



**A process and
conversation guide
for sending pastors,
church planters, and
teams**

THINKING STRATEGICALLY ABOUT LAUNCH DAY



Phase 3 - Launch Day

For many church planters, launch day is a big day they pray for, plan for, and spend so much time preparing for. Because this is a critical topic, let's discuss three guiding thoughts.

- In the context of this resource, **launch day** is defined as the day that marks the start of weekly Sunday services. It may also represent the grand opening or official birthday of your church.

Having a church birthday is important for many reasons. Not only does it serve as a point of reference for the future, but it serves as a day that you will be able to reflect on and celebrate. On a spiritual level, it represents a moment of commissioning in which you and your team are commissioned as missionary agents in the city. This is why we make launch day a big deal.

- The spiritual focus of your launch day is **vision realization**.

On this day, you and your team will begin to *realize* the vision that you have been working so hard to fulfill. On this day, the community should become aware of who your church is. Having a launch day also helps your unchurched relational network to see and experience the birth of your church.

As you consider when to launch, remember this:

- There is no such thing as the "perfect" launch date.

When considering the date of your launch, don't get stuck comparing yourself with outside church launches and unwisely attempt to replicate the exact model of others. Lean into your unique context, borrow best practices, and do your best to be strategic and spirit-led.

Though there are dates/seasons throughout the year that may be more beneficial to utilize, it is better to identify a series of benchmarks and then launch when those benchmarks are attained.

Benchmark #1 - Forward momentum

Before you launch, you should work to build momentum. On your launch day, you will need to advertise kingdom wins your team/church has experienced (salvations, redemptive testimonies, stories of God's provision, etc.). You want to develop a positive Gospel narrative about your church in your city (what is God doing in your city, what is God's plan for your city, how God has shown His love/favor in your city, etc).

You, your team, and your community network should be excited about what God is doing in the city through your church. These are the kinds of things that produce forward momentum in a church plant, and you should work to build momentum in your favor *before* you decide to launch.

Benchmark #2 - Team cohesion

In the pre-launch phase, you should work to develop a launch team with a balance of rooted leaders and unchurched city contacts.

As a team forms around you, work hard to build cohesion among your varying launch team members. Has everyone bought into the vision? Is everyone on the same page? Is everyone aiming for the same targets? Have you trained, developed, and cultivated your team?

COHESION REFERS TO "THE ACT OF FORMING OR CREATING A UNITED WHOLE." THIS IS A QUALITY YOU SHOULD TAKE TIME TO CULTIVATE IN YOUR TEAM BEFORE YOU LAUNCH.

Benchmark #3 - An unchurched following & relational network

As a church planter, you must develop the mindset that God has sent you in to your city primarily for the conversion of the unchurched. God has *not* sent you into your city to create another Sunday option for saved people. From the very beginning, you should work to build a contact list and a relational network of unchurched people.

Though it is very likely that there will be supporting pastors, leaders, and members from area churches in attendance on your launch day, they do *not* serve as an accurate measurement of city impact or new church growth.

Often, the key factors that bring the unchurched and unconverted to a church launch are trust, authentic relationships, a compelling vision, and the tangible presence of a holy God. Before you set a launch day date on the calendar, take adequate time and lead your team in building authentic relationships with the unchurched. Relationships like these are really what matters the most.

THE NUMBER OF UNCHURCHED AND UNCONVERTED PEOPLE IN THE ROOM WILL MEASURE THE POTENTIAL OF YOUR CHURCH ON LAUNCH DAY.

Benchmark #4 - A clear, progressive vision

In Impact Community coaching, we emphasize the significance of developing a strategic launch plan that is divided into clear, measurable stages/phases.

- Largely, your launch day is about the future and what you believe God will do through your church in your city.

From launch day forward, you should have a plan of your future goals and team objectives. That plan should be *written down* and understood by *all* members of your team.

You should recognize that there will be a huge temptation to focus so much on getting to launch day that you may neglect the development of a post-launch growth plan.

Your launch day is a lot like a wedding day filled with pomp and circumstance, excitement, great passion, and celebration. But the test of any marriage is making it work long after the wedding is over. Likewise, as a church planter, you should have a clear post-launch plan and vision for your church. Furthermore, this vision should be established *before* your launch day.

Benchmark #5 - Stream-lined growth systems

In reference to your post-launch growth plan, it's important to think through the pipeline that will facilitate the growth of your guest and new converts.

How do you intend to create a culture of discipleship in your church? After a person is baptized, what are their next steps? What is your process for guest follow-up? Do you have a "next steps" or new member growth process in place?

Think ahead and imagine that the room is full on your launch day. If this is the case, what will you do to ensure that no one slips out through the back door? How does your team intend to invite these people into a life of Christian discipleship?

What is your long-term plan for small groups? How do you intend to schedule team development or strategy meetings? What is your outreach or evangelism plan? These are the sort of **growth systems** that should be in place *before* you get to launch.

Without growth systems like these, you will make a big splash on launch day and then shortly after, experience a big drop in attendance, discipleship, enthusiasm, and community interest.

Benchmark #6 - Launch day checklist

Before you get to launch day, set some goals as a team. 3-6 months out, identify your launch day objectives and assign clear tasks to your team members. How will you gather contact data from guests and interested community members? Can you invite key city officials to participate in some way? How do you intend to show your city that your church is there to give/serve versus receive?

- When your team walks home at the end of launch day, what do you hope to have accomplished?

All of these targets should be discussed and written down in a launch day checklist *before* launch day arrives.

Benchmark #7 - A financial plan

As you consider what life will be like for your church post-launch, you should develop well-defined financial accounting systems.

Who will collect the offering during services and make weekly deposits? What kind of monthly budget will your team utilize? Do you have a list of reoccurring expenses and how much money you desire to spend on your launch day? What kind of facility will you be using and how will that affect your monthly budget?

A big aspect of your post-launch growth plan will be how you can position your church for future expansion, and there is *always* a financial element to expansion. Think through your financial accounting plan and budget controls *before* you get to launch day.

Benchmark #8 - A spiritual witness

Ultimately, your goal should be to follow the Spirit at every stage and phase in the launch of your church. When our thinking, ability, and resources are limited, God is infinite in knowledge and power. As you consider setting a date for your church launch, take adequate time in prayer and seek God for clear direction, affirmation, favor, and spiritual power.

There was a key moment in the life of the Apostle Paul when his heart was set on venturing into Asia for ministry but the Spirit closed the door and sent him in a different direction (Acts 16:6). Then, later in time, the Spirit sent Paul directly into Asia to the city of Ephesus.

- Rather than making your launch an exact replica of another church you admire or respect, consider how God is leading you in your unique context.

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These eight benchmarks represent how to think strategically about your launch day. Don't get stuck on a particular date if it does not fit the personnel, resources, or spiritual direction God has given you.

**REMEMBER WHY GOD CALLED YOU TO YOUR CITY
IN THE FIRST PLACE AND BUILD YOUR DEFINITION
OF LAUNCH DAY SUCCESS AROUND THE
FULFILLMENT OF THAT UNIQUE, GOD-GIVEN
VISION.**

SELF-ASSESS YOUR STRENGTH

After reading and discussing this section with your team, take time to self-assess and rate your current strength in each of these eight areas on a ten-point scale (1 = *very low*, 10 = *very high*).

We have forward momentum.



We have team cohesion.



We have an unchurched following and a growing relational network in the community/city.



We have cultivated a clear, progressive vision.



We have streamlined our essential growth systems.



We have established a launch day checklist with measurable goals.



We have established a financial plan.



We have experienced/felt/witnessed a spiritual witness and see that God is clearly involved in the process.

