REACHING AND RETAINING NEW PEOPLE

By John Kaiser

Consider the Analogy of an internal Combustion Engine.

- There are only three basic reasons why an engine will not run:
    - 1 Fuel   Fuel System Failure
    - 2. Fire   Electrical System Failure
    - 3. Compression   Mechanical System Failure

- So if an engine is not running, one, two, or all three of these systems require fixing.
- If the engine has been running well until recently, chances are that only one of the three systems is the problem.
- If the engine has been running poorly for a while, more than one of the systems may have problems.
- If the engine is being built or rebuilt, all three of the systems will need to be put in good condition before starting it up.
- There is an overriding factor that these systems do not and cannot address. If God wants to stop a good engine, he will. If God wants to run a bad engine, he will. However, both Scripture and experience seem to indicate that God works within his created order much more often than he suspends it.

Compare These Three Basic Systems for Church Growth.

- From a systems perspective there are only three basic reasons why a church is not growing in average attendance:
    - 1. Inflow   Outreach System Failure
    - 2. Capacity   Facility System Failure
    - 3. Retention   Assimilation System Failure

- So if a church is not growing, one, two, or all three of these systems require fixing.
- If the church has been growing well until recently, chances are that only one of the three systems is the problem
- If the church has been growing poorly for a while, more than one of the systems may have problems.
- If the church is being planted or redeveloped, all three of the systems will need to be put in good condition before starting it up.
- "God is the one who gives the increase," whether in agriculture or in church growth. However there is an area of responsibility that he has chosen to assign to the human workers he has called into the process. The Apostle Paul describes his role in establishing churches as a wise master builder or architect. Mastering the wisdom of church growth architecture is the limited purpose of the systems analysis that follows

Break Down the Three Basic Systems into Their Components.

- Without adequate outreach, you have no people coming
- Without adequate facilities, you lose people before they come
- Without adequate assimilation, you lose people after they come

1. Inflow of People through Outreach Systems Reflects Targeting, Quality, and Exposure.
   a. <u>Target Group Issue</u>: Provide the right ministries for the people you want to reach.
   b. <u>Quality Issue</u>: Provide those ministries at an effective level of excellence.
   c. <u>Exposure Issue</u>: Make it easy for people to access the ministries you provide.

2. Capacity for People through Facility Systems Requires Three Kinds of Space.
   a. <u>Assembly Spaces</u>: Provide comfortable seating within the 50% and 80% rules.
   b. <u>Group Spaces</u>: Provide rooms for new classes and groups to start at all age levels.
   c. <u>Parking Spaces</u>: Provide spaces for 2 people per car, or find creative alternatives.

3. Retention of People through Assimilation Systems Has a Beginning, Middle, and End.
   a. <u>Front Door</u>: Start with first impressions, assistance, and follow-up that people enjoy.
   b. <u>Living Rooms</u>: Offer multiple, new, and progressive connections for people.
   c. <u>Back Door</u>: Track, care for, and learn from people who are withdrawing from church.

Ask the Right Questions to Analyse Your Outreach System. (INFLOW)

The Basic Question: Are there an adequate number of new people coming to our church?

1. <u>Target Group</u>: Are we providing the *right ministries?*
   a. Have we selected a viable target group of people we can reach?
   b. Have we learned enough about the needs of the target group?
   c. Have we implemented ministries that meet the needs of the target group?

2. <u>Quality</u>: Are we providing the right ministries *well enough?*
   a. Do we have leaders in place who are able to produce the quality we need?

     b. Do we give leaders ample authority and resources to produce the quality we need?
     c. Do we hold leaders accountable to see that they do produce the quality we need?

3. <u>Exposure</u>: Are we making these ministries *easy for people to access?*
     a. Are our ministries offered in a location that is visible and accessible enough for our target group?
     b. Are people in our target group finding out enough about us through word-of-mouth, advertising, and other means of marketing (e.g., website)?
     c. Do the people in our target group find the image we present to be both truthful and appealing?

Ask the Right Questions to Analyse Your Facility System. (CAPACITY)

The Basic Question: Are there adequate spaces for new people coming to our church?

1. <u>Assembly</u>: Are we providing *comfortable seating* within the *50%* and 80% rules?
     a. Is our seating and crowd flow comfortable enough for those we want to reach?
     b. Are we arranging our seating so that less than *50%* are empty?
     c. Are we arranging our seating so that less than 80% are full?

2. <u>Groups</u>: Are we providing *rooms for new groups* and classes to start at all age levels?
     a. Do our nursery and children's spaces allow each current group to function well and allow new groups to start?
     b. Do our youth ministry spaces allow each current group to function well and allow new groups to start?
     c. Do our adult ministry spaces allow each current group to function well and allow new groups to start?

3. <u>Parking</u>: Do we provide *spaces for two people per car,* or find creative alternatives?
     a. Do we accommodate 2:1 parking on site?
     b. Do we accommodate 2:1 parking if nearby street parking is added?
     c. Do we have a creative alternative that really works to make up the difference?

Ask the Right Questions to Analyse Your Assimilation System. (RETENTION)

The Basic Question: Are there an adequate number of people staying involved with our church?

1. <u>Front Door</u>: Do people enjoy the *first impressions, assistance, and follow-up* we provide?
   a. Are we providing great first impressions to newcomers upon their arrival?
   b. Are we offering personal assistance to newcomers that feels good to them?
   c. Are we following up with newcomers in a way that they appreciate?

2. <u>Living Rooms</u>: Do we offer *multiple, new, and progressive connections* for people?
   a. Do people have plenty of options from which to choose a place to belong in the church that really fits them?
   b. Are we constantly starting enough new groups so that newcomers don't have to break in to old groups?
   c. Do we provide a clear and inviting path of progressive involvement for people who want to go deeper in their growth and ministry through the church?

3. <u>Back Door</u>: Do we *track, care for, and learn from* people who are withdrawing?
   a. Do we have effective systems for tracking people who begin to withdraw?
   b. Do we have caring ways to give these people a reason to stay or assistance with finding a better church for them?
   c. Do we conduct exit interviews or other studies to learn all we can from people who leave our church?

The Systems Analysis Above Is Fundamental but Also Limited.

- No matter what particular growth barrier a church is facing, the three basic systems of inflow, capacity, and retention are always fundamental.
- The particular growth barrier faced by a church—whether 50, 100, 200, 400, 800, or beyond—does bring specific issues to bear upon the three fundamental systems.
- The *performance* of the three basic systems, not the *analysis* of them, is what makes a difference for the growth of a church. Therefore, it is possible for growing churches to perform well without analysing well. It is also possible for non-growing churches to analyse well without performing well. The only benefit of analysing the systems is to prescribe appropriate action. It is the appropriate action that "fixes the engine."
- The systems analysis in this paper does not address many issues that are important for a healthy church. In fact, because of its limited focus on attendance, much of this analysis could be applied to organizations that exist for purposes other than reaching people for Christ. The basis for applying this analytical approach to a spiritual endeavour is the assumption that while God can overrule foolishness at will, he calls us to live and work with all the wisdom that we can obtain.