



How Can I Increase Sign-Up and Show-Up At My Small Group Connection?

[By Mark Howell](#)

I get questions. A LOT of questions.

Here's a small group connection question that I've answered many, many times.

What's the best way to increase sign-up and show-up at my small group connection?

It may be worded many different ways, but it gets asked a lot because after all the work of preparing everyone wants a good outcome. Everyone wants to launch more new groups and connect more unconnected people.

Here's my recommendation:

First, choose a familiar place and convenient day and time for unconnected people. Part of ensuring the best attendance is choosing a familiar place and a convenient day and time *for unconnected people*.

Unconnected people are often reluctant to venture too far off their beaten path when they're taking a step they've never taken before. When is the best day and time for a connection? Right after (or during) a service. Make it convenient. Hold the connection when people are already there! Do it in an easy room to get to. Be sure and provide childcare. Train your childcare team to ask everyone, "Are you staying for the connection?" Use good, clear signage.

Second, be sure and begin promoting the connection two to three weeks in advance. Unconnected people are almost always infrequent attenders. If you want to get their attention, you'll need to promote the event two or three weeks in a row (in part because they'll only be there one or two of the three weeks). The best way to promote the connection is to use the sermon to talk about the power of being connected and then refer to the connection event as an action step. It's great to also give an announcement and feature it on the website and newsletter, but the key to great promotion is to do it in the message. For supercharged promotion, prepare a video or a live testimony of someone who has been powerfully impacted by being in a small group.

Third, take sign-ups and make it convenient to sign up. This is one of the rare times when I encourage the use of a sign-up form. Provide a simple bulletin insert for people to fill in their name, best phone, best email and the kind of group they're looking for (this last one is optional, but allowing them to check interest in couples, singles, men's or women's gives you a little info that can help you prepare). Unless your church is exceptionally good at using their phone in the service to sign up for things, an old school sign-up form generates a much better response. And be sure you provide an opportunity for them to fill it out and "drop it in the offering later in the service." Even if you have to move the offering to a later slot in the service, it will be worth the effort.

Fourth, optimize attendance with these steps:

- Send an initial “thanks for taking this step” email from your senior pastor commending their signup as well as providing specifics about the event (day and time, room it is in, childcare instructions, etc.).
- Send a reminder email two or three days before the event.
- Call everyone the day before the connection. The phone call can be a quick 15 second voicemail reminder.
- Making a final announcement on the day of the connection leads to attendance equal to the signup (“Whether you’ve signed up for the connection today or not, you are invited!”). Walk-ins make a big difference.

Friendly persistence will help the largest number attend. My experience has been that attendance is best with an initial confirmation email, a reminder email, a phone call on the day before and a final announcement on the day (or week) of the connection.

Note: If you haven’t downloaded my FREE resource, How to Launch New Groups with a Small Group Connection—2016, [you can do that right here.](#)