

# 5 Steps to Sustaining the New Small Groups You Launch

By Mark Howell

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"We've launched 25 new groups! How can we help them continue to meet?"

With the development of strategies like [the small group connection strategy](#) and the [HOST strategy](#) it is not hard to launch a wave of new small groups. In fact, it is very easy to do. But like I always say, "There's an upside and a downside to everything." What's the upside? They're easy to start. The downside is that they come with a life expectancy of about six weeks.

See also, [3 Strategies that Launch a Wave of New Groups](#).

Six weeks? That's all? Isn't there anything that can be done? I'm glad you asked! And the answer is "Yes!"

## **The step before the first step:**

I think there are five steps to sustaining new groups, but there is a very important step that happens before your new groups even begin. What is it?

Choose the right launching study.

**Choose the right launching study.** This is an important key because if you don't choose the right launching study, the groups that do launch will struggle immediately. How can you choose the right launching study? It will be on ***the right topic and easy to use***. This should be self-evident, but sometimes a little explanation is helpful. The launching study you choose will determine both who will say yes to hosting a group and who will say yes to joining a group (or attending a connection). If you want your hosts to fill their own group you'll need to find a topic that is very invitation friendly. I've written about what I call [the Easy/Hard Continuum](#). If you want to connect the largest number of unconnected people you will need to choose a study that has broad appeal. There are a growing number of great studies to choose from. I've written about some of them [right here](#). See also, [5 Best Church-Wide Campaigns for 2018](#).

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joining a group (or attending a connection).

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**Here are the 5 steps to sustaining the new groups you launch:**

**1. Encourage every new leader to begin with a co-leader.**

Regardless of how your new groups begin, make it a priority for every new leader to identify a co-leader (who is not a spouse) as their first step.

**2. Give new leaders a coach on the front end, before they even begin.**

Give new leaders a coach on the front end, before they even begin, who will connect on a weekly basis, walk alongside them and help them get started. This is important. New leaders are usually very receptive to this idea in the beginning than they ever will be again.

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**Caution:** It is important to recruit coaches based on who's right for the job, not who's available. The best candidates are almost always already serving. Freeing them up to move to the right seat on the bus separates fruitfulness from "in-name-only." Don't give in to the temptation to fill an org chart with available bodies. If you want to sustain groups, you'll need the right people.

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See also, [How to Recruit Additional Coaches for Church-Wide Campaigns](#).

**3. Choose a study to do next that is similar in kind.**

Choose a study to do next that is similar in kind (before you even begin) and give it to your new groups by week 4 or 5. There are two important parts to this step. First, what you give them to do next must be similar to the study they start with. Video driven? Give them a video driven study to do next. 6 weeks? Give them another 6 week study to do next. Easy to prepare? You get the idea. Keeping them in a similar format ensures that your new hosts will not be intimidated. Second, telling them what's next by week 4 or 5 catches them while they're beginning to develop a rhythm of getting together.

**Caution:** Allowing new groups to come up with their own follow up study almost always leads to the selection of a study that is too hard or too long.

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See also, [5 Recommended Follow-Up Studies for Church-Wide Campaigns](#).

#### **4. Encourage your new groups to take turns facilitating.**

Session one ought to end with a brief look at the calendar and the invitation for group members to share responsibility for the group by taking a turn bringing refreshments, coordinating the prayer list, or even facilitating a session! Recruiting one member in advance to take a turn is often all you need to prime the pump. Groups that rotate facilitators are much more likely to continue meeting.

**Caution:** Do this in a way that is not forced. "Everybody needs to take a turn" is not the idea.

#### **5. Encourage your new hosts to find at least one other member who is willing to open their home for a meeting.**

Groups that can meet even when the host is out of town are much more likely to continue.

**Caution:** It should be nearby. Moving week four's meeting to a home 15 miles away is not a good idea.

Image by [NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center](#)

#### **You might find these articles helpful:**

- [Skill Training: 5 Simple Steps to Starting a New Group](#)
- [Skill Training: 10 Keys to a Great First Meeting](#)
- [Skill Training: 6 Keys to Keeping Your New Group Going](#)
- [8 Commitments for Small Group Leaders](#)