

Secrets of a Secret Shopper

by Greg Atkinson

NOTES:

Intro:

As we begin to see the loving of strangers as fundamental to the life and heart of the church, my prayer is that our churches would gain a greater vision of hospitality and that by practicing the loving of strangers we would become churches where true transformation happens and eternities are altered.

All of us need to have the mindset and expectation that company is coming. How we prepare for and welcome “company” or guests to our churches says a lot about how seriously we take the Great Commission.

Walls, barriers, and obstacles exist. We need to help guests overcome these barriers.

We remove barriers and distractions, so that our guests can focus on what God wants to do in their heart.

Ch. 1: Online Presence

Guests will visit you online before they visit you in person. (front door)

- Website
- Social media (FB, Twitter, YouTube, Podcasts, Instagram, etc.)

The Order of First Impressions:

1. Social Media
2. Mobile Site
3. Church Website
4. Parking Lot

Facebook:

Be active and engaging: not just announcements and events (broadcast tool), but seek to interact and engage in conversation. Ask questions. Encourage feedback and comments.

Post 1~2 times/day. Encourage interaction.

- 50% inspirational (sermon video clips, quotes, inspirational messages/images)
- 25% information (what’s going on, how and where to get connected)
- Conversation (questions)
- Celebration (tell stories of what God has done)

Mobile site: less is more – name/logo, service times, directions, phone number, About Us section

Website:

- “I’m New” or “What to Expect” button on the homepage that leads to a page that answers key questions guests have when considering visiting your church.
- Service times/directions easy to find and visible
- Top or bottom of homepage: link to social media accounts

Ch. 3: First Impressions

Before our guests arrive, we need to envision the experience we desire for them. If we can see that experience clearly, we can create a road map to lead them there.

What do you want people to feel? What emotions do you want them to experience within the first few minutes? What do you want them to see, touch, hear, and smell?

We have 10 minutes before a first impression sets in

First Impressions by Mark Waltz

Ch. 5: Signage

4 Questions first time guests want answered: (inside door bulletin board – New Here?)

Where am I supposed to go?

Where are my kids supposed to go?

Where is the bathroom?

Is there coffee?

NO insider language (titles)

Ch. 10: Finish Strong

It’s simply not enough for greeters and parking lot attendants to say “Hello” or “Welcome” when one walks into their church. To go to another level, have your Guest Services or Hospitality team stationed at their posts when the service ends to say “Goodbye” or “Have a nice week”. This goes a long way to wrapping a bow around the entire morning experience and will send them off with a lasting positive impression.

On our Communication Card, there’s a place for you to check off if you’re a first-time guest or second-time guest. We contact both (this is important).

For the first-time guests, I write a handwritten thank you note to thank them for coming and encourage them to come back. Inside the note, we give them a \$5 gift card to Subway. I also have a first-time guest email that goes out to anyone that included their email on their Communication Card. If they included their phone number, I also try to call them at some point later in the week to see if they have any questions about our church and again encourage them to come back the following Sunday.

If your guests return for a second visit, you've won 80% of the battle, and they are much more likely to make a decision for Christ!

What do we do for second-time guests? For our second-times guests (that check-off that box on our Communication Card), I send a form letter that is geared to a returning guest and I talk about next steps (like getting plugged into a small group or checking out our newcomer's class). In the letter and envelope is another \$5 gift card, but this time the card is to Sonic. I also have a second-time guest email that I send to them, which outlines next steps and encourages them to begin to get plugged in.

Follow-Up:

Assimilation – vital to closing the back door to your church and helping your ministry grow.

Conclusion:

Perry Noble used to say, "Every number has a name. Every name has a story. Every story matters to God."

We don't do hospitality and guest services ministry simply to grow our church. That's the wrong motivation. We do this because all people are precious in the sight of God and made in His image. Is growth a by-product? Yes, but our hospitality and service should be genuine and filled with love, grace, and compassion.