

Win Every Week

How to help every parent and every small group leader win every week.

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EVERY PARENT!

Okay. It may seem a little too idealistic. How can you even possibly know every parent represented by the kids and teens in your church? We know that there are a lot of parents who . . .
are at the lake.
never give you the correct info.
live in another state.
go to another church.
don't even like Christians.

But we aren't trying to be unreasonable, just hopeful.
Because we believe every parent has something in common:
They all care about helping their kids have a better future.

Maybe it's a stretch to say that every parent cares. But think about it this way: Unless you know a foolproof way to determine exactly which parents don't care about their kids, then it may be smart to start acting like every parent does. It can't hurt can it? Just make an assumption that every . . .
divorced
church-going
unmarried
never-married
anti-Christian
parent . . .
loves their kids.

Once you do that, you will look at every parent in a different way. You will see every parent as a potential partner with you to influence the faith and character of the children and teenagers.

You do realize that if you want to have influence with kids and teenagers that you need to influence their parents, right?
Remember the math:
The church gets 40 hours of influence in a kid's life every year.
The parent gets 3,000 hours of influence in a kid's life every year.

That's why we always say,
"No one has more potential to influence a child than a parent."

So, smart leaders who want to influence kids figure out how to influence those who have the most influence with kids. That's why you should use every tool you have to locate and communicate with every parent.

Hire a detective.
Use a GPS satellite-tracking device.
Interrogate their children.
But find out how you can connect with them and use social media, email, snail mail, text messaging, apps, UPS deliveries, and whatever other techniques you can to engage every parent.

EVERY SMALL GROUP LEADER!

By now you are probably thinking, This is starting to seem a little impossible. How do you connect to every parent and every small group leader? Before we jump into some practical solutions to that question, we need to make sure you know what a small group leader actually is.

A small group leader, affectionately referred to as an SGL, is someone who invests in the lives of a few (kids or teenagers) to encourage authentic faith. They are the “other” influence, besides the parent, that you strategically recruit to show up consistently in a kid’s life.

Why?

Because **a parent is not the only influence a kid needs.**
Because discipleship happens best in the context of a small group.
Because kids don’t feel known unless someone actually knows them.
And because every kid needs a place to belong.

So the most logical, strategic, and practical way to influence every kid’s faith is to influence every small group leader.

SGLs should be the most important volunteers in your church, because they are your frontline for the kids you are called to influence. Most kids who come to your church will decide what they think about the church based on what these leaders say and do. And the best way you can help kids or teenagers know God is to put someone in their life who knows God.

So if every kid is important to you, then every small group leader should be important to you.



**NO ONE HAS MORE POTENTIAL
TO INFLUENCE A CHILD THAN A
PARENT.**

EVERY WEEK!

Yeah, we think every week matters. What your parents and SGLs do in the lives of kids consistently over time makes a different kind of impact than what they do randomly or occasionally. We actually wrote a book about it called *Playing for Keeps*. It outlines the six things every kid needs over time. It challenges small group leaders and parents to be present every week in the lives of kids or teenagers if they want to help them grow in their faith and character.

Over the past several years we have recognized that more and more churches depend on small group leaders and parents to show up to invest in kids or teenagers every week. And we think that's a good thing.

But here's the problem, many of those same churches don't have an intentional plan to invest in small group leaders and parents every week.

So, here's something we would like for you as a church leader to seriously consider:

If you want parents and small group leaders to do influence kids every week, then maybe you need to start influencing parents and small group leaders every week.

It makes sense, right?

Before we can get impatient with parents or SGLs for being inconsistent, we should probably re-evaluate how consistently we are investing in them.

It's so easy to get caught up in the urgent weekly responsibilities that sometimes we neglect our primary weekly priorities. The point is relationships matter most. And if connecting parents and SGLs to kids every week is the goal, then the church needs to connect with parents and leaders every week. For one simple and practical reason:

You should be present every week in the lives of parents and SGLs, if you want them to know what they need to do every week.

The clearer a parent or a leader is about what they are supposed to do, the greater the chance is they will actually do it. If you want them to . . .

- write a note
- watch a video
- read the latest on Justin Bieber's exploits
- explain a principle
- tell a story
- practice carrying a spoon on their nose
- make a memory,

then for the sake of a kid, you need to prompt them consistently.

That's the plan. You influence parents and leaders, and they influence a kid. And it happens every week.

No.
We don't want you to nag them.
We just want you to carefully cue them.

The most common mistake churches make is thinking they can communicate with a parent or an SGL once every month, or every few months. Therefore, churches tend to do an annual or quarterly training event to download everything a leader needs to know in a crash course.

It's not unlike trying to give a thirsty man a drink of water from a fire hydrant.
He is going to get less water than he was hoping.
He will be exhausted from the experience.
And he probably won't look forward to coming back.

A periodic training event is more effective when it is positioned on the calendar as a catalyst to inspire leaders and parents. Its primary value is to train leaders on why and how you're going to train them, but not to train them about everything you want them to know every week.

The real learning experience for your SGLs and parents will happen when you require every parent and SGL to attend a weekly 6 a.m. training breakfast.
(See how that works for you. We're just making sure you are still reading.)

Since that's obviously not going to work, think about this principle related to training.
People need to know what they need to know when they need to know it.



**A PARENT IS NOT THE ONLY
INFLUENCE A KID NEEDS.**

Or stated another way:

People (parents, SGLs, and even kids) usually learn what they need to learn when they actually need to learn it.

So, whenever you are downloading everything you know all at once to leaders and parents, expect them to only swallow a little at a time.

Instead, why don't you consider taking a more strategic approach? Begin to see yourself as the guy who delivers the water every week to the water cooler.

You have access to an endless supply, but you show up at just the right time every week to make sure they have what they need.

Think about it. Most of your parents and small group leaders are flooded with more content every week than they can even begin to sort through. (The average adult processes about three books, 770 texts, 1,321 emails, and a dozen blogs worth of content). Maybe that's why as ministry leaders we should filter and prioritize information.

One of the best investments you can make in training anyone is to prioritize everything you want them to know, and then to present it to them one sip at a time so they will actually drink it. Remember we are talking about water, not Kool-Aid.

Parents and small group leaders don't need more content. They need better cues. If you want them to learn more, then tell them less more often.

In case you don't think we are right, do a little research on the growing number of people who are using Twitter. The power of 140 characters is proving that people like to take small sips frequently, instead of drinking from a hose all at once.

Remember, most parents and leaders are . . .
oversaturated with information.
overwhelmed with responsibility.
overcommitted with activity.

If you are going to help them do what you are expecting them to do every week, then you need to design a plan that is constantly reducing, repeating, and recycling what you want them to know. In a generation that is drowning in data, you have to work a little harder to make sure your content isn't diluted by so many competing voices. Your content needs to be concise, convenient, timely, relevant, and sometimes even entertaining before a lot of people will hear it. You basically have to learn to ask and answer three questions to organize your message.

1. What do they need to know?

Every year, we fill up dozens of creative boards with index cards relating to a specific audience. For example, we might brainstorm everything we can think of that small group leaders need to know in any given year. We will invite a number of voices we trust to brainstorm ideas related to doing small groups.

Veteran small group leaders,
new small group leaders,
and leaders who coach small group leaders
will all meet for hours to add ideas and debate issues.

Then we start the process of reducing the content down to what we consider is the irreducible minimum, or the must-know pieces of content and ideas that most small group leaders need in order to win every week with a kid. Then we move to the next question.

2. When do you tell them?

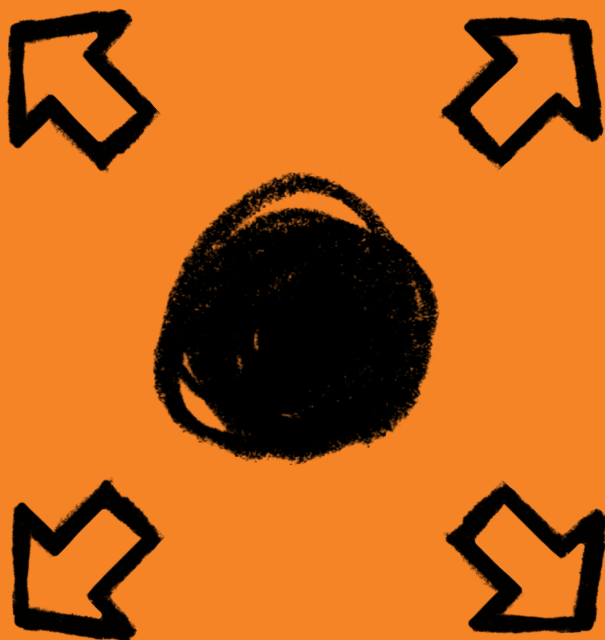
Here is where we begin to do the hard work of scheduling the content so that it cooperates with the typical rhythm of a year, a month, or a week. Since most people do work and life in 7-day cycles, we try to anticipate what a 52-week calendar actually looks like for the average small group leader.

It's interesting that television networks and producers have studied and leveraged the rhythms that exist in people's schedules for decades. That's why they know the best time slots to launch new series and how long to carry episodes before they break. They are simply cooperating with how the calendar works.

Most days and weeks have a typical rhythm. Every organization recognizes patterns in the calendar. That's why . . .
Restaurants often close on Monday night.
College football plays on Saturday.
Bars have happy hour on Friday night.
Churches are easier to fill up on Sundays.

So experiment each year, discovering which time of the days and days of the week are best to cue your leaders or parents.

Every week has a pattern,
and every week is not created equal.



**IF YOU WANT PARENTS AND SMALL
GROUP LEADERS TO INFLUENCE
KIDS EVERY WEEK, THEN MAYBE
YOU NEED TO START INFLUENCING
PARENTS AND SMALL GROUP
LEADERS EVERY WEEK.**

Some weeks are actually great for cueing your leaders, while other weeks may be difficult. If you apply some common sense, you can maximize the most strategic weeks and avoid wasting critical messaging when people are usually preoccupied. For example, that blog article about “how to teach a middle school boy to use deodorant” would probably be missed if you sent it during Thanksgiving or Christmas holidays. However, if you email it in June, right before middle school camp, it could prevent a lot of awkward situations.

3. How should you deliver it?

How you deliver messages to parents and small group leaders should be as varied as the style of music they prefer. If someone listens to a lot of Billy Joel, then you can probably expect them to read their emails and use Facebook. If they are a big fan of JT, then tweet a link to the blog you need them to read, or text them a funny image that makes a point. If they listen to a lot of Frank Sinatra, you might want to call them or put a postcard in the mail. The point is you have to learn to use multiple platforms to communicate with the wide variety of people that are on the front lines communicating to kids.

Social media has opened a new door so churches can give leaders what they need to know when they need to know it. For the past three decades, pastors and staffs have wrestled with how to equip leaders consistently. Many churches have tried to host weekly meetings for adult leaders, but only gotten marginal participation. Some have opted for monthly or seasonal training because of their lack of success with weekly meetings. Meet every week? Forget about it! There are just too many obstacles that make weekly gatherings impractical.

Gasoline

Football Season

Rain

Sunshine

Bowling Leagues

Childcare

Stomach Flu

But the good news is social media is not affected by any of those issues. We could even build a strong case that because of technology, we have more opportunity today than we’ve ever had to influence leaders weekly. Social media also gives us multiple platforms to communicate in a way that doesn’t intrude or interfere with the typical demands in an average parent or leader’s daily routine. And it also complements the way various people learn and collect information. Some people prefer . . .

Podcasts
Videos
Emails
Texts
Blogs
Instagrams
Facebook
Apps
Websites

Different people will be fans of different types of media. But with the right strategy, you can repurpose meaningful content to work on all of those platforms at the same time. This doesn't mean you shouldn't take advantage of the five minutes every week when you may actually see some parents and leaders. Handing them a timely reminder or resource every week in person can be extremely effective. It also doesn't mean you should never plan face-to-face meetings with parents and leaders. Those should still happen occasionally and strategically, and they can be powerful events. It's just that when you leverage social media weekly, you can make sure you are saying what needs to be said so the vast majority will hear it.

Just remember as a good rule of thumb:

Most parents and leaders don't want more information,
they want better information.

Most parents and leaders don't want more responsibility,
they want deeper relationships.

**Most parents and leaders don't want more activity,
they want their activity to matter more.**

So, what is it parents actually need you to give them every week? Here are a few ideas. We are not implying they need all of these things every week, but they do need most of them most weeks.

WHAT PARENTS AND LEADERS NEED EVERY WEEK

- **They need a plan.**

You can show them how everything works together.



**PARENTS AND SMALL GROUP
LEADERS DON'T NEED MORE
CONTENT. THEY NEED BETTER CUES.
IF YOU WANT THEM TO LEARN
MORE, THEN TELL THEM LESS
MORE OFTEN.**

Vision leaks. Parents and leaders simply need reminders so they know why you have asked them to do a few strategic things. Tell stories, post pictures, describe the wins that are happening every week. Craft phrases that remind them about . . .

- what you hope happens at summer camp.
- what you want to make sure every kid understands before they graduate.
- why you think the home and church should work together.

When they understand how various programs work together for the future or faith of a kid, leaders and parents tend to get more engaged.

- **They need a map.**

You can tell them where they should go next. If you want parents or SGLs to do something specific, you may need to make sure you give them specific directions. If you're hoping SGLs will send a postcard to a new kid, then give them a postcard to send. If you want a parent to dress their kid as a superhero, you may want to let them know . . . and have a few spare capes on hand just in case. Every week, you can give them information that will move them in a direction. So, leverage every platform or program to give leaders and parents the directions they need so they know where to go next.

- **They need a script.**

You can give them something to say.

Nothing makes a parent or a leader more nervous than not knowing what they should say. When you hand parents and small group leaders the right questions to ask or the big idea from this week's curriculum, you set them up to win relationally. You also amplify the message that you want a kid or teenager to understand. If you are hoping to give what you say every week any value past Sunday, you need to get parents and small group leaders to say it, too. A script doesn't have to be long. It just needs to help them get started and stay on a track.

- **They need a schedule.**

You can help them know when they should do it.

It's more than just giving them an idea of what to say, it's also helping them know when to say it. Since there is a rhythm to the week, then you should help parents and leaders learn to leverage the weekly schedule. For example, you could give parents of teenagers a forty-page family devotional for every Friday night. Or if that doesn't work, you could give them a couple of questions to ask at dinner. When you help them understand how to leverage a meal every week for meaningful interaction, it could be a game-changer for their family.

Rhythm is also important for small group leaders to understand as well. Texting a devotional or a note of encouragement at a strategic time could make the difference in a teenager's week.

- **They need an assistant.**

You can be there to help them.

The best way to make sure that parents and small group leaders never feel alone is to give them someone to help them. You can hire them a housekeeper, dog-sitter, personal chef, or virtual assistant. Or, you can simply decide that you can do a few things to help them win relationally with a kid or teenager. It might not solve their "what-will-I-eat-for dinner" problems, but it will give them a better chance of influencing the faith of the next generation.

Remember, if you are expecting parents and leaders to serve kids or teenagers every week—and in some cases to serve your ministry—then you should serve them. Sometimes being a pastor isn't as much about being in charge as it is about being responsible to help someone. Actually, one of the original meanings for the word pastor is "to cause to eat." So, there is a sense in which you are a waiter or waitress. I like to think of it as being trusted to serve the people you hope will serve others. That's how everyone grows spiritually. So maybe you should just decide every week you are going to show up to serve parents and small group leaders.

What if you simply decided to create a master menu to help leaders and parents get what they need? Take the words plan, map, script, schedule and assistant, and put them on cards across the top of a creative board. Then start making a list under each card of specific things that you can say or do to help leaders and parents every week. And just remember, the best way to influence a kid or teenager this week is to influence a parent or small group leader this week.

(If you are interested in a longer read, look at *Creating a Lead Small Culture* or *Playing for Keeps*. And if you want to find a personal assistant to assist you while you assist small group leaders and parents, check out our Weekly initiatives at DoMinistryBetter.com)



**MOST PARENTS AND LEADERS
DON'T WANT MORE ACTIVITY,
THEY WANT THEIR ACTIVITY TO
MATTER MORE.**
