

# HOW WOW

## YOUR CHURCH GUESTS

**101 WAYS**  
to make a meaningful  
first impression



**MARK L. WALTZ**

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**Group**

Loveland, Colorado  
group.com

## Group resources really work!

This Group resource incorporates our R.E.A.L. approach to ministry. It reinforces a growing friendship with Jesus, encourages long-term learning, and results in life transformation, because it's



### Relational

Learner-to-learner interaction enhances learning and builds Christian friendships.

### Experiential

What learners experience through discussion and action sticks with them up to 9 times longer than what they simply hear or read.

### Applicable

The aim of Christian education is to equip learners to be both hearers and doers of God's Word.

### Learner-based

Learners understand and retain more when the learning process takes into consideration how they learn best.

## HOW TO WOW YOUR CHURCH GUESTS

### 101 ways to make a meaningful first impression

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## DEDICATION

**W**ith deep gratitude for my bride, best friend, and life partner, Laura, and our deep pride and only daughter, Liv—you practice crazy, unconditional love with me. You're the very best!

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# INTRODUCTION

**W**hat you hold in your hand started as a series of blog posts back in 2009. After nearly 50 best practice posts, a friend suggested, “You know you could bind these and make them available as a book, right?” (Thanks, Tim...and no, at the time I had no idea. I need my friends.) So, I’ve continued to make observations of my own experiences, listened to the experiences of others, and made careful notes. This little volume isn’t exhaustive, but it’s a pretty decent start at identifying best practices that will help you serve your guests with greater care and excellence.

Some phrases get thrown around with little to no explanation. Phrases like “a stitch in time saves nine” or “the cat’s meow” or “the bee’s knees.” Huh? Other phrases are so overused, they’ve lost their once headline-making intensity. Phrases like “paradigm shift,” “new economy,” and “bandwidth” either redefined a previously understood word or with overuse minimized the critical nature of the topic being discussed.

“Best practice” runs the same risk. Maybe a brief explanation is helpful. BusinessDictionary.com provides the following definition of a “best practice:” *Methods and techniques that have consistently shown results superior than those achieved with other means, and which are used as benchmarks to strive for.*

Years ago Westin’s “heavenly bed” set a best practice in the hotel industry for me. Jet Blue established best practices for in-air technology and entertainment. Disney has nailed so many best practices that both churches and the marketplace have learned from their guest services savvy.

Consider this book a start. Just 101 benchmarks that, if you embrace and practice even half of them, you’ll exponentially lift the quality of your guest services in your local church or organization. Once you read the book, keep your eyes open. You’ll create more. You and the teams

you serve with have the potential to establish the list of best practices that will serve your culture and community uniquely.

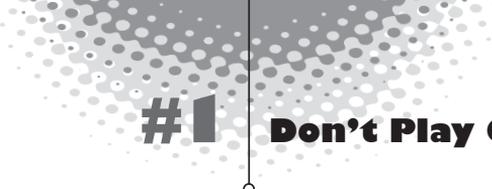
BusinessDictionary.com concludes the definition for “best practice” this way: *There is, however, no practice that is best for everyone or in every situation, and no best practice remains best for very long as people keep on finding better ways of doing things.*

I dare you: keep finding better ways of doing what you do. Make this book obsolete. That’s my hope.

**Mark L. Waltz**

Granger, Indiana

June 2011



# #1

## Don't Play Copycat

It's tempting. Pick up a book with that one inspiring chapter, and overhaul your small-group ministry. Attend a two-day conference on innovation, and scratch your entire weekend strategy and start over. Visit another church, take pictures, interview staff, go home... and resign. It's tempting.

Don't do it. Don't look at inspiration and assume the Holy Spirit is calling you to fire all your small-group leaders. Don't get hyped on innovation and torch the organ. Don't visit another church, become so convinced of what you're not, and quit.

Ministry isn't a rubber stamp. Your church isn't exactly like another. Your context isn't identical to someone else's. Don't try to copy everything that somehow seems "better." You'll never be Disney. You're not Willow Creek (unless you *are* Willow Creek). You're not Nordstrom. You can't be all things to all people.

It's tempting to think that because "it" worked well for them, it will work for us. But valet parking may not work in your context. The liability, the insurance restrictions, and your parking configuration may make it a really bad idea. Free coffee might drain your budget when you try to provide it for 400 or 4,000 guests. There may be another way to communicate value and infuse community into your environment. Rubber stamps work in kindergarten classrooms, high school print shops, and warehouses, but they rarely make a church or service organization better.

However, pay careful attention to best practices in hospitals, airports, shopping centers, websites, churches, amusement parks, theaters, gyms, airlines, and hotels. Not all the best practices you observe are universal, but many are. Still, you'll create many more by observing the inspiring individuals within your setting. You can't rubber-stamp success, but best practices that are repeated over and over become cultural norms that establish unique wins for you, your teams, and the people you serve.

Learn from the best, become better than you are, and teach someone else what you're learning. It's all we've ever done at Granger Community Church.

## #2 Pray

It's easy to think we've got this whole guest services thing locked up. We've read the books, studied great businesses, learned from other churches, stockpiled our own rich experiences. We've got this.

I get that God has wired a bunch of us for this. I understand that he works through us and through our gifted team members. But sometimes we soar along on our own, missing the fact that there's either something supernatural going on in these relational encounters—or there's not.

This is more than technique. More than a book of “best practices.” We've been invited to God's agenda to redeem and recreate his creation. We're in on his movement to restore human life. This is his kingdom. We're mere citizens and stewards of his work.

I need my eyes constantly open to see what God is up to in my life and the lives of those around me. I need my ears alert to the faint whispers of his Spirit that help me be in the right place at the right time.

I need my heart tuned to his agenda so the frustrations, details, and tasks don't become routine. I need my soul awakened to the present moment with the unique individuals in the moment, lest I merely perform a job—paid or unpaid.

I need to pray.

Are you praying?

### WORST PRACTICE



**Remember, this is your gig. Your agenda. Your church. Besides, if you take time to pray, you might not stay on task. Whatever you do, bluster through on your own wisdom and strength. Your agenda. Your church.**

# #3

## Expect New People

This really happened to me.

I walked into a restaurant with my family early in the lunch hour. Like, 11:00 a.m. On the dot. As in, I was the first customer of the day. Surveying the place, I saw...well, nothing. Lots of open tables. And still I was told, “Give me just a couple of minutes and we’ll have a table for you.” I could see at least 12,000 seating options. But I waited.

As I sat down I intuitively wiped bread crumbs from the table onto the floor and thought, “This doesn’t make sense. There’s no way there have been other customers in here for lunch already.” Of course, the mess had to have been left over from the night before. We then learned that the coffee and tea were still brewing. I would have been okay if the posted opening time was 11:16 a.m. If they needed a few more minutes to prepare the place, I could have waited and shown up then.

Bottom line? This staff wasn’t ready for us. They weren’t really expecting customers—not this early, anyway.

How about your church? Is it apparent that you’re expecting new people? Do first-arriving guests catch you by surprise? Here are some simple ways to communicate, “We’ve been expecting you!”

- A core of people who know church isn’t all about them, but about others, so they...
  - give up their front parking spaces
  - move to the center of the row, leaving the aisle seats open
  - greet people around them—even when they’re not “on” as an usher or greeter
- Smiling parking attendants in the parking lot
- Cordial greeters at entry doors and accommodating ushers throughout the building
- Signage that points to “new family children’s area” or “guest services”
- A verbal welcome from the front of the room that includes new guests (without embarrassing them)

- A program/bulletin that speaks to new people, using “normal” language
- Visible, accessible “on-ramps” that help new people connect and grow

When your guests show up, will they think, “Wow! They acted like they were expecting me and they were happy about it!” Or will they feel as if they’ve crashed a party they weren’t invited to attend?

How are you planning for, and expecting, new guests at your church?