

# Top 5 Keys to Starting New Groups. Lots of New Groups.

By Mark Howell

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If you've been along for any of this conversation, you know that I believe unconnected people are always one tough thing away from not being around. *Always*. An illness. A difficult marriage or divorce. The loss of a job. A child making bad decisions.

One tough thing. *One*. I know that and you do too. Unconnected people don't call the church when tough things happen. They stop coming. They abruptly disappear.

If that is true, shouldn't connecting unconnected people be one of our highest priorities?

And if that is one of our highest priorities, what's the best way to connect unconnected people?

New groups are the very best way to connect unconnected people...by a landslide. Compared to the effectiveness of adding new members to existing groups, there is no comparison!

See also, [Critical Decision: Add Members to Existing Groups vs. Start New Groups](#)

**Here are the top 5 keys to starting new groups...as many as possible:**

### **1. Make starting new groups a high priority.**

If starting new groups is *not* already one of your highest priorities, it's time to rearrange priorities. If the number of new groups is not on your dashboard, it's time to take another look at the dashboard.

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### **2. Remove every *unnecessary* barrier to starting a new group.**

Barriers might include leader qualifications and training requirements, room availability and prioritization, and narrow or infrequent windows to launch. *Unnecessary* is a key word. Some barriers might be helpful, but many are ill-conceived and need to be revisited. Remember, there is no problem-free solution. Wise leaders simply choose the set of problems they'd rather have.

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See also, [Is An Artificial Barrier Limiting Growth in Your Small Group Ministry?](#)

### **3. Make starting new groups easy.**

Three of the easiest ways to start new groups are launching a church-wide campaign, holding an on-campus connecting event, and providing an attractive short-term on-campus opportunity that leads to a longer term commitment.

See also, [Distinctives of the Three Types of Small Group Connecting Events.](#)

### **4. Make heroes of new group leaders.**

Sad to say, but in many churches the staff and veteran leaders are made out to be the heroes. Trust me, one of the keys to starting new groups is to make a big deal out of the people who respond to the call, step out in faith, and start a group!

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## **5. Challenge (and inspire) everyone to join a group.**

This might be counterintuitive, but one of the reasons that many churches struggle to start new groups is that they don't sense a need. After all, the number of groups they have seems adequate. They can fit everyone in that wants to come. What do they need a new group for? If you want to start new groups you've got to change that mindset.

### **Here are four important steps:**

#### **1. Schedule a church-wide campaign or *alignment*.**

A campaign that aligns the topic of your weekend message with the small group study allows your senior pastor to say, "In order to get everything possible out of our upcoming series, you need to be in a group that is using the study that goes along with my message." See also, [The Exponential Power of a Church-Wide Campaign](#).

#### **2. Choose a topic that is appealing to unconnected people.**

I don't think I can overemphasize this point. The topic you choose needs to appeal to the people you are trying to connect!

See also, [Don't Miss THIS: The Topic Determines Nearly Everything](#)

#### **3. Ask your congregation for a 6-week commitment.**

This is very important. If you want to help unconnected people take a first step, you've got to give them a reasonable first step to take. 6 weeks. Short enough to seem realistic. Long enough to begin to form connective tissue with the others in their group.

#### **4. Give unconnected people an easy way to respond to a connecting opportunity.**

I've found the easiest way for unconnected people to respond to a connecting opportunity is via a combination of two important tactics (and you need both because unconnected people are the least frequent attendees and may miss the services in which you talk about getting connected):

- An insert/sign-up form in the weekend program (or, if your church is familiar with the "text this to this" technology)
- A series of emails to the unconnected people in your church with an embedded video from your pastor encouraging/challenging them to click the link to sign up.

I've found the best connecting opportunities are on-campus connecting events like Saddleback style Small Group Connection or a North Point style GroupLink. Either of these can be held on-campus, at convenient times, with childcare. On-campus feels safer to unconnected people. A convenient time and with childcare remove important obstacles. See also, [How to Launch New Groups with a Small Group Connection](#) and [North Point's Small Group System](#).

## Need more help?

Need help launching new groups? [How to Maximize Your Church-Wide Campaign](#) may be just the thing. You'll come away with the skills and strategies we use (and I coach churches around the country to use).

