



GROW

Your Launch Team

HOW TO BUILD A GREAT
LAUNCH TEAM

By Raul Rivera



YOU ARE NOT ALONE

The decision to plant a church has never been an easy one. There are so many questions, doubts, and internal struggles when considering planting a church that one may question whether he/she is actually hearing from God or if it is just the spicy food from the night before that is speaking to him or her. However, if you are reading this then it is more than likely because you yourself have heard God's voice and have made the decision to plant a church. Or, perhaps you are on the verge of ardently answering, "Yes" to God's calling upon your life. Regardless of where you are at in the church planting process, we want you to know that StartCHURCH is on your side, and we believe that God has called you to be a church planter for such a time as this.

This free ebook that you are about to read was written with you, as a church planter, in mind. Through the hundreds of conversations that we have with pastors from across the country each week, we understand the questions, doubts, and internal struggles that you have experienced during your journey. With that being said, we also understand the necessity for you to have a solid launch team in place to help support you, as well as the vision that God has given you, during this journey. Whether you are several months into your church planting journey or just about to start, you will discover these recommendations to building a solid launch team beneficial.

In order to know how to build a solid launch team, it is imperative that you first understand and become familiar with the intricacies of the process that goes into establishing that team. In this ebook, we first examine what a launch team is and why you need to build a "solid" launch team. Once we have explored the

“what” and the “why”, we then look at who you should ask to join the launch team. Afterwards, we discuss the time-frame of when you should have your launch team fully established.

In the same manner that we strive to operate in excellence when it comes to the spiritual and ministerial aspect of church, may we heed the words of the Apostle Paul when he wrote to the Church in Colossae.

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord...”

Colossians 3:23 NIV

Be encouraged that as you progress through this ebook and you experience questions or concerns, one of our church plant consultants will be glad to serve you.



UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS OF A LAUNCH TEAM

What is a launch team?

Have you ever seen a church start without people? Well, neither have we. It is a simple fact that each and every church community needs people in order to be the “Church”. However, every new church plant community needs more than just warm bodies in the seats. What every church plant needs is a launch team.

In short, a launch team is a group of individuals who believe in the vision that God has given you for the church plant and, in addition, those individuals play a vital role in seeing the church get started. **Remember, the primary purpose of the launch team is for them to help LAUNCH the church.** As the church planter, pastor, and leader, you establish the very DNA of the church within this group. Therefore, your launch team is not only the group of individuals that help you launch the church, but the group with whom you also practice and establish the expectations of worship, discipleship, and service. In essence, your launch team is an extension of the vision and dream that God has placed in your heart.



It is also important to note that your launch team will be composed of a group of unique individuals. Oftentimes, when you are in the process of building a launch team, you find yourself asking anybody and everybody that you know to consider joining the team. This not only includes family and friends, but you may soon find yourself asking neighbors (even the ones you are not that fond of), coworkers (especially if you are bi-vocational), acquaintances, friends from high school that you have not spoken to in years, and even perhaps the clerk at the grocery store. Yet, what you must keep in mind is that some of these individuals who agree to serve on your launch team may not be around long after the church has launched. If, and when, that happens, you must know that it has absolutely nothing to do with you or the church, but rather, this is what we call a “scaffolding reality”. Next, let us look a little further into “scaffolding reality” and what it should mean to you.

“Scaffolding reality”

As a church planter, you are super excited about the dream and vision that God has given you regarding the church you are preparing to plant. There are so many exciting thoughts and ideas circling around in your head that it is nearly impossible to keep up with them all. One of the thoughts that all church planters are passionate about is the thought of planting the church with a group of people who will go the distance with them. **However, one of the most startling realities for church planters is that those who start the journey with you rarely complete that journey with you.**

WHAT IS “SCAFFOLDING REALITY”?

In the world of church planting, the “scaffolding reality” refers to a core group of believers that God uses to help build a church in its early stages. Many of the individuals that join your launch team have a unique calling upon their life that draws them to the vision and journey of building something new, from the ground up, so that God can be glorified. Many of the individuals who fall into this category may actually attend another church but their calling is that of helping other churches launch. Then, once the church has launched, they return to their home church. Or, perhaps some of the individuals could be considered “church planting nomads”. They do not have a “home” church so to say, but rather, once the church begins to grow and become sustainable, they move on to help launch another church.



The earlier you understand this facet of church planting, the better, simply because this will save you from unnecessary hurt, heartache, and doubt. Sure, it is still going to hurt a little when anybody moves on from your church, and you will miss them; that is just a part of being human. But at the same time, be grateful that God sent these individuals to help you along your church planting journey. The good news is that there will also be those who stay and serve the church throughout its existence. Make sure you treasure these individuals, for it is they who will labor in prayer with you during the good times as well as the not so good times. Next, let us look at why it is imperative to build a solid launch team.

Why build a launch team?

As a church planter, you are well aware that there are hundreds of tasks to complete when planting a church. These tasks include determining a name for the church, opening a bank account, incorporating within your state, adopting bylaws, applying for 501(c)(3) status, locating a place in which to meet, creating and sending out mailers, obtaining sound equipment, and the list just goes on, and on, and on. Yet, as we said earlier in this ebook, you cannot start a church without people. The simple fact is that you need help! Yes, God has called you to plant this church, and He has given you a dream and vision for the church; but you need the help of others. You need to build a launch team that is committed to helping you start the church. The last thing you need this early in the journey is unnecessary stress and burnout. Therefore, may you heed the words of Solomon,

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor.”

Ecclesiastes 4:9 NIV

Now then, let us look at two impelling reasons why you need to build a solid launch team:

1. You need help:

It is worth restating that you are simply unable to launch a church without receiving help from other individuals. There is too much that needs to be done prior to your launch service. To attempt launching a church on your own would be so mentally, physically, and emotionally taxing that you would need a long vacation by the time the church launched. Therefore, put all pride aside and be willing to use the abilities, gifts, and talents that those within your launch team bring. It will make your life as a church planter easier.

2. It is a part of God's plan:

Throughout Scripture, we are told (Deuteronomy 31:6; Hebrews 13:5) and shown that God will never leave us nor forsake us. Not only does He remain with us, He also places others around us. God does not expect you to travel this journey alone, but rather His plan is for you to do this with the assistance of others. Jesus even tells us in Matthew 18:20 (NIV), “For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”



“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

Matthew 18:20 NIV



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YOU NEED MORE THAN WARM BODIES!

Who you should ask to join your launch team

Oftentimes, it is easy to get caught up in the numbers. We live in a culture and society that is obsessed with numbers. “How many contacts were made?”, “How many new sales were made?”, “How many ‘likes’ did I get?”, “How many views did my video receive?”, and the list goes on. Although keeping track of numbers is not bad in and of itself, it is quality over quantity that should be the priority when it comes to building a solid launch team. Launch team members are not people who just simply attend your meeting or gatherings to fill-up seats, but rather, these individuals are the ones who have caught the dream and vision that God has given you for the church. They have joined with the purpose to see God glorified through this new church plant.

SUGGESTION

Take a moment and make a list of everyone you know. Once you have made that list, prayerfully consider each individual who you would like to ask to join your launch team. As Jim Collins says in his book ‘Good to Great’, your responsibility as a great leader is to “start by getting the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats.”

Too often, we think that we first need to know “where” we are going. That seems to be the logical first step of the process. However, it is important to challenge that mode of thinking in order for your launch team to truly succeed in what it was established to do. Just think about it for a moment. The chances that everything will go according to plan is slim to none. There are bound to be “hick-ups” or detours along the way. That is just the territory that comes with being a church planter. Yet, if individuals initially joined your launch team because they thought it was going in one direction, and then you discover at some point down the road that it needs to go in a slightly different direction, you may have some unhappy passengers. That is why it is important to know who you should ask to join your launch team.

To go where you are wanting to go, you must first begin with “who” is going with you before determining “where” you are going. Let us look at a few characteristics that the “right people” will have in common.

Common characteristics of the “right people”

It is important for you to have the “right people on the bus” as you begin your journey of church planting. Yet, how does one know who the “right people” are? Below are some common characteristics to look for when you begin building your launch team.

Aligned Values

The right people have values that align closely with yours. Your dream and vision for the church resonate with them. Their desire to promote and see the vision for the church to come to pass matches yours. They have a real passion to see the church succeed and make a true difference within your community.

Willing to Fill Any Role

The right people are willing to fill whatever role needs to be filled in order for the team to thrive. Usually, your launch team members are willing to take on more than one role if necessary. They are willing to accept roles with no titles.

Take Ownership

The right people take ownership of their responsibilities. They are careful about what they commit to, but when they do commit, they are in it 100%.

Now, this is not an exhaustive list of common characteristics that your launch team should have, but it is a good place to begin. Once you have determined who you would like to ask to join your launch team, you then want to begin working on how to deliver to those individuals the vision and dream that God has placed on your heart so that your dream can become a reality. Next, let us look at how to deliver the “where you are going” aspect of the vision to your potential launch team members.

SPEAKING YOUR DREAM INTO REALITY

How to articulate the dream and vision of your church plant

Have you ever experienced a time when you were certain that you heard from God, yet when it came time for you to share what God spoke to you, you had trouble finding the right words to describe what He had said? Or, perhaps God gave you a dream or vision that you could not quite articulate. Well, do not worry; you are not the only one who has, and will, experience that feeling. However, when the time comes to share with a potential launch team member your dream and vision that God has called you to, you need to be able to clearly articulate that dream and vision. When you work on crafting your dream and vision into clear, concise, and succinct words, you are making it easier for your dream and vision to resonate with potential launch team members. When preparing to share the information, you want to make sure that you are presenting a clear vision, that you have clear expectations, and that you are also able to give a “90-second elevator pitch” when necessary. Let us examine these three keys a little closer so that you have a better understanding of how to best articulate the dream and vision of your church plant.



Have a clear vision

Vision is crucial. And we are not talking about the physical act of being able to see, but rather, the foresight to be able to see where you are going. This type of vision is simply irreplaceable. Without a clear vision, everyone has to wait around and see what happens next. As the leader, your job is to be able to identify, articulate, and communicate a clear vision. This is one of your most important responsibilities not just at the start of planting the church, but throughout the existence of the church. Your vision should clearly express what the church is, who the church will be to the community, and where you see the church going. With a clearly communicated vision, those who join your launch team are able to gain a sense of shared ownership that helps to define the values of your church and its members. Below are some suggestions as to what a good, clear vision contains:

- **A clear vision** identifies your church's purpose and direction.
- **A clear vision** sets the standards of excellence you want in your church.
- **A clear vision** is well articulated and easy to understand.
- **A clear vision** is unique to your church's culture and values.
- **A clear vision** energizes those who join your launch team in a common direction.
- **A clear vision** inspires commitment to the church and its success.



This is by no means an exhaustive list of what a clear vision is or looks like, but simply a few suggestions that should be kept in mind when you are preparing to present your vision to a potential launch team member.

Have clear expectations

Next to having a clear vision, it is important that you establish clear expectations. When you establish clear expectations for what your launch team members can expect, you are helping to avoid miscommunication and frustration not only for your launch team members, but also for yourself. Expectations that are poorly communicated can oftentimes create conflict and dysfunction within the team. It is only a natural part of being human that everyone has his or her own expectations. That is why it is imperative for you to get everyone on the same page who becomes a launch team member and that you establish clear expectations at the beginning of your church planting journey.

There is little that a launch team member finds more frustrating than not having clear expectations from you, the leader. Therefore, with that in mind, here are a few keys to establishing clear expectations:

Provide Structure

Providing structure begins by you being able to articulate and clearly communicate the vision for your church. This helps to ensure that you and your launch team are all on the same page. Providing structure to your launch team members allows them to know the guidelines within which to participate in the church planting process, which in-turn empowers them to take more initiative and ownership in the process.

Roles Without Titles

We, as humans, have a tendency to get caught up in what title we have or do not have. In addition, we allow titles to dictate what we can or cannot do. In a way, titles can become paralyzing to a group if they become the focal point. That is why it is important that your launch team members have specific roles, which indicate what their responsibilities are, but without titles. This may seem like an insignificant step in the process of building a solid launch team, but this one simple implementation can save your team from unnecessary strife. The right people take ownership of their responsibilities. They are careful about what they commit to, but when they do commit, they are in it 100%.

Set Measurable Goals

Knowing the goals for your church plant is incredibly important. Setting goals is also an important step when you are establishing clear expectations. The goals you set give your launch team something that it can collectively work towards. You do not just want to set one goal of launching on a particular date, but you also want to include measurable goals that your team can obtain along the way. When you set measurable goals that can be obtained throughout the launch process, it provides a sense of motivation amongst your launch team members that in and of itself cannot be measured. In the same manner that you make personal goals, as a church planter you should also set financial goals for your church plant. By setting these goals, you are allowing yourself to be more aware of where you are at and where you are wanting to go.

Give and receive feedback

Anytime a group of individuals comes together to accomplish a task there is bound to be some “bumps” along the way. Not everybody will always see eye-to-eye, or agree with each other 100%. In essence, it all boils down to the simple fact that nobody is perfect. However, if you are willing to acknowledge that fact, it can make a world of difference in the energy of the group. That is why we suggest implementing the expectation that conversations include two-way feedback. This helps to ensure that everyone feels heard and that continued improvement and upward progress occurs not only towards the launch of your church, but also within your launch team.



Be ready to give a 90-second elevator pitch

There will come a time during the launch phase of planting your church in which you will need to describe your church (vision, expectations, etc.) in 90 seconds or less. Not everybody that you ask to join your launch team will have the time to sit down for an extended time, simply because their schedule will not allow it. Therefore, you will need to be able to give those individuals the run down in a shorter amount of time. The catch is that it will need to be interesting, effective, and memorable. Following are three easy steps that can help you develop an effective and memorable, 90-second elevator pitch. In no way is this an exhaustive list, but we believe that if you begin to implement these steps into your plan to raise finances, it will help you to reach your overall financial goal.

1. Highlight what is unique about your church

It will be easy for you to launch into a lengthy speech describing the vision and dream that God has given you about the church. But this is not the time for that. Instead, make a list of just one or two items that are unique about the church you are planting. This simple step will help draw intrigue to the person with whom you are speaking.



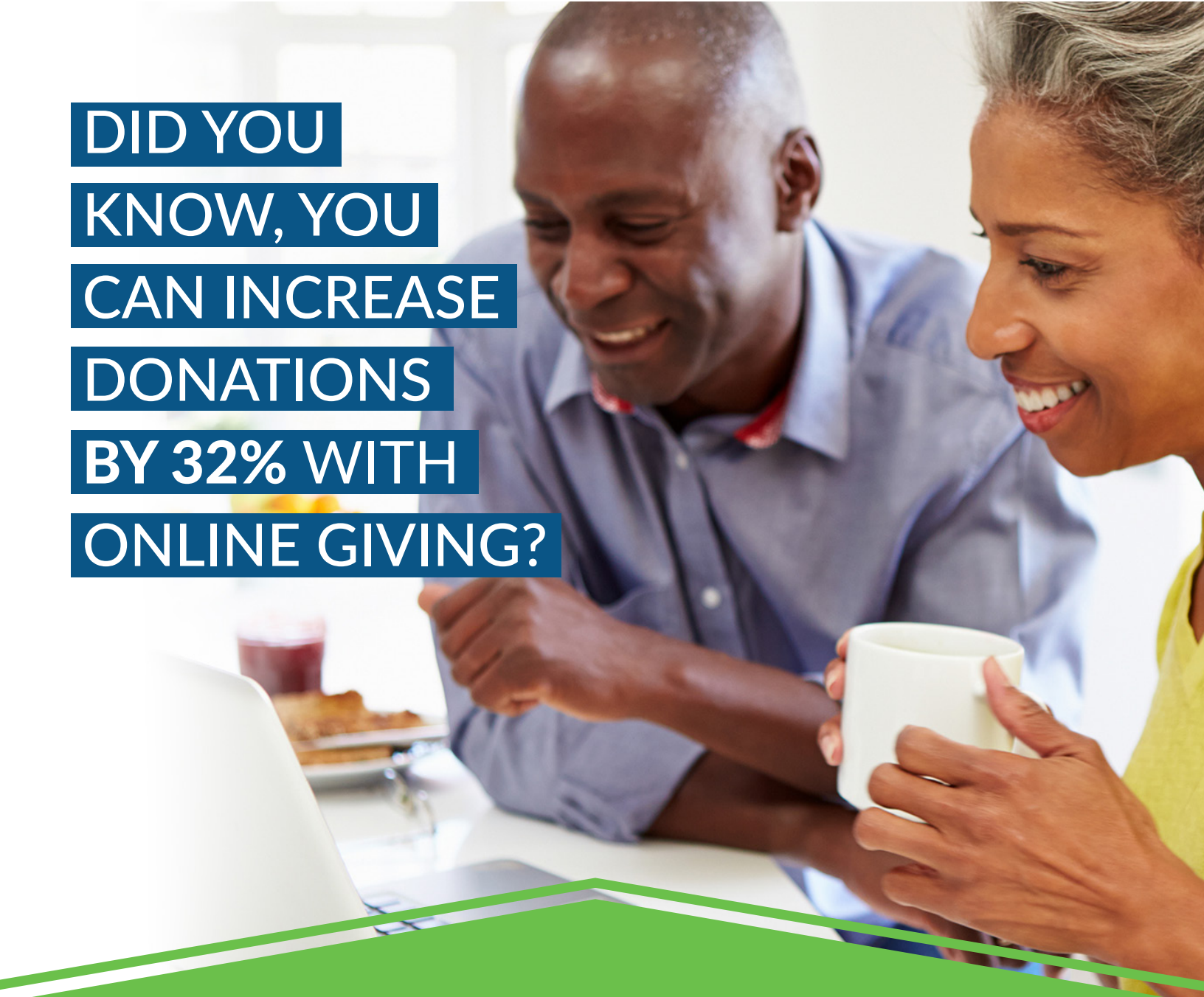
2. Create dialogue between you and the other person

Now, you may be thinking that this step seems to conflict with the 90-second purpose. When we say create dialogue, we are referring to asking him or her a simple question requiring a response, and even one that requires a follow-up question from him/her. For example, you may ask someone, “What do you look for in a church?” This simple question can lead into you telling the person something unique about the church you are planting that intrigues him/her enough to ask you another question, which is the goal. You want to grab the other person’s attention early on in the conversation. If you use your 90 seconds as a monologue, rather than a dialogue, then it will be easy for the person to become disinterested.

3. Do not over-think your pitch

In essence, keep it short, sweet, and straight to the point. It will be easy to want to ramble on about the church plant, but in order for your 90 seconds to be effective, you need to keep it simple. You want the pitch to be compelling enough to arouse questions from the individual hearing you. So, a simple way to measure the effectiveness of your 90-second pitch is to take note of the amount of questions you are receiving. If you are receiving a steady amount of questions from the recipient, then it is safe to assume that your 90-second pitch is effective.

Thus far, we have examined the basics of what a launch team is and why it is important for you to build a launch team. We have looked at who you should consider asking to join your launch team, and then we explored how to articulate the dream and vision of your church plant. Now that we know the basics of how to build a solid launch team for your church plant, let us discuss when you should have your launch team established and the timeline you should follow leading up to your launch.



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GETTING YOUR LAUNCH TEAM ESTABLISHED

When your launch team should be established

Each launch team is going to look different. Your launch team will look different from the launch team that is planting a church in the community next to yours. Perhaps you have already planted a church and this process is nothing new to you. Well, you can know that although this new launch team may be very similar to the other launch team you worked with, it will not be the same. That is really the beauty and uniqueness of it all; the fact that each group will be unique and special in their own way. However, there is a general time-frame that each launch group should follow. There are various facts and circumstances that dictate the time-frame for your launch team, such as when your church will officially launch, but we can look at a few generalities that can help guide you throughout this journey.

When to begin forming the launch team:

In essence, you want to begin forming your launch team shortly after you have answered “Yes” to God’s call on your life to plant this church. You will want to begin by making a list of everyone that you know, and from that list prayerfully determine who are the “right people” to ask to join your launch team (see previous section, “Common characteristics of the right people”). Remember, you cannot launch this church on your own; you need help! Thus, the sooner you are able to determine who you would like to ask, the better. Also, be open to the fact that you may end up having launch team members that are not initially on the list you originally drafted. God just may bring people into this season of your life, so have an open heart to what God has in store for you.

When to have your launch team finalized:

You want to have your launch team established at least three months prior to the launch of your church. You could even say that having the launch team finalized three months prior to your pre-launch would be ideal if you are planning on having pre-launch services before your official launch service. Although this three-month time-frame is just a suggestion, we have discovered (from the numerous conversations we have had with other church planters just like you) that

the three-month time-frame is a good window for the launch team to begin molding well within the aspects of worship, discipleship, and service. The right people take ownership of their responsibilities. They are careful about what they commit to, but when they do commit, they are in it 100%.

When to begin launch team training:

Ideally, you will want to begin launch team training once you have your launch team finalized. This training includes everything pertaining to the logistics of the worship service (setting up, tearing down, etc.), as well as the more specific tasks for greeters, ushers, childcare workers, worship team members, sound team members, and more. It is highly suggested that each launch team member participate in at least a solid two weeks of training. Again, this time-frame of two weeks is just a suggestion, but you may discover a training time-frame that works best with your launch team. Whatever the time-frame for training that you choose, just make sure that it is a sufficient amount of time to give your team the best chance to succeed.

Choosing where to hold your launch team meetings

We just discussed the ideal time frames of when you should have your launch team established and when to begin training your launch team. In addition to establishing the “when”, it is important to establish the “where”. In reality, your launch team meetings could be held anywhere. They could be held in your home, the home of a launch team member, a coffee shop, or any other public facility that can facilitate your group.

SUGGESTION

Our one suggestion for you to consider in determining where to meet is this: choose to meet in a place that communicates the level of excellence that you want to have for the church that you have been called to plant.

THE MOST IMPORTANT COMPONENT TO BUILDING YOUR LAUNCH TEAM

Pray...and pray without ceasing

The most important aspect of church planting is building your launch team. Throughout this ebook we have discussed why it is important for you to build a solid launch team, and we have also looked at how you can begin to build a solid launch team. However, the most important component in this process is to pray. The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (ESV) to “pray without ceasing”. It is ever so important to heed the words of the Apostle Paul not only throughout the church planting process, but especially when you are in the midst of building a launch team. This group of individuals is the team that you partner with, that you invite to be a part of a life-changing experience, that works together seeking to bring God glory and to bring an impactful change not only to your local community, but also to the world at large. When you are praying for your launch team, here are a few prayer suggestions to keep in mind:



**Pray for the
relationships you are
establishing.**



**Pray for the church
that you are
planting.**



**Pray for the
community in which
you are planting.**



**Pray for the lives
that will be impacted
for eternity.**



**Pray together.
Always be a team
that prays together.**



SUMMARY

The journey of church planting can often feel like a lonely one. However, know that loneliness is not a part of God's plan for you and your church. Wherever you are in the church planting process, know that you are not alone. That is why we wrote this ebook on how to build a solid launch team. We realize that there is power and potential when we utilize the gifts and talents of others. That is a part of God's plan for our lives as well as His plan for your church. For as we pointed out earlier, the Scriptures tell us that where two or three are gathered, there He is also. Within the ebook we explored what a launch team is and why building a launch team is important. We also examined who you should consider asking to join your launch team and what common characteristics to look for in the "right people". After that, we discussed the importance of being able to articulate and clearly communicate the dream and vision that God has given you regarding the church plant. And then, lastly, we looked at the time-frame in which your launch team should be established compared to the actual launch date of your church and we determined that the most important component of this entire process is prayer. Always be praying. No matter where you are at in the process, be encouraged knowing that we, here at StartCHURCH, are on your side and that with God all things are possible.

ABOUT StartCHURCH

StartCHURCH is a company dedicated to meeting the needs of pastors, leaders and church boards that have a vision to make a difference in their communities through establishing new churches and ministries. Knowing that churches face increased scrutiny, StartCHURCH answered the call to be a voice to the Body of Christ by educating and empowering men and women of God not only to start their churches, but also to run and manage them better.

StartCHURCH believes in helping those who feel called to leadership within the Body of Christ. To that end, the authors have designed all products and services to aid ministers in fulfilling the call of God on their lives. Most of the resources have been authored by Reverend Raul Rivera, who has over 18 years of extensive experience researching the compliance issues that surround religious and non-profit organizations. Using simple day-to-day language, Raul has created more than 80 effective and user-friendly manuals and compliance software and document packages, such as the StartRIGHT™ Program, to make church starts and management easier.

Raul and his wife, Genel, have also used their years of ministry experience to help serve the community in which they live. They have witnessed the powerful way that hearts and lives are opened before them for the gospel, simply by using opportunities that the Lord puts before them to make a difference through giving and serving others.



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