

# Open Doors

## Creating a Climate of Understanding

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Open Doors has the potential to dramatically change the redemptive landscape of your church. It will not happen, however, without your commitment to lead and encourage others throughout the process. As you take the first steps in this campaign, be mindful of the challenges you must overcome for a strong start.

### **Creating a Climate of Understanding**

#### **Overcoming the Gravitational Pull of Status Quo**

In most campaigns, the start is the toughest part of the journey. An object at rest tends to stay at rest. A great start is essential to enhance the campaign experience for everyone involved. Perhaps no one is more responsible for setting the pace for the campaign, from the beginning, than the senior pastor. You will identify the volunteers who will embark on the journey, as well as play a key role in determining the quality of experience for your Leadership team. As you read and hear in other parts of the Open Doors coaching, creating a climate of understanding requires:

#### **Invitation**

Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone*, observes that the number one reason someone volunteers: they were asked. Most people don't get involved because they are not asked.

Be intentional about inviting others into the Open Doors journey. The more general the announcements the less likely people in the congregation believe involvement is crucial. The more personal the invitations the more likely people are to engage. An inviting culture gives a sense of welcoming and openness. Be creative. We'll continue these discussions in our coaching.

#### **Conversation**

**Conversational moments**-Resist the temptation to give information by only by announcement or presentation but engage volunteers with conversation. In particular, enlist the leadership team in a setting where dialog is encouraged. We strongly recommend enlisting the Campaign leaders and the Ministry Forum leaders with a personal conversation by phone or face to face. If you enlist the Ministry Forum leaders in a group, perhaps a meal at the church or home environment would be more effective.

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### **Conversation: The Ability to Deeply Connect**

Conversational leadership is so important to gain understanding in the Open Doors campaign. Traditional thinking communicates leadership as a “command and control” model. The biblical model isn’t about controlling but empowering.

1. Conversation creates a more servant leadership model than simply presenting alone. You care enough to ask questions. You model empathy by creating the conversational moment. In John 17, Jesus prays for oneness with His people as He is one with the Father. As Marshall McLuhan wrote, “the medium is the message.” Jesus prays for oneness as he demonstrates oneness. With conversation, you model the adage, “if you want to be understood, seek to understand.”
2. Conversation protects against the error of presuming on what people already know or understand. As leader, ask clarifying questions to understand where people are in the process. What is his/her ministry experience with the church? How can we better serve volunteers, as well as our community? You then model for the Leadership team the conversational approach needed to gain understanding as the process moves to others.
3. Conversation brings focus to the process and to decision-making. Presentation, by definition, has to be general, casting the net widely for everyone. Conversation allows a process that identifies the primary point of interest so you can start with relevance to the person(s) in the discussion. It personalizes the journey. It serves as a filter to find the content “gold” and remove the distraction “dross.”
4. It is much more personal and includes an emotional proximity to volunteers. It moves pastors out of the pulpit and on to the same path. Oratory is needed to inspire. Conversation will strengthen the connection made through inspirational presentation and create a better chance for follow through and life change.
5. Conversation builds trust. You will know volunteers’ concerns and aspirations. They will also gain understanding for you as a person and leader.
6. Conversation creates what Peter Senge coined as the “learning organization.” Senge suggested organizations have “mental models” that summarize organizational assumptions. Those assumptions must be challenged if an organization is to change and improve. Open Doors is a vehicle to create a safe place to challenge existing models. Conversation creates an open culture to learn. Ongoing conversation creates a learning loop to revisit assumptions and new initiatives.

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Clarity comes out of conversation. Adults process and learn much better in a conversational environment. Secondly, don't be afraid of over-communicating. Churches have a tendency to think everyone knows the vision and direction when we have announced it once or twice. Redundancy is your friend in the campaign. Clarity for those not as involved only comes from hearing the message several times.

### **Inspiration**

Communicate with the intent to give more than a rationale for involvement. Communicate to inspire! Don't simply convince people to get involved but **move** people to get involved. Give them a sense of the transcendence inherent to the gospel. Walking through Open Doors may change their lives forever!