

Four Keys for Improving Your Assimilation Process

If you ask 100 church leaders to define [assimilation](#), you'll probably get 100 different answers. Some might say it's all about creating relationships. Others might say it's when a new member joins the church.

For us, the best way to define *assimilation* is with a metaphor. In the same way that an engine is composed of multiple parts all working together to move a vehicle in one direction, [effective assimilation is a system](#) that involves many different areas working together to move people from first-time visitors to fully engaged members. It's a process that begins with a person's first visit to the church (for any reason) and ends when that person becomes connected to the people, ministries, and programs that drive the mission.

We've identified four keys to help you improve and streamline your assimilation process.

1. Evaluate your current process, it's important

It is often the case in ministry that there is so much to do and too little time. Sometimes all you can do is barely keep your head afloat. It can seem daunting to imagine having the time to stop, strategize, and learn a new system. However, taking the time to think through your church assimilation process might be the single most effective choice you can make in your ministry. Having a systematic approach to your assimilation process is imperative to ensuring that no one is overlooked and that your church is not leaking people. It's tough to know whether your assimilation process is providing enough opportunity for life change without taking a step back and evaluating your process.

2. Identify the primary areas that need attention

After having evaluated your church's current assimilation process, what are some of the areas that need immediate attention? What role do each of these play in ensuring your church's growth keeps... well, growing?

Each church's assimilation process will be unique.

However, after working with many of our church partners at Church Community Builder we have identified four primary areas or processes that often need attention: Hospitality, Information Gathering, Follow-Up, and Connection.

3. Develop a strategy for improving your church's assimilation process

Take time to intentionally invest in a plan that's going to improve your church's overall health and growth. A process is something that can be measured and monitored; the same should be true of your assimilation strategy. Here are some ways we've seen churches benefit from greater intentionality around assimilation:

- They end up mapping out how a new visitor is integrated into their community. This helps them remember the new visitor experiences.
- They develop a process that can be replicated and reproduced. These are critical to the success of your ministry, and should regularly be assessed and tweaked.
- They're able to measure what's working and what isn't. You can't manage what you don't measure.
- They place a higher percentage of attenders into small groups. Active small group participants are more likely to be faithful givers, volunteers, and lay leaders.
- They have greater success connecting people with volunteer opportunities that match their passions and abilities. Just filling slots leads to burnout; matching people to positions leads to breakthrough.
- Their churches are producing active leaders instead of frozen chosen. They make it more comfortable for people to get involved that just sit and consume.
- They discover ministry opportunities they didn't know existed. God has given your members unique gifts and a purpose that he wants to fulfill through your church. That purpose might be something you hadn't considered before.

4. Leverage technology to measure the results of your process.

Your church management system has the ability to make assimilation more efficient and effective. In addition to helping you distribute workloads, it can provide a place for recording and measuring the effectiveness of your process. The larger your church becomes, the more moving pieces there are, and the more you can your staff will need to depend on robust technology designed to accelerate the rate your people grow, connect, and engage with the long-term vision and development of your church.

A healthy church maximizes the assimilation process

There's a quote that reads: "If you want something you've never had before, you have to do something you've never done before." And there's probably a list of things that you'd like to do to help your church reach more people and move those people along the pathway of discipleship. However, you can't keep doing the same things and expecting different results. Discipleship suffers without a good assimilation process that facilitates moving people into a deeper relationship with Christ, people struggle to connect, first-time visitors are discouraged as there is nothing in place for them to move forward and connect with the church and it's vision, and your backdoor remains just as open as your frontdoor.

The end result: overall church health decays because there is no plan in place to help people keep growing.

Maybe your assimilation process needs a quick pulse check, maybe it needs some surgery, or even a complete overhaul, one thing we know for certain is that it is essential to building a thriving ministry.

The more powerful the assimilation process, the more powerful your church will be.

Here are some practical next steps you can take today:

- Outline your church's assimilation process. Document it.
 - Assess the effectiveness of your current process. How are you doing in the 4 primary areas we identified?
 - Put the necessary changes in motion
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Learn more about improving your assimilation process - [connect with an Auxano Navigator today](#).

> [Read more from Church Community Builder](#).