



BRAINSTORMING FOR EVANGELIZATION

Facilitator's Guide

Overview

Purpose: The purpose of this small group exercise is to help your parish brainstorm answers to the question: *How do we become an evangelizing parish?*

This exercise is an extension of the book *101 Ways to Evangelize* by Susan Windley-Daoust.

Time: Allow 60–90 minutes.

What you'll need

- A chalk or dry erase board for recording ideas.
- 6–10 people who have become invested, are spiritually sound, represent different elements of your community, and know the rules.
- Snacks and drinks—keep it relaxed.
- A facilitator willing to record, stay out of it, and enforce rules. Ideally this is an outsider to the group. However, it could be an insider who understands the process and keeps it going.

Preparation

Before getting into this exercise as a small group, *pray* deliberately and intentionally—not just a few minutes before you start, but a few *days* before you start. Read some good texts or books on evangelization: *The Joy of the Gospel* • *Made for Mission* • *Ablaze* • *Start with Jesus* • *Divine Renovation* • *Rebuilt* • *Making Missionary Disciples*, etc.

If you can, do some *assessment* of your parish and community. Know what you are offering and what people say they need.

Finally, have a serious *vision conversation*: who is Jesus Christ calling us to be as a parish? (See gracewatch.org for a “Discussing the Vision” digital printable.)

As you prepare for this session, remember that the purpose of brainstorming is to get as many ideas

as possible on the table. They may be outlandish and undoable, but that's okay ... they will help spur creative thinking. In fact, *encourage* “crazy” at this point. God will help you do what you are called to do. But use this time to think big, bold, and without internal censoring.

Process

1. Begin by praying for the Holy Spirit to inspire your time together.
2. Hand out the “Brainstorming Rules” and the “Evangelization Scratchpad” sheets. Review the rules, and explain that you will be “cheerfully ruthless” enforcing them for the sake of the process.
3. Note that there are a few things that trip up church organizations during brainstorming sessions, and warn your participants to avoid them. Do not comment on cost. Do not comment on anticipated resistance. Do not devolve into a theological argument right now (although brainstorming ideas clearly outside of Catholic doctrine doesn't help you move forward). Do not discuss whether someone will allow an idea to happen. The goal here is not culling; save that for the next meeting. This brainstorming session is about creating as many local responses to the call to evangelization as possible.

One other common pitfall when brainstorming local evangelization ideas: Too much emphasis on hospitality (the quality of welcome to Mass, parish offices, etc.). While strong hospitality is essential, it does not constitute a full evangelization initiative because it is focused on those who are already coming to church. Spend no more than one third of your evangelization brainstorming on hospitality issues.

4. Once you have reviewed the guidelines above, set a timer and invite participants to begin brainstorming.



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A Few “Rules” to Keep in Mind...

1. Bracket your judgment of ideas.

The purpose of a brainstorming session is to offer ideas that respond to the call to evangelize—that is, to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. All ideas put forward are potential responses, or at the very least serve to inspire other responses. There is no such thing as a bad or crazy idea. Bracket any judgment until *after* the meeting; it is a different thought process and will take up too much time here.

2. Offer and encourage extravagant “shoot for the moon” ideas.

Taming a wild idea is a lot easier than thinking of a perfect and workable one right away. Challenge one another to go as big as possible. Shout out unusual and fantastic ideas to see what they spark. No idea is too outrageous. Exaggerate ideas with abandon.

3. Go for quantity over quality.

Name the idea briefly, with just enough detail to understand it, and move on. Think fast! You will narrow down ideas at another meeting. The more ideas, the more likely you have surfaced ones that work.

4. Build on previously stated ideas.

Create new ideas by expanding on the ideas of others. Try to add extra thoughts to each idea. Use other people’s ideas as leap boards for your own. Combine stated ideas to create a new one.

5. Every person and every idea has value: Participate!

Each person has a specific perspective on your community, parish, and inviting people to Christ. We need to hear from everyone. Please participate and offer your ideas.

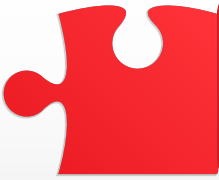


THRESHOLDS TO CONVERSION



Trusting the messenger. › Curiosity about Jesus. › Openness to following God. › Seeking a relationship with Christ. › Intentional discipleship.

KERYGMA



God is good. › Sin separates us from God. › Jesus Christ died for us to offer us love, truth, and joy now and forever. › The Holy Spirit helps us say yes to God's love.

EVANGELIZATION



...Is the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life (*Catechism*, #905). Evangelization always contains some element (or the whole) of the kerygma.

Use this space (and the back of this sheet) to jot down your brainstorm ideas...or just to doodle, to help the creative juices flow.

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS



Pre-evangelization (relationship building) › Evangelization (proposing Jesus Christ) › Catechesis (growing in knowledge of Christ and his Church) › Discipleship (walking the path, receiving the sacraments, sharing Christ with others).