

**Multi-Site Conference
March 2007**

**"To Launch or Not to Launch: Six Key Questions"
Doug Swagerty**

Big Idea:

This lecture is not about "how to launch" but "whether to launch." Just because you can do multi-site ministry does not mean that you should to multi-site ministry. These questions will help you decide whether this strategy best fits your need and context.

1. Does Multi-Site Ministry Fit with our Vision & Values?

It is possible that there may be a clash between your vision and multi-site ministry. Remember, multi-site is a strategy! And when there is a conflict, vision and values will always trump strategy. Example: In a "bridge" model where you are trying to bring two dissimilar cultures, ethnicities or groups together, you would undermine your vision by starting a site in each of the two communities. A better use of the multi-site model would be to find a completely different location where you could plant a second "bridge" model with your existing staff.

2. What Multi-Site Model will best fit our Context and Gifts?

We have talked about many different models of multi-site ministry and what must be done to implement them. There are different skills and gifts that are needed for each model and the models will function differently in different communities. Think carefully through each one to find the best fit.

You may conclude that you could effectively head in more than one direction and this leads many to ask the question, "What do we do next?" But rather than starting with that question, the better question to ask first is, "Where do we want to be in ten years?" The second question is, "What will we need to look like?" (structure, staff, strategy, etc.). And then the final question is, "What do we do next?" If you have thought through the long-range questions, then the

answer to the “What next?” question will not only be something you CAN do, but the answer will be a strategy that propels you toward your long-range goals.

3. Is our Leadership United and Enthusiastic?

The importance of united and enthusiastic leadership cannot be over-emphasized. In most cases, if this piece isn't in place, you are not ready to launch a multi-site strategy.

But before you make a final decision to not move ahead, it might be helpful to recast the vision for those who aren't on board. They may have good reasons for their stance, but it is also possible that they feel overwhelmed or threatened by the model. Take time to show your leaders where they would fit within the strategy and how their unique gifts could contribute to the success of the model. Sometimes going the extra mile and serving your leaders in this way will turn reluctant critics into enthusiastic advocates.

4. Is our Key Staff in Place or at least Around?

If you are going to launch a second site, your key staff will be a site director and a second worship leader. In some cases, a worship leader will be able to lead two sites, but if this is not feasible in your setting, then another qualified musician will be needed. In securing a second worship leader, keep in mind that the style of music can be different in the second site, but the level of excellence should be close to the same (whether high or medium or low). If there is a marked difference in the level of excellence, then it is more likely that the site with the “lower” level of excellence will struggle.

If you are going to launch a second congregation and begin a multi-congregational model, your key staff will be a movement leader (visionary), a movement facilitator (who will have an understanding of how systems work as well as the wisdom and communication skills to promote teamwork), and, of course, the second church planter.

5. Have we Effectively Communicated Our Vision?

You will need to communicate your vision at several different levels and often in several different ways. The three most obvious levels are your presbytery, your session and your congregation. Be

sensitive to the differences and needs of each audience. The fuller account that you may be asked to give to your presbytery with references to the Book of Church Order will need to be adapted for the congregation.

It is also important to discern how much of the strategic and structural details you need to present to the congregation. They will certainly be concerned about how a second site or congregation will affect their church experience, but in most cases, it isn't necessary to lay out the intricacies of the model to the congregation.

6. As a Pastor, am I Ready, Able and Willing to Make Any Necessary Changes in My Ministry Style?

Are you ready to be stretched and challenged by the demands of a multi-site or multi-congregational model? Do you have the gifts and God-given abilities to fill the roles and meet the pastoral needs of your chosen model? Are you willing to delegate significant areas of ministry to qualified leaders and become their coach or mentor?

It may be that your gifts and calling are perfectly suited to being a solo pastor of one church. If so, there is no merit or wisdom in forcing your church to change to a model that you will not be equipped to lead. But if God has given you the gifts, experience and influence to lead a multi-site or multi-congregational model, then proceed with confidence that He will continue to meet your needs.