

Understanding Multi-Site Church

Pastor Marc Estes

I. Introduction

The multi-site movement is a fairly new model that has gained great momentum in last twenty years. This model of church growth has many viable options worth pursuing for any growing local church that has a vision to impact surrounding regions with their church vision. This session will introduce important considerations a church must discuss before moving forward with a multi-site strategy.

II. What is Multi –Site?

In 1980, there were only 23 known multi-site churches. Today, there are now over 8,000 multi-site churches in America alone. There is no sign of slow down, and this year multi-site churches exceeded the number of mega churches in America. In fact, most mega churches are now converting to multi-site model. **#70% of all Mega-Churches are multi-site.**

A. Definition of Multi Site Church

1. There is a variety of models, structures, philosophies, and strategies. As many as there are multi site churches! Each is a little different, no two are the same.
2. Multi –Site Defined, “A multi-site church is one church meeting in multiple locations – different rooms on the same campus, different location in the same region, or in some instances, different cities, states, and nations. A multi-site church shares common values, vision and leadership while allowing for the development of each specific location’s personality.”

B. Current trends of Multi-Site

1. Current trends of Multi-Site Churches are staggering. Recent surveys show that this model is one that works well in our culture and is one of the fastest growing methods of church growth in the nation, a true phenomenon.
2. Many great resources to give you better understanding:
 - a. **Annual Multi Site Survey – Leadership Network**
 - b. **Books – “Multi-site churches.” Or, “Multi-Site Revolution.”**

C. Biblical Premise for Multi-site

1. It is important to start with question, **“What does the Bible say about Multi-site?”**
2. The choosing of a church model is open as the scriptures do not dictate any one methodology or one application of spiritual truths as to how we structure a church model.
3. **The important key is making sure we follow the biblical principles of the NT church.**
We must identify, understand, embrace, and implement the principles of the Local Church as outlined in scripture (Book of Acts is blueprint):
 - a. Mission of Church – Glorify God, Reach people and make disciples.
 - b. Pastoral care and accountability.
 - c. Authentic, biblically based, purpose driven community.
 - d. Corporate service(s).

- e. Governmental oversight – Eldership rule, elders in every city.
 - f. Five-fold ministry.
 - g. Discipleship – Personal growth and accountabilities.
 - h. Leadership development.
 - i. Evangelism, reproduction, and multiplication of church to city, nation and world.
4. How we structure for these truths to be applied varies in every church around the world, considering the location, culture, demographics, and unique challenges each church faces.

III. The Seven Main Benefits of Multi-Site

Multi-site can be overwhelming to many church leadership teams due to their unfamiliarity to how they function. Yet, there are many great benefits to multi-site that should be considered:

#Wife landing in NYC for 1st time, "I am really excited, but kinda scared at the same time, it's huge!"

A. The opportunity to reach more people for Christ.

1. More locations, more services, provides more opportunity to reach more people.
 - a. People want options to fit their busy/complex lifestyles. Multi-site meets that need.
 - b. Most unchurched people will not drive further than 15 minutes to attend church.
2. Multi-site culture also produces a growth/expanding mindset in those that attend.
 - a. Congregation is reminded every weekend of the church's passion to reach region.
 - b. Congregation is reminded that what they're apart of is bigger than themselves.
3. Surveys show that all campuses grow when one campus is birthed.

B. The ability to grow larger yet remain smaller at the same time.

1. Our culture is starving for relationship and authentic community. America has been labeled the loneliest place on earth. *#Bowling Alone – study of America's social problem.*
2. People today want smaller venues, more community, and intimate atmospheres.

#Starbucks (Third Place), bistros, and cafes - Highly visited areas.

#Anti-mega, anti-corporate, anti-institution culture. Agressively moving this direction.
3. More locations and services create smaller congregational feel and gives people a community feel, while being a part of something that has influence and impact.

C. The opportunity for Five-fold leaders to flourish.

1. Single location churches have limited places for emerging leaders to thrive.
2. More locations give opportunity for increased key leader opportunities such as Executive Pastors, Campus, Youth, Children, Worship, etc.
3. Team of stronger leaders, builds better decision making, better disciple making, better fruit and vision fulfillment.
4. The potential of planting more churches is quicker as more leaders are raised.

D. The opportunity for more people to serve and lead in all ministries.

1. Every ministry is multiplied at each campus. This gives room for new leaders to emerge.
2. New serving opportunities are greatly multiplied, requiring the church to be mobilized.
3. Mobilized church develops healthier Christians. *#Spectator vs. Critic, NY Yankees game*

4. Requires leaders to take more leadership resulting in healthier leaders as well.

E. The opportunity for greater impact and influence at minimal costs.

1. Unlike a church plant, you don't need to duplicate key staff positions.
2. Minimize duplication of planning and administration.
3. Sharing staff, resources, and ideas as part of strategic plan.

F. The opportunity to multiply resources and future opportunities.

1. Exponential growth produces exponential resources, which produces exponential opportunities. The growth of the congregation exceeds the growth in expenses.
#Dependent on staffing/facilities/operations ratios!
2. Average growth for new campus in first year is 53% (Leadership Network survey 2010).

G. The ability to protect church DNA and reputation.

1. What makes you unique is the combination of your vision, heritage, Senior Pastor and leadership team mix, worship service experiences, ministry expressions, etc.
5. This unique blend is your brand and what people desire.
6. You can always count on a great latte at any Starbucks worldwide. Their proven model produces measurable results. Their brand is protected by their strategic growth plan.
7. Your model choice will dictate the level of consistency of DNA and your reputation.
6. More consistency in maintaining church DNA at every level, will determine the ability of each campus to re-create your DNA and brand.
#Our challenge with wide diversity in area – Makes Movement Model more applicable

IV. The Five Main Challenges of Multi-Site

Although there are many benefits to Multi-Site Church, there are many challenges as well. Here are a few challenges shared by most churches who are involved in the multi-site journey.

A. Increased leadership complexities

1. Multi-campus blends different locations, demographics, leadership passions and congregational needs. #Like having five kids of varying ages, gender in the home.
2. Implementation of vision into multiple campuses of the same ministries has its unique challenges. #Dependent upon strength of team, number of leaders, maturity and gifting.
3. Greater teamwork and collaboration is a must to survive and succeed.
#Creating team culture vertical/horizontal, direct/collaborative a must.

B. Greater organizational challenges

1. The addition of each campus requires assessment of overall organizational structure.
 - a. 2 campuses = congregational challenge.
 - b. 3 campuses = departmental and staff challenges.
 - c. 4 campuses = executive leadership challenges.
 - d. 5 campuses = senior leader challenges.
 - e. 6 campuses and above = DNA and vision sustainment challenges.
2. All leaders must be flexible as to role and reporting relationships at each tier of the journey.

C. The tension for resources

1. Allocation of funds for ministries, equipment, supplies and buildings can be a challenge.
#Start with Matrix, percentages and ratios. Feed what grows!
2. Placement of leaders on campuses to strengthen overall church can produce regional tension. #Moving leaders for the sake of the whole – Campus loses pastor to the ‘machine’
3. The need for senior leader at all campuses, at all times, for every need is not reality.

D. Quicker release of ministry oversight and decision making

1. Empowering emerging leaders is a part of the growth process both for the emerging leader and the delegating leader. It can also be a challenge.
2. There are times where delegation must happen, but leaders may not be totally prepared.
#Many Mentoring Moments – Our team is YOUNG (20’s and early 30’s)
3. Time, proximity, and context may not be a reality for those that should make the decision, requiring greater trust on emerging leaders and the risk of potential wrong decisions.
#Senior Leader(s) must empower and release more, not less. PIPELINE CULTURE!!

E. Central vs. Regional tensions

1. Central attempts to maintain overall vision and values and ministry philosophy.
#Certain principles, practices, processes, programs, must be agreed on before hand.
2. Regional attempts to release people into personal passions and ministry desires.
#Every campus has visionary leaders that want to create. Need guard rails!
3. A challenge exists in maintaining consistency, while allowing growth of campuses.
#Especially with demographic, ethnic or age of campus challenges.
4. Model will dictate how much freedom is released to campus.
#Franchise framework = “Central creates; regional implements.” Team of teams decides, individuals return and implement on own campus.
#Movement Model = “Central defines Oneness, allows campus distinction.”
Family Model = Same vision, values and distinctives, rest if left to campuses.
5. Central meetings vs. regional meetings – Both types of meetings are critical to maintain a healthy multi-site church atmosphere. Department meetings are key, but campus meetings are crucial as well. Strategic meeting planning is vital to avoid conflict and burnout.
#MANNAHOUSE spent 6 months to just devise meeting flow and annual calendar. Changes all the time

F. Overall communication of ministry decisions

1. Communication is a key to maintaining leadership momentum. Breakdown in communication will frustrate most any leader.
3. More campuses and more teams require greater concentration on all levels of communication. There must be a constant assessment of the communication process.
#Slack, Weekly Staff Meeting, Team meetings, etc.

V. Multi –Site Teaching Models

A multi-site church can resemble a wide variety of models. For some churches, having multiple sites involves only a worship service at each location; for others, each location has a full range of support ministries. Some churches use simulcast or videocast talks (recorded or live); others have in-person teaching on-site. Some churches maintain a similar worship atmosphere and style at all their campuses; and others allow or invite variation. There can be a combination of any or all options:

A. Video Venue Teaching Model

Creating one or more on or off-campus environments that use video-cast talks (live or recorded), often varying the worship style.

#20% use pre-recorded as primary means.

#11% use live feed as primary means.

B. Team Teaching Model

Leveraging a strong teaching team across multiple locations at the original campus and other campuses.

#46% Use this model exclusive. The larger the church, the less likely to use this as primary model. However, we have embraced this model to accelerate multiplication and expansion.

#Must discern demographics/psycho-graphics of your church and your region. What works in Alabama, may not work in NW.

C. Rotation Teaching Model

The rotation of the lead pastor to speak at any or all locations, team teaching and video combined. This allows the people to see experience a variety of teaching venues as well as allowing the lead pastor to have a true pulse on the entire church.

#34% Use a combination model

#The larger the church, the more likely to use this as primary model.

VI. Multi –Site Structure Models

A multi-site church can function effectively in a variety of different models. The type of model will be dictated by your multi-site vision goals. The vision must be established before deciding on the structural model.

A. Regional Campus Model

Replicating the experience of the original campus at additional campuses to make church more accessible to other geographic communities.

#MANNAHOUSE started with, “Franchise focused” replicating all aspects services and ministries.

B. Partnership Model

Partnering with a local business or nonprofit organization to use its facility beyond a more “renter” arrangement.

C. Low-Risk Model

Experimenting with new locations that have a low level of risk because of the simplicity of programming and low financial investment involved but that have the potential

#Theaters, schools, etc. “Portable Church”

#Believe this to be really key to not encumber church with unnecessary overhead.

D. Satellite Model

All campuses share same name, vision and values, but most decisions are made at the regional level.

E. Same location different service Model

This model is used mostly with different international groups. These groups are part of the existing church vision but have an international leader and team that is responsible for developing the ministry for this group. #MH = Latino, Burmese, Arabic, Indonesian, etc.

This can also be used for a variety of worship style options as well. #Rick Warren @ Saddleback

#WE DO WITH INTERNATIONAL SERVICES ON CAMPUSES – Latino, Burmese, Arabic, Laotian, etc.

F. Feeder Service Model

This model places weekend services in strategic areas to reach more of the community and allows all support ministries, staffing and events to take place at one of the larger, more established campus locations (i.e. Youth nights, training, membership, etc.)

#Draw diagram to show Hub and Feeder Service model.

A combination of video, team teaching in services along with a variety of modifications at every level of the organization (services, ministries, finances, oversight, decision making, etc.)

G. Combination/Hybrid Model

A combination of video, team teaching in services along with a variety of modifications at every level of the organization (services, ministries, finances, oversight, decision making, etc.)

H. Microsite Service Model

This is one of the newest to emerge, post pandemic. This model places weekend services in a smaller facility with less than 50 to start. Some may even start as a group in a home. Yet regardless of size, the goal is to grow from a group, to a site to a full-sized campus location. [in some cases they convert to their own local church].

VII. Multi –Site Structural Considerations

The structure of the organization will have a huge impact on the outcome of the church vision, regardless of vision intentions.

A. Structure Considerations

1. The model chosen; will greatly dictate how you structure the entire organization.
2. The number of campuses will dictate the structure and will change as number of campuses increase.
3. The age of the congregation and strength of the leadership team will dictate structure.
4. The size of the existing congregation and its ability to 'send' leaders to new campus will dictate structure.
5. The proximity of the campuses and ability to relate and communicate will dictate structure.

B. Church Oversight – Central

1. Most all multisite churches will have two major components in place. One senior/lead pastor and one governing board/elders.
2. Most all multi-site churches also have one general budget, with identifiable ways to track campus revenues and expenditures.
3. Most all multi-site churches have some form of centralized team(s) for major ministries. Many have team of teams for every ministry comprised of team leaders from each campus.

#Three main models - Central support, Center of Excellence, or greater amongst equals.

4. Most multi – site churches eventually shift from the traditional hierarchical organizational model to a matrix organizational model. [after 3rd of 4th campus]

#Show/write diagram and explain.

C. Church Structure - Regional

The following key positions should be the desired goal for every campus. A reproducible model of ministries and positions is one of the most important strategies for building consistency on every campus. The types and titles of positions will vary depending on church.

1. Campus Pastor
This person represents the senior pastor and is an extension of church vision to their campus. Their primary responsibility is to coordinate and implement all aspects of pastoral ministry on the campus, coordinating with the campus pastors, small groups, discipleship, leadership development, counseling, evangelism, assimilation and any other pastoral ministries. The regional staff pastors for that region would report to this person.
2. Campus Coordinator/Administrative Assistant
Their primary responsibility is to provide administrative support to the Campus Pastor and help coordinate all pastoral ministries and events. They also provide administrative support and maintains the campus calendar and schedule.
3. Staff Pastor
Their primary responsibility is to provide directional, spiritual and moral oversight to their lay pastors and small groups. They equip, train, lead, disciple, pastor and counsel existing leaders and individuals, and help with the assimilation of new people through the discipleship pathway
4. Campus Children's Pastor
Their primary responsibility is to coordinate and implement the children's ministry curriculum, policy, and DNA which has been established by the Children's Ministry Director. They will recruit and coordinate training for their campus. They report to the Campus Pastor and coordinate with the Director of Children's Ministry.
5. Campus Youth/Young Adults Pastor
Their primary responsibility is for the youth—junior high, high school, college and young adults—on a campus. They are responsible to implement the Generation Ministry as already established by the Director. They will also work with the campus team and have an report directly to the Campus Pastor as to how that ministry affects the campus overall.
6. Campus Worship Pastor

- Their primary responsibility is to be the Worship Pastor for the regional campus to which they are assigned. They work closely with the director of the Worship and Arts Department. They assure all aspects of the worship service are successfully achieved, along with pastoring musicians and singers on that campus. They report directly to the Campus Pastor.
7. Campus A/V Coordinator
Their primary responsibility is to serve the regional campus corporate service and ministries with all the A/V needs. They work closely with the A/V director and are report directly to the Campus Pastor.
 8. Campus Technical Coordinator (If applicable)
Depending on the model chosen for corporate service message delivery (simulcast, video, team, etc.) their primary responsibility is to assure all aspects of the technical are successfully accomplished for all corporate services. The coordinator works closely with the Technical Director and reports directly to the Campus Pastor as to the corporate services.
 9. Campus Ministries
 - a. Weekend Services
 1. Children's Ministry
 2. Worship and Creative Arts (Worship, Audio, Visual, Simulcast)
 3. First Impressions
 4. Cafes
 5. International Ministries
 - b. Generational Ministries
 1. Children's Ministry (0-11 Years)
 2. GU Youth Ministry (12-18 Years)
 3. College (18-23 Years)
 4. Young Adults (24-35 Years)
 - c. Small Groups
 1. Men's
 2. Women's
 3. Family and Marriage
 4. Finance
 5. Recovery (All Things New)
 6. Business (Worklife)
 7. Prayer
 8. Outreach
 - d. Discipleship Pathway (Growth Track).
 1. Weekly Growth Track/Starting Point class for greatest impact.
 2. Freedom
 3. Disciple Makers Workshop
 4. Core
 5. WILD

VIII. Multi –Site Suggestions

Making the decision to move into a multi-site church model can't be taken lightly. Here are a few considerations before moving forward:

- A. Make sure all leadership team is completely behind the multi-side model.**
- B. Make sure your congregation fully embraces the new multi-site model.**
- C. Make sure you develop a financial plan that projects expenses and future revenues.**
- D. Make sure your model matches your wallet.**
- E. Make sure the vision includes the right timing for launching.**
- F. Make sure you have the right Campus Pastor.**
- G. Make sure your major ministries have the leadership to support a new location.**
- H. Making sure all the details are in place, before the launch.**