



ACTION STEP 3: COMMUNITY MEMBER GATHERINGS

Overview

Tap into community knowledge and leadership to hear what your community thinks about your church and how you can meet their needs.

This step will feature a series of meetings with influential individuals and groups to assess:

- **Perception:** What do they know about your church? How do they feel about its people? What do they see are its strengths and weaknesses? Would it be missed if it left the community?
- **Needs:** What do they believe are individual and community-wide needs that the church could meet?

Process

Information for this step can be gleaned by bringing community members together for gatherings at your church.

1. Prepare for the Gathering

Determine who will be invited and by whom.

Marketing Team Member(s) will want to include a complementary gathering of people and perspectives. Plan to invite key leaders within each group.

Consider the following options:

- Chamber of commerce.
- Other churches.
- Business leaders (large corporations and small businesses).
- Government leaders.
- Education leaders.
- Nonprofit and social service agencies.
- Arts programs.
- Medical clinics.
- Social organizations.

Plan the gathering/invite the guests

Once you determine how many people will be invited, decide on the nature of the gathering. Will it be a breakfast, lunch, dinner or coffee? Where will it be held? Who from the church will be involved? What information needs to be prepared in advance?

Contact the guests.

Send invitations and follow up with phone calls. Contact the guest and explain to him/her that your church wants to learn more about the community and how you can meet needs. Ask if they can attend.

2. Host the Gathering

Within the context of the gathering (food and mingling or just sit down and start with the agenda), the Marketing Team Member will give a very brief overview as to what the gathering is all about and what will be done with the information. This should be clear and simple.

The facilitator will then ask questions and facilitate the conversation. He/she will need to take notes or bring someone along to help him/her capture the information.

Questions to ask:

- What are the key strengths of our community?
- What are the three biggest challenges our community is facing right now?
- What are community needs that you would like to meet, but for whatever reason you are not able to do so. Is anyone else meeting that need? If so, who?
- What do you know about ABC church?
- What are ways our church can meet our community's needs? (You may want to present this within the context of the Vision/Values so the contact will know what types of needs you might be more focused on.)
- What are ways our church can *partner* with you to meet needs?

Upon completing the gathering, be sure to thank the contact for setting aside time to attend and for helping the church make a greater impact.

3. Summarize Comments from the Gathering/Make Observations

As each Marketing Team Member completes an interview, he/she will prepare a summary of his/her findings. The summary should include:
Common themes under each of the questions listed above.



Step 2: Deliverable

The Marketing Plan Coordinator (or his/her designee) will prepare a report with the summary. Once the report is prepared, the Marketing Plan Coordinator will distribute copies to prepare for in **Step 3: Strategy**.