

Communicate Clearly Using These Seven Attention Getters

How can you more clearly communicate your unique church vision?

Every day, your church stewards thousands of moments of truth. Every time a member talks to a neighbor, someone drives by the church facility, ministry e-mail goes out, a pastor's business card is left on a desk, some interaction on behalf of the church has transpired. Every time these events happen, the church's vision glows brighter or dims in the tiniest little increments.

The leader's role is to crank up the communication wattage. The visionary cares too much about the message to let it just blow in the wind, unattended. Rather, they grab the message and affix it to a kite for all to see. This can happen only with a tremendous amount of intentionality in the complex discipline of church communications.

THE QUICK SUMMARY - [The Attention Economy](#), Thomas Davenport and John Beck

This title identifies attention management as the new critical competency for 21st century business. This is a landmark book for every manager who wants to learn how to earn and spend the new currency of business argues that unless companies learn to effectively capture, manage, and keep attention - both internally and out in the marketplace - they'll fall hopelessly behind in our information-flooded world. It is based on an exclusive global research study, with examples from a range of companies. It provides a revolutionary four-part model for managing attention in all areas of business. It presents a multidisciplinary approach to the topic of 'attention,' incorporating economics, psychology, and technology. It appeals to readers not only as representatives of an organization, but as individuals.

A SIMPLE SOLUTION

When Thomas Davenport and John Beck wrote the book *The Attention Economy*, they brought a very important message to church leaders. The book argues that information and talent are no longer your most important resource, but rather attention itself. People cannot hear the vision unless we cut through the clutter.

The principle of attention requires church leaders to be bold and relevant as they integrate vision into the internal communication of the church. According to Davenport and Beck, these are the most important characteristics to get attention:

- The communication is personalized.
- The communication comes from a trustworthy source.
- The communication is brief.
- The communication is emotional.

Imagine the implications of these attributes for your church's communications. Are you sending targeted, HTML e-mails to supplement snail mail and print communication? Are you delivering your most important sound bites via sharable social media posts?

It is important to keep good communications people close to the core leadership. They shouldn't have to guess about your church's DNA. Rather, allow them to be privy to all the conversations and dialogue that surround development and articulation of your vision.

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Every organization is an engine fueled by attention. In the farms and fields of primitive societies, and in the factories of the Industrial Revolution, physical manpower drove the economy. In the information era, knowledge was power – the more an organization had, the more successful it could be.

But now, as flows of unnecessary information clog brains and corporate communication links, attention is the rare resource that truly powers an organization. Recognizing that attention is valuable, that where it is directed is important, and that it can be managed like other precious resources is essential in today's economy.

Let's look at the word *attention*: Notice that its root word is *attend*. To attend to something is to tend it – to take care of it. A typical employee in today's world is expected to take care of more things than a worker would have at any other time in history. So much information and so many activities, people, and places are vying for our attention today that the mere *management* of attention has become one of our most important activities. Attention involves understanding how to work within an overabundance of "information competition," whether you are interfacing with customers, coworkers, or your own priority list.

Our simple definition is this: *Attention is focused mental engagement on a particular item of information. Items come into our awareness, we attend to a particular item, and then we decide whether to act.* Attention occurs between a relatively unconscious *narrowing phase* in which we screen out most of the sensory inputs around us (we are aware of many things, but not paying attention to them), and a *decision phase*, in which we decide to act on the attention-getting information. Without both phases, there is no attention.

Awareness becomes attention when information reaches a threshold of meaning and spurs the potential for action.

You can throw oodles of information into a person's awareness. The problem is that everybody is doing it. Awareness is vague, general information, and doesn't by itself catalyze any action. Attention is targeted and specific. It gets people moving. In a simple analogy, awareness is the target, and attention is the bull's-eye.

Thomas H. Davenport and John C. Beck, [*The Attention Economy*](#)

A NEXT STEP

In your next leadership meeting, gather the last 4 weeks of Sunday morning bulletins. On a whiteboard, list every announcement made in the last month. Note recurring announcements.

Next rate the attentiveness to each of these announcements (from 1 to 5) in the following seven categories:

1. **Verbal Support** (1 – no verbal support given to this announcement, 5 – this announcement got a sermon mention)
2. **Visual Support** (1 – there are no bulletin or screen graphics for this announcement, 5 – this has it's own logo and visual identity)
3. **Ministry Support** (1 – this is a general announcement with no ONE ministry or leader giving oversight, 5 – this is directly connected to a ministry and/or leader)
4. **Next-Step Support** (1 – there was nothing for the reader to actually do, just something to know, 5 – there was a clear next-step communicated)
5. **Vision Support** (1 – we loosely connect this to the future, but in reality this is more connected to the past, 5 – this clearly points to God's vision for the church)
6. **Emotional Support** (1 – this announcement was likely to get only a small number of our congregation excited and engaged, 5 – everyone was excited about this)
7. **Scoreboard Support** (1 – this will not likely lead someone to Jesus or grow them as a follower, 5 – this event will prayerfully change lives for eternity)

Now add up the scores for each announcement and discuss the following next steps:

Score of 7 – 14 – How can we cut or cage this event or announcement in order to prioritize more important and impacting activity?

Score of 15 – 28 – How can we combine or coordinate this even within our vision to bring greater impact?

Score of 29-35 – How can we catapult this to prominence across each service and communication channels?

Set your focus on a Sunday 2-4 weeks in the future and make the necessary adjustments as a team to grab attention with every announcement.

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*This is part of a weekly series posting content from one of the most innovative content sources in the church world: **SUMS Remix Book Summaries** for church leaders.*

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