

Say Hell-o to Your Community

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There is an old saying that you never have a second chance to make a first impression. How do you say hell-o to your first-timers? One effective way is to provide a well done **First Impression Piece**.

An effective church advertising strategy should be balanced among the five areas of Word of Mouth, an In-house Communications Piece, a First Impression Piece, Newspaper Advertising and Direct Mail.

A Definition

A First Impression Piece is a brochure that is given to new people as a way to briefly inform them about your church.

Before Your Write A Word

Before you contact a graphic artist or even write a word of copy for your brochure, write out answers to the following questions.

1. What is the purpose of your church?
2. What makes your church unique in contrast to other churches in your area?
3. What are some benefits that people could expect to receive from attending your church?
4. What are newer members saying about your church? (A way to find out is to interview people in your church for testimonials.)
5. Who will be the primary audience you hope to reach with this advertising piece? (Families, youth, elderly, singles, particular ethnic group, etc.)
6. What do you want the reader to know, think, feel and do after reading your first impression piece?

7. What resources do you have available for producing this piece? (Budget, time, people who can help, equipment, final authority for approvals, etc.)

Cover

Four out of five readers will only look at the first page. The cover of your first impression piece must be designed to catch the attention of as many readers as possible to draw them into the rest of the piece.

A cover should include . . .

- A photo or drawing that illustrates your purpose or mission. Use pictures of people not buildings.
- A title that implies a benefit. For example, "New Hope: The Friendly Church That Cares" implies that there is hope, friendship and concern at that church. Or "Catch The Spirit of New Life at Community Presbyterian Church" implies an exciting new approach to life.
- A church logo that is up-to-date in design. Ask an art or print professional to review your logo and to make suggestions on modernizing it. Consider the design, color, understandability, etc.
- A statement that notes some benefits of your church. Why would anyone want to come? What benefits will they receive by attending your church?

Body

The main part of your first impression piece should give people an overview of your church. Resist the desire to say everything. Remember that this is just a "first" impression piece. If it does its job there will be further opportunities to tell more of your story to the people who begin attending your church.

The body might include . . .

- Copy that is readable with loose, not "packed" text written in the everyday language of the readers.
- Pictures and titles that are understandable to the primary audience you are targeting.
- Benefit statements throughout.
- Special features of your church.

- A short biography or sketch of your senior pastor or pastors. Staff photos and descriptions of their responsibilities.
- Testimonials from various people in your church. Use their pictures if possible.
- A statement of your church's purpose or mission written in common language. Resist the desire to say or define your purpose in too much detail. Twenty-five words or less is best.
- A simple map showing your church's location.
- An overview sketch of your church facilities. (This is essential for larger churches with complex facilities.)
- Brief description of programs and activities for every age group.
- Photos of your congregation participating in worship and other activities.
- First impression stories of how people in your church are being served.
- Photos and descriptions of your church's service to the community at large.
- An article on how to get involved.
- A brief schedule of activities.
- An invitation to visit.
- Offers of professional help or service.

Backside or Mailing Panel

Design your first impression piece so that it may be used in a variety of ways. It should be sized so that it fits into a standard business envelope and includes a mailing panel so that it may be mailed individually.

Be sure to include . . .

- Your church's name, complete address, website, email, and phone number. Include postal codes and area codes.
- The times of your program and location.

- An indication of mailing class (Important if mailing is to be bulk rate. Please contact your post office's bulk mail room for information.)

- An indicia on the mailing panel and a return address. Remember to get your local postmaster's approval of the mailing panel and format if using a self-mailer.

Design and Printing

Since you want this piece to make a positive first impression on the people who read it, it is best to . . .

- Get outside help from freelance art, copy, marketing and printing professionals.

- Solicit bids from several printers and select those you wish to work with.

- Establish a rapport with your designer and printer.

- Select quality paper, popular colors and up-to-date typefaces.

General Information

Your First Impression Piece should be . . .

- Designed with unchurched people in mind.

- Written in the language of the people to receive it.

- Attractive.

- Usable in a variety of situations.

A well designed First Impression Piece is the cornerstone of a church advertising plan. Develop or revise your piece using the ideas suggested above.