

# Using Booths in Ministry

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Hear the sounds. Smell the aromas. Taste the foods. Enjoy the fun. Watch the people. These are things you might experience as you set up a booth for a fair, festival, or special event. A booth ministry provides an opportunity to spread the good news of Christ in the marketplace. Why does this environment appeal to the masses? Why do they come? How can your booth make a difference?

This material will answer some of these questions and perhaps raise others. There are suggestions for designing, setting up, and staffing a booth; examples of how a booth can be used in ministry; and ways to follow up and evaluate your ministry. Hopefully, these ideas will help you design and implement a specific ministry using a booth.

## Biblical Basis

The call of Christ in Matthew 28:19-20 commands us to share the good news as we are going. In Acts 1:8, we are told to be witnesses in all areas of our lives. We are to interact with people in the marketplace, to touch them with the gospel of Christ.

In an age of skepticism, having a booth at an event can be a great way to open doors to witnessing opportunities. It is a non-threatening tool that can be used for ministry in a variety of ways. It can also give a sense of involvement and identification with the community you are trying to reach.

Jesus set the best example of responding to people. He met their needs in unexpected ways with care and compassion. The greatest portion of His ministry was spent, not in a synagogue, but in the marketplace and on the hillsides, preaching, teaching, and healing. Christians should follow His example.

## A Simple Strategy for Beginning a Booth Ministry

1. Understand the setting.
  - (1) Attend and observe the event before starting a ministry.
  - (2) Determine who is attending.
  - (3) Ask why they have come.
2. Determine needs and aspirations.
  - (1) Take a survey to identify needs and aspirations.
  - (2) Consider the variety of lifestyles represented.
  - (3) Interview management and personnel at the event.
  - (4) Consult with local pastors and leaders in the community.
3. Develop a mission statement.
  - (1) State reasons for the ministry, vision for the ministry, intentions of the ministry, and functions of the ministry.
  - (2) Establish an agreement among all the people participating.

4. Envision the ministry.
  - (1) Dream without limits.
  - (2) Brainstorm all possibilities.
  - (3) Research other ministry models.
  - (4) Be creative.
5. Develop a ministry plan.
  - (1) Decide who your ministry can help most effectively.
  - (2) Order your priorities; consider your resources; determine your focus.
  - (3) Assemble your resources. Get commitments.
  - (4) Structure the ministry with quality and integrity. Earn others' respect.
6. Carry out the ministry.
  - (1) Keep your promises and commitments.
  - (2) Maintain a spiritual focus.
  - (3) Be sensitive to people.
  - (4) Have quality programming.
  - (5) Demonstrate openness and flexibility
  - (6) Give supportive supervision to ministry personnel.
7. Follow up.
  - (1) Develop a system of obtaining information.
  - (2) Develop a referral system for local and outside people affected by your ministry.
8. Evaluate and make long-range plans.
  - (1) Keep ongoing records.
  - (2) Evaluate the ministry systematically.
  - (3) Make long-range plans.

### Purposes of a Booth

1. Helps sanction the event.
2. Involves the public—the church moves into the marketplace.
3. Offers identification, as well as a continuous platform to advertise or promote your presence during the event.
4. Provides a focus of attention, a home base, or an operations center.
5. Offers security and convenience.
6. Provides a staging ground for additional ministries.
7. Functions as an area for marketing products.
8. Allows for distribution of literature.

9. Serves as a referral or information center.
10. Serves as a multipurpose hospitality area.
11. Provides an area for witnessing activities, one-on-one contact, and audiovisual presentations.
12. Helps enlist and enroll people in preparation for follow-up.

### How to Set Up a Booth

Develop a good relationship with managers of the event. You must go through them to obtain space for a booth. Be sure they know who you are and why you are there. All rules must be obeyed fully to maintain healthy working relationships. Make a mutual agreement with managers and be willing to pay all fees required. Asking for too many privileges and exceptions makes you suspect. Earn your right to be there.

### Booth Ministry Possibilities

Be service-oriented and willing to offer additional services to the community if resources are available. Here are some possibilities for booth ministries:

- Booth-sitting services (certified people to relieve personnel)
- Chaplaincy ministry (helping locate missing children, helping injured children, counseling)
- Childcare services (baby-sitting)
- Children's programs (day camp, recreation)
- Creative arts teams (music, drama, puppetry, clowning, mime, juggling) for entertainment or traffic control
- Hospitality services (coffee breaks; messenger services for event staff, personnel, security, medical workers)
- Informational services (maps, directions, transportation, list of area churches)
- Scripture distribution (Bibles, tracts, brochures, pamphlets)
- Certified professionals and supplemental human services (workers such as chaplains and counselors; help with temporary housing, transportation, medical problems)
- Supplemental personnel (security, parking-lot attendants, guides, interpreters)
- Supplemental program features (choirs, speakers)

### Booth Location

A good location is one of the most important aspects of a booth ministry. Get as good a location as you can afford. Try to get a corner booth. Consider using a booth as a staging area for performing groups and others that want to be involved in your ministry.

Make arrangements with the managers for access to other parts of the event. Try to secure other stage areas where your performing groups might be involved, such as in providing a worship service in a grandstand area.

Consider the advantages and disadvantages in relation to the sun, bathrooms, traffic patterns, and noise levels. Consider your neighbors. Understand your parking and loading privileges.

## Booth Design and Construction

Some important design and construction factors to consider are:

1. The back of the booth should be used to full advantage.
2. The sides of the booth should correspond to the rules and regulations of that particular event. Do not block your neighbor—you would not want to be blocked.
3. Use a minimum of words on the booth. A lot of copy or a busy design confuses the message.
4. If sound equipment is allowed, be sure to play at levels that do not distract others.
5. All materials used in your booth should conform to fire regulations and should be lightweight for transporting and reuse.
6. To save time, construct an easily assembled booth. Consider portions that can be reused.

You may find it advantageous to rent a furnished space in a pavilion that provides your group with identity, shelter, and utilities. Consider the age and interests of your target audience.

## Staffing a Booth

Recruiting personnel to staff the booth is a requirement. Consider enlisting one or more people to supervise volunteers. This will allow for greater expertise, better security fewer people to train, and more people aware of the follow-up needs and opportunities.

Orientation of personnel recruited for the ministry is necessary. Involve people in presentations, in staffing the event, and in follow-up. Allow volunteers to see the whole process so they will understand their roles and the overall goals of the ministry.

Make volunteers feel important, because they are the backbone of your ministry. Consider uniforms, T-shirts, or logos to identify ministry participants. Also, consider such conveniences as fans, refreshments, and seating for volunteers.

## Booth Theme

Use a theme that promotes the overall event and communicates your interests. A theme should:

- Strengthen and unify your purpose.
- Encourage creativity in developing a format.
- Make your presentation easier to remember.
- Avoid being repetitious from year to year.

An example is a group that used a nautical theme for their booth that included a painting of a blue sea, a fishnet, a treasure chest, and their own sailing vessel named the *S.S. Eternity*. Their theme was “Sail Away with Resort Missions.” The booth activities included a station

set up for children to go fishing. Instead of live fish, their fishing poles caught tracts and candy. Volunteers also gave out Bibles and cups of cold water. And, by the way, they won a red ribbon for second-best display at the event.

## Literature

Brochures and other literature for the booth can be developed around the event's theme. This will help advertise your booth and present a unified message. A personalized pamphlet can be effective, especially if it is a useful souvenir that people will want to keep. Literature should target more than one age group. Correspondence, mailers, and other follow-through offers will attract people to your booth. Bibles, Scripture portions, and tracts are available in many languages and can be purchased from the American Bible Society, 1865 Broadway, New York, NY 10023, and from the NAMB Bookstore and Scripture Distribution, North American Mission Board, 4200 North Point Pkwy, Alpharetta, GA 30022-4176.

Display and present your literature in the most positive way possible. This will leave a distinct impression on those visiting your booth. Be sure to pick up any literature or trash thrown on the ground around your booth area.

## Publicity

Be willing to participate in the event's programs, publicity and periodicals. If you support the event, usually its managers will support you. Take advantage of the following:

1. Submit human-interest stories to local newspapers.
2. Have fliers about the booth distributed by clowns to get attention.
3. Imprint the ministry logo on T-shirts, visors, buttons, and pins.
4. Give press releases about the ministry.
5. Use helium-filled balloons to identify your location.
6. Advertise in the event's programs.
7. Keep volunteers informed through church newsletters.
8. Use free local television and radio access, as well as community bulletin boards.
9. Use portable puppet stages and "good-time" wagons.
10. Have a staging area for performing groups and speakers.

## Possible Events and Places for Booths

Airports

Amusement parks

Amusement rides

Art festivals

Arts and crafts shows

Auctions

Auto races

Beaches  
Bicycle events  
Boardwalks  
Boat shows  
Bus and train stations  
Business and trade shows  
Camps  
Campuses  
Carnivals  
City/state/national parks  
Commercial campgrounds  
Community events  
Convention hotels  
Conventions  
Country crossroads  
Custom auto shows  
Ethnic festivals  
Expositions  
Fairs  
Flea markets  
Garage sales  
Holiday events  
Horse and livestock shows  
Jamborees  
Little League parks  
Malls  
Marathons  
Nursing/retirement homes  
Parades  
Playgrounds  
Produce stands  
Professional sports events  
Recreational sites  
Roadside parks

Rodeos

School events

Shopping centers

Sporting events

Sports enthusiast shows

Swimming pools

Tourist areas

Trailer parks

Video-game rooms

### Follow-Up Methods

Design a way of obtaining information from people visiting your booth. The following methods have been successful:

- Guest book registration
- Drawings and contests
- Correspondence course offers
- Youth graffiti boards
- Sign-up sheets for obtaining materials
- Photos taken to be delivered later
- Tape-recorded interviews, with participants' permission

A system of referral for local people, as well as those outside your area, will help your follow-up efforts. Here are some steps for local follow-up:

1. Provide names of two local pastors and churches in the area.
2. Send these pastors and churches the names of prospects.
3. Send a letter and make a phone call to each pastor about the prospects.
4. Use a response card for each pastor to fill out and return after contacting the prospect.
5. If pastors do not respond, send the names to two other pastors and churches and follow the same pattern.

Here are some steps for follow-up with people outside your area:

1. Give prospects the names of Baptist associational directors of missions in their areas.
2. Send directors of missions the names of the prospects.
3. Send a letter and make a phone call to each director of missions, giving information about the prospects.
4. Have a local director of missions contact two pastors near a prospect's home.

5. Use response cards for the director of missions to fill out and return after contacting the prospects.
6. If the director of missions does not respond, obtain the names of two pastors in the prospect's area, make direct contact, and restart the process.

## Evaluation

Evaluation is necessary because:

1. Emphasis is on quality and building long-term rapport with management.
2. Participants can give their special insights to the evaluation process.
3. It is good stewardship.
4. It enhances the follow-up of spiritual and ministry possibilities.

Some important points to remember in evaluation are:

1. Get the correct address of key event staff members and ask for their suggestions, evaluations, and comments — both positive and negative.
2. Collect stories, pictures, and suggestions that will be helpful in writing public relations materials.
3. Focus on the spiritual dimension.
4. Develop a plan for preserving the event's results.
5. Write letters of thanks to volunteers.
6. Write stories to share with interested people.