



NEWCHURCHES

MULTIPLY THE MISSION.

HOW TO SPOT A FIRST TIME GUEST

By: Danny Franks

A few weeks ago, an alert reader alerted me to the fact that they'd never seen a post of this kind on the blog. Sadly, I was not alert enough to jot down the alert reader's name, and even several seconds minutes worth of inbox searching failed to produce any identifying info so I could give 'em credit.

So alert reader: I apologize.

But the question remains, how do you spot a first time guest? How do you distinguish a seasoned member of your church from one who's walking in the door for the very first time? Ideally, you'll simply follow your procedure: [have a process](#) that you can use as a tool to identify and greet guests as they arrive.

But what if there's no process? Or what if there is a process, but your guest missed the signage or the instructions or just wanted to fly under the radar? Here are six things that might help (and yes, these are likely cobbled together from the thoughts of [Mark Waltz](#), [Nelson Searcy](#), and others. This same non-alert person also failed to find specific references in their books).

Heading towards the wrong door / parking spot / building.

Seasoned people know the rules: where to park, where to walk, when to get there. If a guest looks lost (and if you have an observant outside team), you can help get them to their destination.

Slowing down as they approach.

Seasoned folks confidently maneuver your sidewalks and front doors; guests do not. If they're slowing their pace, chances are they're new.

Looking around / looking up.

A first timer will try to take it all in. They're looking for visual cues: signs, banners, and overheads that let them know they're in the right spot.

Over- or under-dressed.

If you're a casual crowd and a guy shows up in a three piece, he *could* be a fancy hipster. Or he could be dressing for what he thinks your church expects.

Really late or really early.

Let's err on the "really early" side. Your regulars are probably the ones showing up for an 11:20 service that you don't have.

Texting. A lot.

Sure, this could be the sign of any 12-59 year old in your church. But it could also be the sign of a first time guest who is trying to find the friend they're meeting there. True story: I once approached a lady who had been texting for 10-15 minutes as she stood in the lobby. She said she was trying to find a friend of a friend who'd invited her. The good news: that friend went to the Summit. The bad news: she was at the wrong campus. My wife invited her to sit with our family and the experience was (partially) saved.