

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

Church Engagement Report 2019

Episode 90

Differences Between Growing & Declining Churches

Engagement is a buzzword right now. We're hearing it a lot from leaders at the churches we work with, but it's kind of a loose term. You could define engagement however you want. We recently partnered up with [Blackbaud](#) to survey church leaders across the country and find out more about how church leaders are actually defining and measuring engagement.

In this episode, Tony and Amy shared a few of the findings that highlight differences in how growing and declining churches are engaging people inside the church and outside their walls.

Important to note: There was a slightly higher percentage of *small* churches included in the mix of "growing" churches. It would be easy to make assumptions that a few of these results are happening because some churches are larger than others. In fact, both small growing churches and large growing churches were seeing some of the same trends. And vice versa.

The Weekend

- **74% of growing churches had increases in first-time guests compared to only 23% of declining churches.**
- **The average person attends services more frequently in declining churches.** People attend 2.5 weeks each month in declining churches compared to 2.3 weeks per month in growing churches. For all the hand-wringing about people not showing up to church, a higher frequency of attendance is not actually not correlated with church growth. What this number really underscores is that first bullet: Growing churches are reaching *more first-time guests*.

Online Engagement

- **Growing churches had more *new* visitors to their website in the last 12 months.** 85% of growing churches saw an increase, compared to only 60% of declining churches.

- **79% of growing churches saw an increase in *returning* visits, while only 33% of declining churches had increases in return visits to the website.** This implies there's something more effective about the web strategy of growing churches. They are not only getting more new visitors to visit the site, they are getting more of them to come back again. And we know most people will check out your website a few times before they ever visit your church in person.
- **Both growing and declining churches saw increases in engagement on Facebook.**
- **44% of declining church said they are using Instagram, while 72% of growing churches are using that social media platform.** Based on the demographic data widely available about who uses Facebook vs. who uses Instagram, which do you think is connecting with more young people?

Video Content

- **Growing churches are much more likely to share video content online.** In fact, 85% of growing churches share video content online compared to only 49% of declining churches.
- We hear pastors talk about pulling video content so that people will show up more. We don't think that's the answer. The data suggests the direct opposite will happen: If you stop sharing video content, your attendance will likely decrease.
- Sharing video online may slightly reduce the *frequency* that people attend, but it likely increases the *total number* of people who attend your church.

Next Steps

- Download the [Church Engagement Report 2019](#) and discussion guide
- Take the [Unstuck Church Assessment](#) (free)

Listen to the episode on iTunes or at theunstuckgroup.com/episode90.