



SURFACE TO SOUL

Live Well | Lead Well | Coach Well

10 Tips for Improving Your Hospitality

1 | Expect new people. Update your website weekly, providing current information for people seeking a new church home. Include signage that highlights where the worship center, restrooms, and children's areas are located. Provide an information center or table that is staffed by a volunteer. Offer designated parking for guests. If parking is limited, ask members to park in the parking spaces furthest from the building. Provide uplifting music before worship. Brew good coffee. Offer healthy refreshments. Have parking lot attendants say, "Thank you for coming, please join us next week!"

2 | Provide an information packet for guests. Include a general brochure about the congregation and its mission and vision. Include information on educational opportunities, serving events, and small groups, along with a letter from the pastor or program staff. Include a current newsletter and information about how to sign up to receive blog postings, weekly e-newsletters, and social media notices.

3 | Provide announcements or specific invitations to upcoming events. Place these items in a colorful packet so that other members know that the person is a guest when they see the packet. Consider offering a prayer cube or a unique gift that they will regularly use and will remind them of the church.

4 | Recognize that guests fear the unknown. They're wondering "Will I have to speak? Will they ask for money?" or "Can I participate in communion?" Get rid of church-y or insider language. Start calling the worship bulletin a "program." Let guests know that they're welcome at any of your upcoming events. Explain what you do during the worship service and why it's done. Clearly communicate your vision in a compelling way.

5 | Train ushers and greeters. Train ushers and greeters to introduce themselves by name and to learn the names of the guests. Use ushers to seat guests, providing them with choice seats without regard to "owned" seats. Train staff and worship leaders to be "undercover" greeters who roam the sanctuary, lobby, refreshments area, and hallways and introduce themselves to people they haven't met before (it doesn't matter if these people are members or not). Avoid merely pointing them in the direction of restrooms or the children's center - escort them to these locations. Introduce guests to other members. Train ushers and greeters to read the body language of guests and to avoid being "too friendly" to guests that seem more reserved or prefer to remain anonymous. Befriend guests. Avoid making a sales pitch.

6 | Get feedback from guests. Ask for feedback on your comment/prayer card in your worship program/bulletin. Send a thank you note to guests with an opportunity for them to do an online survey that includes questions such as "This is what I noticed first . . . This is what I liked best . . . This is what I liked least," or "This is what I am most looking for in a church." Keep the survey brief and use it to find out if "insider" language was used, what values were communicated, if the experience was welcoming and engaging, and whether they're inclined to return.

7 | Hire or bring in "secret shoppers." Use Vibrant Faith's Church Hospitality Audit or a company like Guest Services to evaluate your congregation's hospitality.

8 | Create "wow" experiences. Provide guests with an umbrella escort in inclement weather. Place hand-sanitizer around the building, mints in the restroom, and comfortable seating in the common areas.

9 | Pay attention to the kids. Get down to their level when talking with them. Ask their names. Offer them a gift.

10 | Innovate and improve weekly. Have the hospitality team members evaluate weekly. List and discuss what went well, what didn't, and what could be done next time to enhance a guest's experience.



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