

12 Tips for a successful Campaign

by Steve Gladen

A lot of people have written about our Campaign Strategy, but let me give you look behind the curtain. Having lived through nine Campaigns (running point on five) in my twelve years as Small Group Pastor here at Saddleback Church, I have discovered a strategy is only as good as the foundation and follow-through. As they say, the devil is in the details. When you do one of our Saddleback Church Campaigns (found at <http://www.saddlebackresources.com/en-US/Campaigns/CampaignOverview.htm>), it comes with full instructions on how to do the Campaign from start to finish. The instructions explain what type of teams you need to develop, and provides a calendar timeline and training DVD's.

A Church Wide Campaign is an exponential experience for a church. It can be exponentially positive or negative, depending on how you approach it. Based on my experience, and a few battle scars, here are twelve tips to ensure a positive outcome.



1. **What's the compelling question?** When you do a Campaign, you need to know question the Campaign will answer. To give you an example, for our 40 Days of Purpose Campaign the question was “What on earth am I here for?” The compelling question gives your people a reason to join a small group and attend the corresponding weekend services. It provides your small group leaders with motivation to invite others into their small group. Without a compelling question, the congregation won't understand the central theme or the reason for the Campaign.
2. **Align Children, Student and Adult ministries.** A lot of churches that do a Campaign miss the alignment by only doing it for the adults. When your children and student ministries memorize the same scriptures, are reading similar themes, doing projects together and listening to the same weekend message, everyone is on the same page. Discussions naturally flow into the home from parent to child and child to parent.
3. **Stick to the principles and apply your own methodologies.** As it goes for the Children, Student and Adult ministries—so it goes from church to church. When aligning your Campaigns for children and students you need to adapt the material to their learning level. So if the adults are memorizing a scripture, the children may learn part of the same scripture instead of the whole scripture—because that is appropriate for their level. The same principle needs to be applied to your entire church. Weekend messages need to be adapted to your church context and culture. Small group questions can be adapted to your needs. If there is a church-wide project or small group project it should serve your particular church and community. If your church has a strong presence in the homeless community, for example, then stay true to your culture and serve those same people with your Campaign projects.
4. **Language matters.** One of the most significant things we learned through recruiting for our Campaigns was language matters! Campaign material is delivered through small groups, so it is vital that you have plenty of people ready to “lead” a small group. When we asked for Lay Pastors, that didn't work well because people didn't feel they were pastors. We then changed the term to Shepherd Leaders, which failed because they didn't connect with the term “shepherd”. Next we tried Small Group Leader, but nobody wanted to be the leader due to perceived inadequacies or lack of time. Then we asked for H.O.S.T.'s. We told people, if you have a Heart for people, are willing to Open your home, can serve a Snack and Turn on a DVD player; then you can host a group of people. All of a sudden, we had plenty of volunteers! Interestingly enough, we never changed the duties of a small group leader, just the language. It was enough. All of the preconceived notions of what it takes to be a “leader” just fell away. If a Host continues with the group after the Campaign, then we enter them into our Small Group Leadership Development Pathway <http://www.smallgroups.net/ltkit.html>. This pathway then provides them with the relationships and resources to nurture and build their leadership skills.

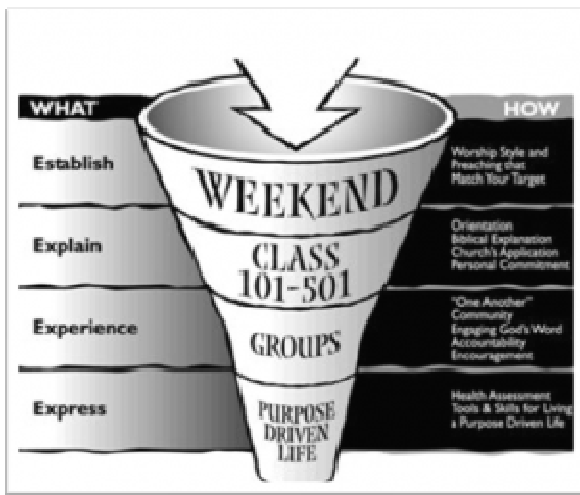
5. **Employ various avenues of learning.** The Campaign Strategy takes a common theme and helps people learn that theme through different learning styles. People learn through listening to the weekend services. People learn through discussing topics in their small groups. People learn through doing hands-on projects. People learn through memorizing scripture. And people learn through reading as they work through the Campaign materials in their small groups.
6. **Once a year is enough.** I am a college football fan. As much as I love the college football season and hate to see it come to an end, there is something about the wait and anticipation of the next season. If college football was off for a month and then back on, it wouldn't be as good from month to month (because players couldn't prepare) and when the fall season would come, I would not be looking forward to it. It is the same way with Campaigns. When you do too many Campaigns in a year, two things happen, your volunteers who pulled it off, won't be able to manage doing another Campaign so soon and your congregation won't experience the anticipation of an upcoming event. At Saddleback we do one Campaign a year and trust me, we all feel that yearly Campaign comes around very quickly!



7. **Provide a clear start and end date.** Our Campaigns last forty days. This is a short enough commitment that most people are willing to make it, but long enough to instill good habits. When you have a clear start and end date, it gives people an end in sight and they are more willing to come along for the ride.
8. **Expect high intensity for staff, volunteers, and members.** The secret of a successful Campaign is sustaining high intensity for forty days and then backing off to allow staff and volunteers time to recover and giving members time to process the experience. Let your church calendar return to what it was and give your small groups time to stabilize. For a Campaign to happen successfully you must clear the calendar for the duration of that Campaign. You need to stop programs and events that could be distracting. Sometimes "good" programs can stop "great" things from happening in a Campaign. Also, with a Campaign comes the beginning of many new groups. After the Campaign you need time to assess where those groups are at. Some will continue and some will stop. But without the margin and infrastructure to check in on these groups, you will start a lot of groups and lose the same amount.



9. **Remember and celebrate!** So often the church does a great job of recruiting and getting the job done, but a terrible job celebrating a job well done. After the Campaign, be sure to hold a celebration and express your gratitude for all of the hard work done by staff and volunteers. Take time to remember and celebrate God's work. Share stories of success and gratitude. When you don't take the time to celebrate, you are increasing the possibility of burnout in your staff and volunteers. In the Bible we read of many instances when God had people stop and remember the miracles He did. Why? Because He knew people would forget. When you celebrate, you etch God's work on your people's heart. Often we give little reminders such as key chains so when people see them, they will be reminded of that God movement. Help your people remember and celebrate the Campaign they put so much time and energy into!
10. **Understand the Delivery System—small groups.** At Saddleback we have two delivery systems, weekend services and small groups. Acts 5:42 gives us that one. It is a two punch system to help people not just learn, but also apply the word of God. Our small groups are the delivery system of all the components of the campaign. Group life is not optional at Saddleback. It is vital. We use a funnel to depict the strategy behind how we apply the five



biblical purposes throughout the church. The weekend service establishes the five biblical purposes through the preaching of the word. The CLASS system explains the five biblical purposes.

> Small groups give people the opportunity to experience the five biblical purposes. The life of the individual (a Purpose Driven Life) express the purposes. The small groups are the application process of your church. They take information and turn it into transformation.

> You need have an infrastructure in place. An infrastructure helps your new groups not go it alone. You don't have to be an expert, just one step ahead of that new small group leader. At Saddleback we have Community Leaders who oversee new small groups. What do they do? Simple, just check in on them and offer encouragement and prayer. For a new group in the Campaign, they don't need a lot; but they do need encouragement and prayer. The DVD curriculum provides the material, but the Community Leader gives the moral support.

> A Leadership Development Pathway needs to be in place. Your small group hosts/leaders need to know where you want them to go. If they continue to lead, what will be their journey and final destination? Not providing clear direction is like asking someone to come over to your house and only giving them a city, not the address. They have enough information to get to the general area, but not enough to get to the intended destination. Churches sometimes give their small groups the same type of vague direction.

> When we did the 40 Days of Community we assigned groups to do a project together. We discovered a group that does a project together, regardless of what the project is, builds a bond in those group members that holds a group together. In 40 Days of Purpose we had 68% retention rate of small groups that started. In 40 Days of Community, with a project to do, our group retention rate went to 86%. Were there other factors? I'm sure there were. But clearly, having a project to do was a big one.

> Give your groups a next step. Before you let a group get through a Campaign, have them make a decision on what their next step will be. Will they continue or part ways? Around week four of the six week Campaign, we encourage groups to determine what their next study will be. We give them curriculum suggestion and encourage them to get the new material as soon as possible. Very often, just avoiding "down time" can make the difference in whether a group continues or not.

11. **Give people an "out" after the Campaign is finished.** Chances are, even those who drop out will eventually be back in a small group. In a Campaign you need to give people permission to stop their group. I know this feels counterintuitive, but it will serve you. Now, let me be clear, I want them to continue and I want to give them every possible reason to stay together; but on the other hand I don't want them to feel guilt if their group doesn't continue. Why? Because when they do what you have asked, you need to reward them and thank them, not pour on guilt for not continuing. I have learned when you give people permission to stop meeting at the end of the Campaign, they will be there for the next Campaign. And during the next Campaign, they just might stay with that next group!
12. **Budget to remove financial obstacles.** When we do a Campaign, we pay for everything. We provide the devotional reading books, memory key tags, prayer guides, small group DVDs and small group study guides to anyone who joins a small group. If people commit to a small group we give them everything to make a spiritual impact on them—they just need to join a small group to get them. It's a lot of money up front, but brings huge dividends on the back side. Invest in your church. It shows your people you not only care about them, but you are also willing to put your money where your heart is.



Steve Gladen has been leading the [Small Group Team at Saddleback Church](#) since 1998 and currently oversees 3,500 adult small groups at Saddleback Church. Steve also founded the [Purpose Driven Small Group Network](#), a free network of small group point people to make sure no one stands alone. He has co-written several books including: [250 Big Ideas for Small Groups](#), [Building Healthy Small Groups in Your Church](#), and [Don't Lead Alone](#).