

THE ART OF 
REACHING
with Carey Nieuwhof and Mark Clark

COURSE
APPLICATION
GUIDE

Fresh Digital And In-Person Strategies
To Grow Your Church

The Art of Reaching

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Introduction

Discussion Questions

1. What's your biggest hope for taking the Art of Reaching course at your church?
2. As a group, complete this sentence: If there's one problem with evangelism in your church you could fix, it would be _____.
3. What are you most concerned about as you consider the future?
4. What are you most excited about?

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Session 1

Discussion Questions

Mark listed 5 major shifts that have taken place in Western Culture that the church needs to know about. How have you seen these three play out around you in your life and church?

Highest good is individual freedom and happiness.

Traditions, regulations and social ties that restrict freedom, happiness, and self-expression must be deconstructed and destroyed.

Forms of external authority are rejected and personal authenticity is celebrated.

1. What unique challenges are there in doing ministry in light of needing to re-evangelize our western culture?

2. What are two practical ways your church can do ministry in light of being a post-Christian culture versus a pre-Christian culture?

3. Talk about how you are doing ministry in light of these three shifts as a church or ministry? What is one thing you can do to do better this year?

Team Application Steps

1. Adapt your messaging (on social media, website, newsletters, bulletins, in-church services, etc.) to help people apply the gospel to the issue of their personal fulfillment not just vague spirituality or societal problems.

2. Sift through your ministries, structure, etc., and make sure you are not feeding into the paradigm of suspicion the culture around you feels toward institutional authority. What can you adapt to make sure it is servant-oriented versus authoritative?

3. In light of the idea that one of the problems of the culture is distraction, how does your church reach people and help give solutions to Christians who are fighting the temptation toward distraction?

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Session 2

Discussion Questions

1. How have attendance trends impacted in your church over the last two decades? Look at both overall numbers and generational trends (is your church getting younger, older?)

2. Discuss the five reasons people are attending church less often.

- a. Self-directed spirituality
- b. The collapse of guilt, habit and duty
- c. Greater mobility, options and freedom
- d. Digital options
- e. Pastors who are obsessed over attendance

Which of the reasons seems most present in your context? Which (if any) seems to be a less likely factor?

3. What would you say your default reaction as a staff is to infrequent church attenders? Do you embrace them? Judge them? Shame them? Something else? Be honest in your assessment.

4. Would you say your current pattern is: *to use church online to get people in the building, or to use the building to reach people online? Why?*

Team Application Steps

There is much more ahead on engaging the people in your church in the sessions ahead in *The Art of Reaching*, but in the meantime, your team can start working on a few things to help embrace and engage infrequent attenders.

1. Using what you've gleaned from your discussion so far, brainstorm some ways you can embrace infrequent attenders. What practical steps can you take to love and embrace infrequent attenders rather than judge or ignore them?

2. In a similar way, what can you do to mobilize all of your attenders to be the church rather than just simply go to church. Think both of digital and non-digital strategies you can use to equip them to be the church every day, where they are.

3. In what ways can begin to pivot your model of church to equip people rather than just gather them? What practical things can you do to equip engaged people who aren't in the room?

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Session 3

Discussion Questions

1. How is your church staff (and members) 'thinking mission not church'? How are you not? What needs to change?

2. Essentialism says say 'yes' to things that hit the 9/10 on the 'heck yeah' scale. What are those opportunities in front of you right now that you should be saying yes to? What are those you should be saying 'no' to?

3. What parts of your vision as a church or ministry are compelling and costly?

4. In what ways are you showing dependence on God in your weekly rhythms as a church or ministry?

5. Which of the three categories (Gospel, community, culture) are you weakest on? Which is strongest?

Team Application Steps

1. Make two changes in light of your answer to #1.

2. What changes can you make in light of your answer to #5?

3. Build a system or process whereby your people can discover their spiritual gifts and place in the church.

4. Evaluate your preaching and messaging to make sure you are engaging the life and the mind of the culture you are trying to reach, and not just the heart.

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Session 4

Discussion Questions

1. Evaluate your church (out of 10) on how it is doing being “Shrewd as Serpents” and “Innocent as doves”. Which do you lean toward more? How can you improve at the one you are weaker at?

2. Is the WHY of your church or ministry strong and clear enough to your audience/people/congregation to make them sacrifice, give and serve?

3. Is your church or ministry a place of grace or legalism? How can you create more grace to attract and reach imperfect people?

4. In what ways are you not raising the bar high enough for your people?

5. Are you striking the balance between being theologically conservative and culturally liberal? What do you think Mark meant by that? Do you agree or disagree? How can this paradigm be helpful? What are some pitfalls?

6. How are you distracted right now from the single vision of your church or ministry?

Team Application Steps

1. Make two changes in light of your answer to Question #4.

2. “Students expected to put what they learned into practice that week.” Begin to outline practical things your people can do each week to put their Christian life into practice.

3. How can you make the mission (the why) or your church or ministry as clear and compelling as possible? How can you frequently incorporate drawing people towards your mission?

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Session 5

Discussion Questions

1. How are you creating the space for skeptics/unchurched/de-churched before they even arrive?

2. Why is it important that you view your church or ministry as a battleship not a cruiseliner? How can you get your people to live in light of that?

3. How could you be better at authenticity? What holds you back from it?

4. Do you tend to focus more on evangelism or discipleship (as classically defined)? What are two things you can adjust so that you're doing both?

5. Are you behind on leveraging technology? If so, what is one thing you can do to catch-up?

Team Application Steps

1. Make two changes to your services and ministries to build a culture for the audience mentioned in question #1.

2. Work on your messaging and ministries to get people to treasure God more rather than just know more about Him. What is one thing you can do each month to move your people toward loving God and not just believing in Him?

3. Make the change to technology in light of your answer to question #5. How can you adjust your budget to reflect this decision?



Session 6

Discussion Questions

1. How would you assess the current engagement level of most of your attenders?

Estimate a percentage of people who are

- a. Deeply engaged
- b. Somewhat engaged
- c. Not engaged

2. *In the future church, attendance won't drive engagement; engagement will drive attendance. You can do more with 300 engaged Christians than 3000 who merely attend.* Discuss. Why or why not do you think that's true?

3. How could you be better at authenticity? What holds you back from it?

4. Does your church tend more toward an immanent experience or a transcendent one? Why?

5. Would you say that your in-person experiences are 'downloadable'? In other words, do people get the same benefit watching online that they would in the room? A good idea is to ask a half a dozen people who attend primarily attend online. They may have a more accurate analysis than you do.

Team Application Steps

1. If an attender decided to get more engaged, how would he or she do it? How simple is your path to engagement? How can you clarify it even further?

2. Do an audit of your ministries. Which ones are core to your mission? Which aren't? How can you pare away the ministries that aren't related to your core mission?

3. How could you better gear your in-person and online experiences toward transformation rather than information?

4. While we'll return to this theme before we wrap up the course, brainstorm one or two key moves that would further help your congregation to stop merely 'going' to church and instead 'be' the church.



Session 7

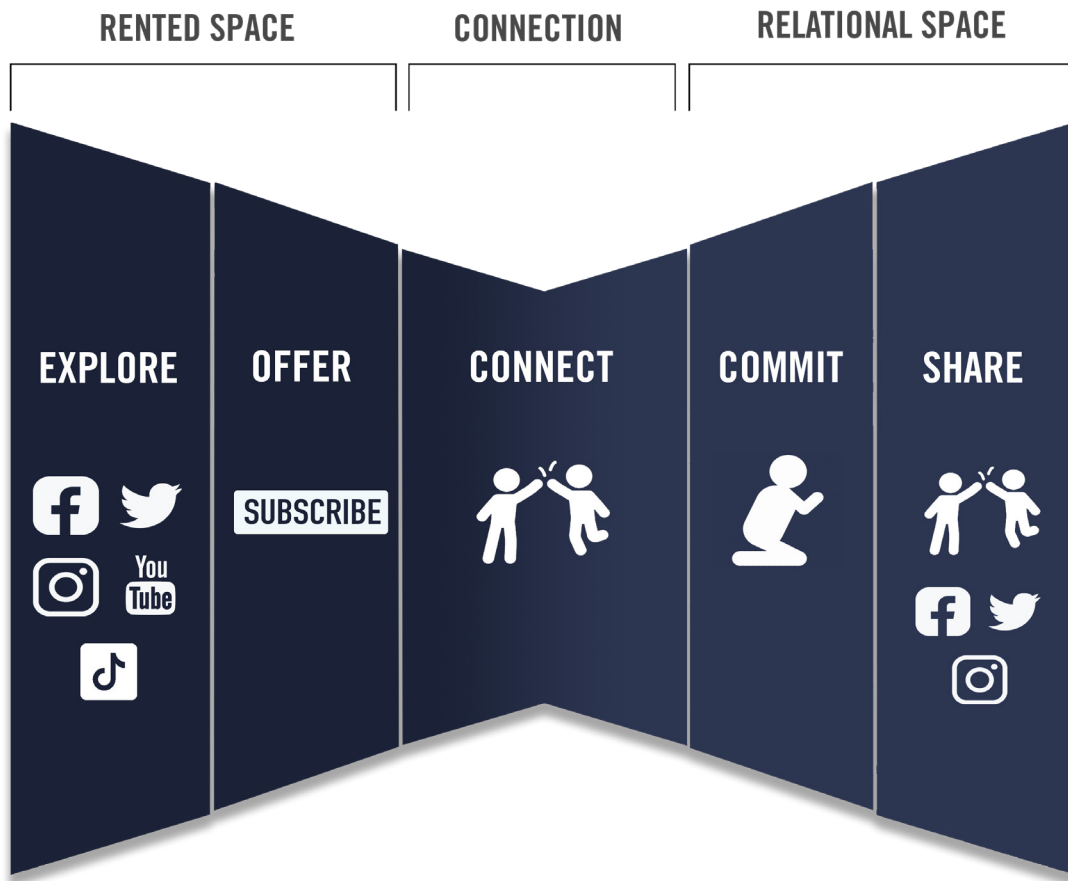
Discussion Questions

1. Even if you haven't named or identified it, you actually have a model or approach the move from physical attenders to attenders to engagers (participating, being baptized, joining a group, giving, sharing their faith, etc.) Draw out your current model. What is working in your current model? What isn't?

2. How has your team translated your physical engagement model to online church?

3. Discuss the five reasons people are attending church less often.

- a. How have you seen similar funnels work in companies or products you do business with? What do you like/not like about it?
- b. Most churches stop at “explore” and never create an offer, connect with people or have a process for helping people make a commitment or share their faith. Where does your church’s strategy ‘end’? Why?



4. If the goal of digital content is connection, not consumption, what can you do to ensure all your content helps people connect with you and each other? Be specific.

Team Application Steps

1. What kind of offer might you create for people who are consuming your content?

2. Who will be responsible for designing it, monitoring effectiveness and responding to people who are opting in?

3. What specifically can you do to encourage your people to share your content without being 'spammy'?



Session 8

Discussion Questions

1. To what extent does your church fall into the category of churches that create, reveal and abandon content? Any idea why you still hold to that model if you do?

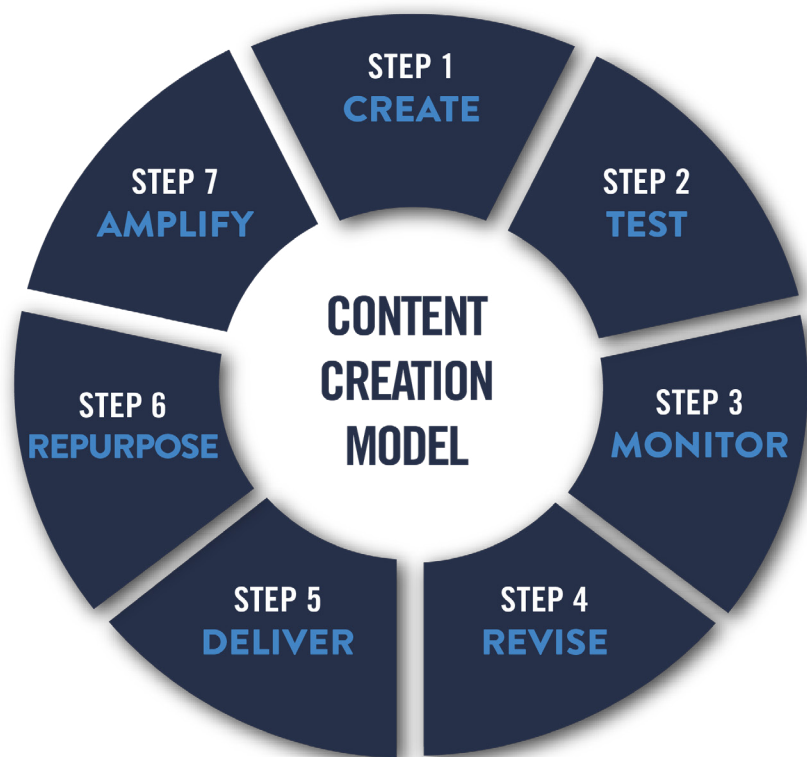
2. Make a list of problems/topics you think your congregation and the people you're trying to reach struggle with most.

3. Would you say people access your church the way people accessed cable tv in the 80s or more like people access Netflix, Hulu and Disney+ today? What could be improved in your approach?

4. *The internet doesn't lie.* What has the internet told you about content that's resonating and not resonating?

5. People prefer great content over new content. Discuss what you learned from Carey's conversation with Transformation Church's Mike Todd.

6. Which of the seven steps in the new model for content creation is your church practicing? Which are missing?



Team Application Steps

1. Go back over your past 2-3 years of series, resources and content. What existing resources do you have that can speak to people's needs?

2. Use the new content creation model for your next round of content creation: series, posts, and other content you're releasing. See what you learn, and keep iterating.

3. Finally, go back through the last 2-3 years of content, checking metrics, and use some of your most relevant and best performing content again, repurposing it or amplifying it for on-demand access.

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Session 9

Discussion Questions

1. When was the last time you visited a new place (pick a restaurant, hotel, Airbnb, or vacation spot)? What did you notice? Why did you notice it? Compare what you noticed versus what other people on your team notices about their experience(s).

2. If a first-time guest was to arrive at your church this weekend, what do you think they would notice, both positively and negatively? Make a list.

3. *Often the barrier to Christ isn't spiritual, it's us.* Discuss.

4. How do you collect data on first time guests? What is good about your current approach? How might you make it better?

Team Application Steps

1. Review the list of best practices for first time guests below. Rank these in order of how well you're doing them (#1 of the list being your strength, and #8 being a real growth area for you.)

- a. Treat Online Like Your Front Door...Because It Is
- b. Offer Great Parking
- c. Recruit A Guest Services Team That Actually Likes People
- d. Prioritize A Safe, Secure Kids Experience
- e. Make the Welcome a WELCOME
- f. Services with the Guest in Mind
- g. Clear Next Steps
- h. Follow Up and Welcome Back

2. Create an action plan that will help you bring all eight of these areas up to a good to great level over the next year, starting with some immediate priorities and then setting objectives for one month, three months, six months, nine months and a year until all areas have been thought-through and revised with an optimal first time guest experience in mind.

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Session 10

Discussion Questions

1. Carey and Mark covered a wide variety of questions during the Q&A. Which one resonated most with what you're experiencing? Why?

Team Application Steps

1. We have covered a lot of issues and content in this course. Take some time with your team to review your workbook and make a list of your top 5 objectives over the next year to help you reach more people. While you can't focus on everything, isolating a few key areas can help you make a lot of progress. Most people overestimate what they can accomplish in a day and underestimate what they can accomplish in a year.

2. How many new people do you hope to reach in the next year? Setting a target can help motivate you to accomplish more than you thought you could do. The world needs the church more than ever, and you're now positioned to reach more people than ever.

Thanks for joining us on this journey!

We sincerely hope that *The Art of Reaching* Course will help you better fulfill your mission and introduce more people to the love, hope and saving power of Jesus Christ.

Carey Nieuwhof and Mark Clark