

CAMPAIGN SUCCESS GUIDE'S

Small Groups Coordinator Handbook



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Congratulations!

WAY TO GO for signing up to be the Small Groups Coordinator. This is a big deal! Thanks for stepping up to serve. It takes a team to pull off a campaign and your work will be a blessing to your church.

First, have you read the CAMPAIGN SUCCESS GUIDE?

If you haven't read it, you need to do that before looking at this document. If you don't have that document, email your Pastor (or the person who provided you with this document).

The purpose of this handbook is to help you understand your role and responsibilities as the Small Groups Coordinator. If you need help, we encourage you to contact your Campaign Director.

Your Role as the Small Groups Coordinator

You are responsible for all things related to small groups for the campaign.

In short, your focus is on (a) the small group coaches, (b) the small group hosts (and facilitators), and (c) assimilating people into small groups.

With the coaches, hosts, and facilitators, you will need to recruit, train, equip, and encourage them.

Here are a few “big picture” items to keep in mind before we jump into the details:

Maximizing the Power of a Small Group

We live in an extremely isolated world today. Our culture feeds into individualism and lifts it up as a value. The fruit of rampant individualism is massive loneliness. Unfortunately, we have lonely people in our churches.

One of God's purposes for our lives is to learn to love people in our spiritual family—the church. As

a leader in your church, one of your responsibilities is to help people grow in their relationship with other believers.

Relationships are the glue of your church. Sure, some people will spontaneously develop those connections, but you can't leave relationships to chance. They're too important. Relationships can't be built in a crowd.

That's why you need small groups. People can develop meaningful relationships in small groups, but they're not an automatic fix. Some people can be in a small group for years and never make authentic connections—and your church never grows warmer in the process.

The truth is, many people have never really learned to love anyone. Small groups are the laboratory where they can learn all the relational skills they have yet to learn elsewhere.

These principles won't be taught on autopilot. You and your team must set the expectation of the relationship principles that your small groups are built around. Here are five of the relationship principles taught to the small groups at Saddleback:

- 1. Make your small group a priority.** If people only attend small groups when they feel like it, they won't develop meaningful relationships. A habit means you do it consistently. That's what's so great about spiritual growth campaigns. Anyone can commit to being a part of a small group for six weeks. If you can help people develop that habit over a couple of months, they'll likely continue it afterward.
- 2. Share your thoughts humbly.** Arrogance and pride destroy fellowship. You can't simultaneously try to impress others and build meaningful relationships. Small groups should provide your congregation with opportunities to let go of their egos and come together with a desire to share what God is teaching them.
- 3. Respect the ideas of others.** Courtesy matters in small groups. If your small groups are going to teach people how to love—and help your church grow warmer—you need to teach people to listen to one another. People must learn how to do that no matter how much they disagree with each other. In today's culture, social media has conditioned us to push back hard on whatever we disagree with. Small groups can teach people how to respect one another in light of their differences in opinion and beliefs.

- 4. Open up about your faults.** Vulnerability takes a small group to the next level. When people can talk openly about their faults, stresses, pressures, and troubles in life, small groups will grow.

Most people don't get that opportunity anywhere else. They can't be open and share their problems at work. They can't do it at school. Frankly, they often can't do it at home. People spend a lot of time pretending their lives are perfect. But for them to grow, they should be able to be open and honest about their pain.

- 5. Encourage one another through accountability.** The Bible tells us in Hebrews 10:24 how important this is: *“Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds”* (NIV). Every person in your church needs to have someone who can spur them on to reach their goals—whether those goals are spiritual, health, career, family, etc. If you surveyed the people visiting your church, you would find that most of them don't have those kinds of relationships. Accountable relationships are rare, but your people need them.

Such relationships don't develop overnight. That's why consistency is so important for small groups. You need to encourage people to continue making small groups a priority—even after the campaign.

Action Plan

8 Weeks Prior to Campaign Launch

- 1. Review this entire handbook** and make notes before taking action.
- 2. Get the contact information for the campaign leadership team:** Pastor, Campaign Director, Weekend Service Coordinator, Prayer Coordinator, and Communication Coordinator.
- 3. Understand what your Small Groups Team will look like.** Essentially, your team will consist of four roles:
 - **Small Groups Campaign Coordinator:** This person leads the entire small group effort for the campaign.
 - **Coaches:** Each coach serves and supports up to 15 small groups. If your campaign has less than 15 groups, you can choose to have the Small Groups Campaign Coordinator be the coach.
 - **Hosts:** Each host opens their home and facilitates the discussion.
 - **Facilitators:** Some hosts will open their homes but may not want to lead the discussions. These homes will need separate facilitators.
- 4. Gather ideas for your small groups ministry.** What will your small groups ministry look like? Since there is no “one way” to run a ministry, feel free to get creative. You could gather ideas on your own, but you might want to recruit a small team to help brainstorm. Here are some questions you may need to answer:
 - What is the best way to find and recruit coaches, hosts, and facilitators?
 - What’s the best way to invite people to join a small group?
 - How many new groups could potentially get started?
 - How many coaches, hosts, and facilitators will you need?
 - How will people express their interest in a small group? What criteria will we ask for?
For example:
 - Life stage (single, married, empty nester, etc.)?
 - Location?
 - Day of the week?
 - How will we “assign” people to a small group?
 - At the back of the small group workbook, you will find resources for small groups. Review these and consider how you might use them during the campaign.

- 5. Finalize the details.** You’ve reached the point at which your small groups ministry is beginning to take shape—good job! Chances are, you will have more ideas than you can realistically implement. That’s okay! Take some time to finalize the details for your small groups strategy. You might do this on your own or with the brainstorm team. Ask God to give you wisdom on which ideas to keep and which to let go.
- 6. Make a Small Groups Team Calendar.** Based on your brainstorm sessions and finalization of the details, it’s time to create a calendar. It should include:
- **Small Group Coaches’ meetings**—we suggest at least two meetings:
 - (a) an orientation meeting several weeks before the campaign starts, and
 - (b) a “check-in” meeting the third week of the campaign.
 - **Host/Facilitator recruitment start date**—we suggest at least four weeks of “heavy” recruitment.
 - **Host/Facilitator orientations**—keep these short and sweet! Offer these sessions at convenient times, like before or after a weekend service.
 - **Small group sign-ups begin**—we suggest at least four weeks to take sign-ups.

Whatever strategy you decided on, organize it into a simple list and present it to your team. Use the Small Groups Team Calendar template on page 7 if it’s helpful.

Small Groups Team Calendar

EVENT	DATE	TIME	WHO ¹	LOCATION	NOTES

¹ For example: coaches, campaign leaders, staff, church-wide, etc.

- 7. Define your communications needs.** Now that you’ve finalized the details and created a calendar, you are ready to determine what your church needs to hear. Work with the Communication Coordinator so he or she can get the message out.

Essentially, you are making two appeals to your church—you are inviting people to either host a small group or join one.

Keep your communication short—just tell them the essentials. Raise the need, inspire commitment, and then give them an easy way to sign up.

Once you are done with this step, don’t just rely on “mass” communication—it’s impersonal! Ask people face-to-face to commit, and ask your brainstorm team to do the same.

Work with the Communication Coordinator to refine the following strategy:

A. Make it easy to be a HOST:

- H**ave a heart for people—care for them.
- O**pen your home—one night a week for only six weeks.
- S**erve some snacks—it doesn’t need to be much!
- T**ell your friends—invite them to your group.

B. Dismiss the myths your potential hosts may have:

- Hosts don’t need to be Bible experts or experienced ministry leaders.
- Hosts don’t need to spend hours in preparation for the study.
- Hosts don’t need to make a long-term commitment.
- Hosts don’t have to facilitate the discussion; if you open up your home, we’ll find a facilitator.

C. Best Practices

- Have your Senior Pastor launch the appeal for hosts with a special sermon devoted to small groups.
- Plan on at least **FOUR** weeks of asking people to be a host or join a group.
- Repeat, repeat, repeat. “We need hosts! You should join a group.”
- Continue challenging people to join a group throughout the campaign. Even at week 3 of the campaign, encourage people to get connected.

- 8. Build your Coaches team: (a) Create a “job description” for your coaches, (b) recruit them, and (c) meet together.** A coach’s job is to serve and support up to 15 hosts/facilitators by answering questions and offering encouragement and prayer. Identify some people who would be great at this role and ask them face-to-face or over the phone. We encourage you to avoid email or texting—personal is better!

If you already have small groups in your church, contact all of them and let them know about the campaign. Be sure to assign each group to a coach—even if they are a “veteran” group!

When you meet with your coaches, keep things simple. Review their “job description” and the small group workbook, and pray for the campaign.

Adapt the material below to create a “job description” for your Coaches.

The Coach’s Role and Responsibilities

Role

A small group Coach’s job is to serve and support up to 15 hosts/facilitators by answering questions and offering encouragement and prayer.

Responsibilities

- Contact all newly assigned hosts/facilitators to introduce yourself and give them your contact information.
- Check in with half of your hosts/facilitators every week. Some hosts/facilitators may need you to check in with them every week, especially if they are new to being a host or seem a little anxious about their group. Here are the kinds of questions you could ask:
 - What’s going good? Where do you see God working?
 - Do you need any help?
 - Who is showing up? Who is missing? Would it make sense for you to follow up with those who haven’t been coming?
 - What can I pray for? (If it makes sense, pray for them on the phone.)
- Report back to the Small Groups Coordinator every Thursday or Friday.

9. Create a “job description” for your Hosts/Facilitators. Adapt the material below to create a “job description” and an orientation for your Hosts and Facilitators.

The Host's and Facilitator's Role and Responsibilities

Role

A small group Host's job is to create an environment where people can discover and discuss God's Word while developing deeper relationships with one another.

Responsibilities

Before Campaign Launch

- Preview all of the materials, and the small group DVD and workbook, so that you are familiar with how the curriculum for each week will flow.
- Preview the "Help for Hosts and Facilitators."
- Invite friends, neighbors, and/or co-workers to join your small group. Let them know the campaign topic and that it's only a six-week commitment.

Before You Meet Each Week

- Preview that week's lesson (video and workbook).
- If a new person is assigned to your group, connect with them and invite them to your home.
- Pray for each of your group members.

After You Meet Each Week

- Evaluate how your meeting went: What worked? What should change?
- Connect with your coach if you have any questions or issues that you need help with.

HELP FOR HOSTS and FACILITATORS

As you prepare to facilitate your group, here are a few things to keep in mind:

REMEMBER THAT GOD IS WITH YOU. You may not feel ready, and that’s okay! The Bible is filled with people who didn’t “feel ready,” but God worked powerfully through them. Paul knew that his ministry wasn’t based on his own strength: *“That’s why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ’s mighty power that works within me”* (Colossians 1:29 NLT).

BE FRIENDLY. Greet people at the door with a big smile; this sets the mood for the whole gathering. This doesn’t mean you need to be superficial—people will see through that. Even if you’ve had a bad day, ask God to give you joy. In Christ, our hope is unshakable and there’s always a reason to be thankful.

BE YOURSELF. God wants to use your unique gifts and temperament. Don’t try to do things exactly like another host; facilitate your group in a way that fits you.

PREPARE FOR YOUR MEETING AHEAD OF TIME. Review the session for that week, and write down your responses to each question. Pay special attention to the **Putting It Into Practice exercises** that ask group members to do something other than engage in discussion. These exercises will help your group live out what the Bible teaches, not just talk about it.

PRAY FOR YOUR GROUP MEMBERS BY NAME. Before you begin your session, take a few moments and pray for each member by name. You may want to review the Small Group Prayer and Praise Report (included at the end of the workbook) at least once a week. Ask God to use your time together to touch the heart of each person in your group. Expect God to lead you to those he wants you to encourage or challenge in a special way. If you listen, God will surely lead.

WHEN YOU ASK A QUESTION, BE PATIENT. Sometimes people need a moment or two of silence to think about a question. You may be tempted to fill the silence by answering the question, but don’t!

DON’T MOVE ON TO A NEW QUESTION TOO QUICKLY. After someone responds, affirm their response with a simple “thanks” or “great answer.” Then ask, “How about somebody else?” or “Would someone who hasn’t shared like to add anything?”

BE SENSITIVE TO PEOPLE WHO ARE QUIET. New or reluctant members may not be ready to share or pray, so don’t put them on the spot. If you give them a safe setting, they will blossom over time. If someone in your group is a wallflower who sits silently through every session, consider talking to them privately and encouraging them to participate. Let them know how important they are to you—that they are loved and appreciated—and that the group would value their input and grow from their insight.

PROVIDE TRANSITIONS BETWEEN QUESTIONS. Ask if anyone would like to read the paragraph or Bible passage. Don't call on anyone, but ask for a volunteer, and then be patient until someone begins. Be sure to thank the person who reads aloud.

OCCASIONALLY BREAK INTO SMALLER GROUPS. A smaller group will help some people connect more with the study and apply it to their lives. Also, sharing prayer requests won't take as much time, so there will be more time to pray together. A smaller group may also encourage a quiet person to participate in the discussion or pray aloud.

DON'T TRY TO DO EVERYTHING ON YOUR OWN. Because we are better together, we don't need to do everything—every week. Ask others to help with snacks, facilitate the discussion, or help with anything else your group might need. Give others the opportunity to serve and utilize their gifts by asking for help.

Action Plan (continued)

6 Weeks Prior to Campaign Launch

- 1. Begin promotion (if you haven't already begun).** Start taking sign-ups for small group hosts/facilitators and participants.
- 2. If you have any Small Groups Team orientations, meetings, or events coming up in the next few weeks, prepare for them now.** Don't wait until the last minute!
- 3. On-board any new (a) coaches or (b) hosts/facilitators.** Make a personal connection and point them to the next orientation meeting. If there are no remaining orientation meetings, review the orientation material with them in person or over the phone.
- 4. Assign people to groups.** If anyone has signed up to be in a small group, assign them to a home (based on the criteria you determined weeks ago) and contact their coach and host to give them the contact information.
- 5. Encourage your hosts to invite friends, neighbors, and co-workers to join their small groups.**

4 Weeks Prior to Campaign Launch

- 1. Continue promotion.** Take sign-ups for small group hosts/facilitators and participants.
- 2. If you have any Small Groups Team orientations, meetings, or events coming up in the next few weeks, prepare for them now.** Don't wait until the last minute!
- 3. On-board any new (a) coaches or (b) hosts/facilitators.** Make a personal connection and point them to the next orientation meeting. If there are no remaining orientation meetings, review the orientation material with them in person or over the phone.
- 4. Assign people to groups.** If anyone has signed up to be in a small group, assign them to a home (based on the criteria you determined weeks ago) and contact their coach and host to give them the contact information.
- 5. Encourage your hosts to invite friends, neighbors, and co-workers to join their small groups.**
- 6. Coordinate with the Campaign Director to place an order for small group curriculum.**

2 Weeks Prior to Campaign Launch

- 1. Continue promotion.** Take sign-ups for small group hosts/facilitators and participants.
- 2. If you have any Small Groups Team orientations, meetings, or events coming up in the next few weeks, prepare for them now.** Don't wait until the last minute!
- 3. On-board any new (a) coaches or (b) hosts/facilitators.** Make a personal connection and point them to the next orientation meeting. If there are no remaining orientation meetings, review the orientation material with them in person or over the phone.
- 4. Assign people to groups.** If anyone has signed up to be in a small group, assign them to a home (based on the criteria you determined weeks ago) and contact their coach and host to give them the contact information.
- 5. Encourage your hosts to invite friends, neighbors, and co-workers to join their small groups.**
- 6. Distribute small group curriculum to your hosts.** Ask hosts to return unused study guides to the church office after Week 1 so they can be redistributed to other groups.

Campaign Launch Weekend

- 1. Continue promotion.** Take sign-ups for small group hosts/facilitators and participants.
- 2. If you have any Small Groups Team orientations, meetings, or events coming up in the next few weeks, prepare for them now.** Don't wait until the last minute!
- 3. On-board any new (a) coaches or (b) hosts/facilitators.** Make a personal connection and point them to the next orientation meeting. If there are no remaining orientation meetings, review the orientation material with them in person or over the phone.
- 4. Assign people to groups.** If anyone has signed up to be in a small group, assign them to a home (based on the criteria you determined weeks ago) and contact their coach and host to give them the contact information.
- 5. Coordinate with the Communication Coordinator to have some of your Small Group Coaches volunteer at the “Communication Hub” (an easily accessible location for church attenders to learn more about the campaign) before and after every service.**
Your coaches will have the opportunity to promote small groups and invite visitors and church members to join as a host, facilitator, or participant.

Every Week of the Campaign

- 1. On-board any new (a) coaches or (b) hosts/facilitators.** Make a personal connection and point them to the next orientation meeting. If there are no remaining orientation meetings, review the orientation material with them in person or over the phone.
- 2. Assign people to groups.** If anyone has signed up to be in a small group, assign them to a home (based on the criteria you determined weeks ago) and contact their coach and host to give them the contact information.
- 3. Check in with half of your Coaches.** Find out how the groups are doing and if there are any issues you need to address.

Week 5 of the Campaign

- 1. On-board any new (a) coaches or (b) hosts/facilitators.** Make a personal connection and point them to the next orientation meeting. If there are no remaining orientation meetings, review the orientation material with them in person or over the phone.
- 2. Consider “Next Step” options for groups and hosts/facilitators.**
 - If a host/facilitator wants to continue, will you offer more training?
 - Create a list of curriculum options for groups that will continue.
Check out <https://pastors.com/groups> for a list of our group studies.
- 3. Advise the hosts and facilitators to think about life after the campaign.**
 - Will their group continue?
 - If they don't continue, are they interested in hosting or facilitating a new group?
 - If they continue, do they need curriculum options?

Last Week of the Campaign

- 1. Encourage each group to hold a “Celebration” social event.**
- 2. Follow up with hosts to make sure they have the materials needed to move on to their next study.**
- 3. Plan follow-up training for new hosts who wish to continue leading a group.**

After the Campaign

- 1. Write thank you notes.** As our world becomes increasingly digital, a short handwritten note makes a great impact. Set aside time to thank everyone on the Small Groups Team—your coaches, hosts, and facilitators. Enlist the help of others if your team is too big to manage on your own.
- 2. Finish strong by looking back.** Take some time to evaluate the small groups ministry. Do this on your own, but also consider sending out a survey to the small groups team.

Your Campaign Small Groups Ministry Evaluation should include a list of (a) what worked, (b) what didn't work (but could be fixed), and (c) what didn't work (and can't be fixed).

Put together a Campaign Small Groups Ministry file and give it to your Campaign Director. This will help for your next Campaign! It should include:

- Small Groups Team Roster
- Small Groups Events Calendar
- Campaign Small Groups Ministry Evaluation

- 3. OPTIONAL:**

We'd love your feedback!

If you have ideas on how we can make this handbook better (even if it's just a typo!), or if you had some creative ideas you'd like to share, please email campaigns@pastors.com.