm glad that I'm here)**

Guests deserve a "WOW" we need to train our First Impressions Team for the WOW!

"WOW" Busters

"Wow" Buster #1 – Improper Recognition

- Don't call brand new folks, visitors.
- A visitor implies that it's just a onetime thing.
- Visitor implies, you are a target
- It doesn't feel good to be a target
- **Call them guests**
- It feels good to be a guest.
- Guest speaks of hospitality
- **Call them new attenders** (speaks of starting a journey)
- **Tell your team to never refer to guests as, "They, Them, You Guys"**
- Use their name or refer to them as our guest. "Our guest had a question about Sunday School, can you help them"
- **Over recognition (making people stand)**

"Wow" Buster #2 – Clueless First Impressions Staff

- First Impressions team members who have no idea about what's going on.
- The First Impressions Team needs to be the most knowledgeable members at your church!
 - What Sunday School Class should I take my children to?
 - Who do I talk to about getting financial help?
 - Who do I talk to about joining the church or receiving a Bible Study?

“Wow” Buster #3: A First Impressions Staff Member Who Is Half-Hearted

- Halfhearted First Impressions Team members are sending the wrong message to the wrong people!
- **Things I Don’t Want a First Impressions Staff Member to Say**
 - “I didn’t know I was serving today”
 - “What’s wrong with what I am wearing?”
 - “You don’t need me”
 - “Are we done yet?”

Training the Team for the “WOW”

1. Let Your Team Know Their Significance.

- They are critical to the mission of the church
- Jesus said in *Matt 11:28-30* *28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*
- When the Pastor says, “You matter to God,” the guest should be able to receive that in part because they felt they mattered when they walked into the building.

2. Give Your First Impressions Team “Guest IQ”

- *Col 4:5* *Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. 6 Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man. (KJV)*
- Help your team understand if feels to be a guest: vulnerable, uncertain, hopeful
- The guest needs the team to be confident, but caring
- The guest needs the team to be the extrovert, the one to “go first”

3. Prepare Your Front Line for Situations and Questions

- New Family comes in with a 2-year-old, 10-year-old, and 16-year-old
- Guest comes in a Wheelchair
- Guest comes in and seems to be unstable or under the influence
- Someone comes in and asks for money
- Someone wants to talk to the Pastor

4. Train Your Team to do Their Job

- It’s very hard to meet unstated expectations.
- Don’t be abstract about the process, create a simple page with procedures so everything is clear.
- Don’t rely on people who’ve served a long time and have the institutional knowledge to simply do what needs to be done - what should a new team member know about the role?
- Have at least, one special training each year.

General Training

- 1. Brush Your Teeth, Look Presentable and Use Some Mental Floss**
- 2. Pray for God’s anointing and gifting before you serve.**
- 3. First Impression are the brand, the face of the church**
- 4. Get Ready to Be an Extrovert (Extroverts initiate communication)**

PLANNING FOR A GUEST-CENTRIC SERVICE

Let me begin by saying, that being guest-centric does not have to be at the expense of being spirit-centric.

FIRST THOUGHT: There is such a thing as too much

- More doesn't mean better in first impressions.
- Too many ushers & greeters
- Too many steps to a church experience.
 - Four-way stop vs. on-ramp

SECOND THOUGHT: Plan Announcements with the guest in mind.

- Tell me what's wrong with these announcements:
 - *"There's going to be a Guardians fellowship at the Smith's house.*
 - *Our revival with Bro. Joe is starting next week*
 - *Anyone interested in Firm Foundations should talk to Sister Jill"*

How might we share announcements with the guest in mind?

- *We have a vibrant ministry for our members who are 55 and older, it's called a Guardians, they get together monthly for food and conversation. If you are guest today and would like to attend, please stop by the welcome center for more details.*
- *We have a Spiritual Renewal Weekend on these dates and times. This is a weekend we always look forward to where we have a wonderful guest speaker who inspires and helps us to grow our relationship with God.*
- *If you are a new attender, we have a special class designed for you, to help you get started on your spiritual journey. It will give you answers and tools that you can immediately use to strengthen your relationship with God. (For more details, Sign UP at Welcome Center)*

THIRD THOUGHT: Allow a time for congregational interaction

- Don't do this till you train your church how greet people they don't recognize.
- Take a moment to greet someone this morning, if you don't know them, introduce yourself.
- Responsible for every guest within 15 feet!

FOURTH THOUGHT: Allow the Guest to Visit on Their Terms

Two Kinds of Guests: Relationship Oriented Guests & Low-Profile Guests

- Relationship Oriented Guest
 - Make a Connect Card available and include that in your announcements
 - Invite to Hospitality Suite
 - Hospitality Suite (Can be scaled)
 - Hospitality Suite Questions
 - Impressions of Service
 - How did you hear about us?
 - Tell me about your spiritual Journey
 - Would love to finish this conversation.
- Low Profile Guests
 - We respect their boundaries
 - We don't force them to fill out a card
 - We have "plain clothes" first impression team members who engage guests.
 - We know who they are

- They often visit the guest suite after a few visits

FIFTH THOUGHT: The Altar Call

- Before you preach or at the conclusion of your message
- Repentance, Baptism, Holy Ghost Cards

FINAL THOUGHT: Review Guest Connections on Monday