



Church Wide ABF Campaign - December 06

One of the ways our church increased involvement in our ABFs was through a church wide emphasis we called "The ABF Campaign". I have to admit when I first got the mandate from the elder board about pulling this off, the word "campaign" made me a bit nervous. Having had experience with other types of extended campaigns, to me, the hype was always better than the results. They always promised the sun and the moon for your church and at the end of the day everyone involved just felt exhausted.

However, there were a few things that brought us to a point where we thought we could benefit from a campaign that would make it worth the effort. First, over a two year period the leadership of the church became increasingly more convinced that ABFs were the answer for our church, but our ABFs still tended to operate in the traditional sense of a "class". A prerequisite for this kind of campaign has to be the full support from the leadership, both from the elder board and from the other lay leaders. One of the ways we got this support was to have Steve Lizzio come and talk about ABFs to the core members of our church and those most involved with ABFs. He did this about 8 months before the campaign. We pushed for as many of our key people to be there as possible and about 45 attended. The second area we focused on was repetition. We never stopped talking about ABFs. We wanted people to understand that this was not a fad, but our church's philosophy of discipleship. At times it seemed redundant, but it was necessary. We found that everyone's inclination was to revert back to the "classroom model" if left unchallenged. The other helpful move was to have an elder overseeing each ABF to help bring a connection between church leadership and mid-size groups.

We made plans to start the campaign in the Fall. During the summer the pastors visited each ABF and took the teaching time to recast the vision for ABFs explaining in detail what the mid-sized groups were intended to do. Here we announced the upcoming Fall campaign and made a plea for their support of it. We ran the numbers and discovered that 40% of regular worship attendees were attending ABFs. That wasn't good enough for us and so the challenge was issued. We designed a nice color brochure for ABFs and posters were put up around the church announcing the upcoming campaign.

The campaign extended over a 4 week period, culminating with a friend day we called Bring Somebody Day. Bring Somebody Day was scheduled 2 weeks after our 4 week emphasis to give time for invitations to be given out. I personally met with each ABF leader about a month before the campaign to explain in detail their responsibilities. They were to rally their ABF around campaign goals. I wanted them to meet with their team just to discuss the campaign. They were to start a calling campaign for potential members within the church. They were to have special gifts prepared for any visitors who came during the campaign. They were to make sure a social was planned near the conclusion of the campaign to provide an opportunity for newcomers to develop some relationships. They were also to develop a list of areas for people to serve within their ABF and expected to do a sign up mid way through the campaign.

The week before the campaign was to start we had a Kickoff Dessert. Everyone from the ABF Leadership Teams were invited as well as our church leaders, which gave us about 50 people. We had some fun, I went through characteristics of groups that grow and practical ideas to grow ABFs (from Steve Lizzio's resources) and we explained Bring Somebody Day. We had a Q & A time for their input and it was very positive. They as the core members were to start their invitations immediately for Bring Somebody Day. We set as our goal to move from 40% to 60% ABF involvement for our church. That percentage goal would increase our adult attendance to nearly 100 more adults.

There were 3 pillars to the campaign. 1.) Personal invitations 2.) Emphasis in Worship Services 3.) Personal Prayer. Each week had a different theme as outlined below.

Week 1 Learn! A Time for Leadership to Explain ABFs

Week 2 Attend! A Time for Everyone to Experience ABFs

Week 3 Serve! A Time for Everyone to get Established in service in ABFs

Week 4 Invite! A Time for Everyone to Expand ABFs

Week 6 Bring Somebody Day!

In the worship services we had some short professional looking video clips of our people talking about the benefits of ABFs and we did a short drama on ABFs one Sunday. The sermon messages related to the theme of the week and some weeks the sermons had more of an emphasis on ABFs than others. The first week we put the colored ABF brochure in each bulletin and it was specifically referenced during the service. Between weeks 1 and 2 we sent a mailing out to ABF non-attendees that included a letter from me encouraging them to try an ABF and a few "free tickets" for the ABF of their choice, along with a listing of what ABFs were offered. It brought one ABF a lot of laughs that week when a latecomer said he was outside trying to scalp some tickets.

The greatest challenge for me as discipleship pastor was keeping our ABF leaders on task with the campaign. Some were more passionate about it than others and it was reflected by the results that they saw for their ABF. Our goal was to keep the quality while increasing the quantity. In the end, we did see a positive impact. By the second week, our percentage of attendees had jumped from 40% to 65%. At the time, it was a record attendance week for us with 355 in both children and adult classes. Most of our classrooms were filled to capacity. We sustained those numbers throughout the campaign. At the end of the campaign we ended up with 89 new people visiting and joining the ABFs, which helped us exceed our goal, giving us 62% of our regular attendees involved in an ABF. Bring Somebody Day had about 20 new people come. It was less than hoped for, but still was helpful overall. Thankfully, involvement has sustained itself since the conclusion of the campaign.

The campaign was simple enough to not be too exhausting, and extensive enough to give us the results we needed. I would recommend it for the church that needs a little boost for their ABF ministry.

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