



THE PHILOSOPHY OF RECRUITING

ERIC SWANSON



Looking back over a long lifetime of service, John Mott, one of the founders of the Student Volunteer Movement said this: “If I had to do it all over again, I would have had more conferences because at conferences more critical decisions are made than at any other place.”

WHAT CONFERENCES ACCOMPLISH

Here is a short list of what conferences can accomplish in both the life of a believer and the life of a ministry:

- Conferences are catalytic. Things happen at conferences that do not happen on campus.
- Conferences change lives. Studies show that we develop convictions from personal Bible study and conferences of three or more days.
- Conferences are a time of bonding. Often at a conference or on the bus ride to the conference, friendships are formed which bring students from the fringes into community.
- Conferences get all those in the ministry moving in the ministry moving in the same direction.
- Conferences help to build multiplying disciples. Conferences are just as essential to building disciples as meeting in small groups or one-to-one. You will typically notice that all of the student leaders have attended a retreat or conference. Often more is accomplished at a

retreat than in a whole semester of Bible studies.

- Conferences can serve as a rallying point-- something that everyone is looking forward to.
- Conferences build vision.
- Conferences raise the commitment level of those who attend. Commitments to Christ or decisions to go on missions projects often happen at conferences.
- Conferences provide opportunities for training.
- Conferences give students hands-on ministry experience.

WHY RECRUITING IS DIFFICULT

After recruiting for three conferences a year, it's easy to lose motivation for recruiting for—yet— another event. Every conference can't be the all-time best. We grow tired of being cheerleaders for Campus Crusade events. We think of recruiting as an interruption to the ministry rather than as an integral part of it.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RECRUITING

We make at least two wrong assumptions when it comes to conferences. 1) Students know what is going on, and 2) students will go to the conference on their own and don't need to be asked or challenged to consider going.

On each campus, the students in the ministry can be represented by a line.

20% 60% 20%

For sake of illustration, let's say that when you give the opportunity to sign up for a conference, 20% immediately decide they want to go. To them it doesn't matter if the conference is expensive or is a



thousand miles away. For one reason or another, they know they want to be there or need to be there.

Another 20% has no intention of going . . . never. It wouldn't matter if the conference were across the street, it was free, and Billy Graham was the main speaker—they just are not going to go.

It is the 60% in the middle that is affected by our intentional efforts to ask, invite, and challenge. Students in this segment are wondering if they will be alone at the conference, if it will be worth the time, expense and effort of attending. These questions are answered in the recruiting process.

WHY STUDENTS GO TO CONFERENCES

Students do not go to conferences solely because they are good, although that is important, but 1) because their friends will be there. Generally speaking, the strength of the relationships will determine the strength of the recruiting effort. Unless there is a strong web of relationships within the movement, gathering people to conferences will be very difficult. 2) Because they are asked, and 3) because they see themselves as an integral part of the ministry.

When asked why they decided to come to a conference, 250 students responded as follows:

- Wanted to grow in my walk with God --39%
- Had attended before--12%
- Wanted to be with my friends--12%
- Wanted to renew my commitment to God--8%
- A friend encouraged me to come--6%
- To deal with my future--5%
- I knew it was where God wanted me--5%
- Other--11%

A FOUR-FOLD CHALLENGE

In challenging students to go to a retreat or conference, four phases can be identified.

INFORM. This is where you arouse interest with publicity, announcements, testimonies, and skits. "There's going to be a Christmas Conference in Denver, January 2-7."

EDUCATE. "Let me tell you what will go on....We're going to take a bus....We'll be staying at the Adam's Mark Hotel in downtown DenverHere's who will be speaking...on these topics.... (Highlight speakers and

seminars that you have benefited from.) The price will be....Here's the schedule....You can register by...."

MOTIVATE. This is where you answer, "What difference does it make if I go?" In your own words, share the benefits of going to the conference.

- A time to pull away from a busy campus schedule and grow in your relationship with God. A greenhouse for growth.
- A time to get to know other Christians from your campus.
- Excellent training.
- You'll come back a different person.
- Ask, "What do you think you'd get out of this conference?"
- It'll be a great time.

This is where you say, "I'd really like you to come with me to the retreat. Let me tell you how God has used it in my life and how I can see you benefiting from being there." (Think back on your own life changes, impressions, reservations and fears.) Motivation is helping them want to go. The more important it is to you, the more important it will be for them.

CHALLENGE. Side shows, skits, testimonies, films, banners, and brochures are all helpful in promoting a conference, but ultimately recruiting comes down to a person-to-person challenge: "Would you like to go?" "Can you think of anything that would keep you from going?" "Would you pray about it this week and ask God if He wants you to go?"

This is the most difficult of the four phases, the most effective, and the most ignored. A challenge is done best in a one-to-one setting. Make sure there is accountability and follow-through by getting a definite "yes" or "no" from each student.

As good and complete your conference brochure may be, don't assume that you can ever say, "Everything you need to know is in the brochure. Just read it" and expect students to come. People come because of people.

GOALS VERSUS DESIRES

Goals are statements of faith. No goals—no faith. Goals are a statement of what we believe God wants us to do. "We're praying for two bus loads of students to go to the conference." Goals are a focal point for trusting God together as a ministry. Goals become



our “prayer targets.” In setting recruiting goals, it is useful to remember the difference between goals and desires. A goal is an objective that can be achieved without anyone else’s cooperation, i.e. “My goal is to personally challenge 20 students to go the Christmas Conference.” A desire is an objective that cannot be achieved without someone else’s cooperation. This is your prayer target, i.e. “We’re praying for 100 students to go to the Christmas Conference.” It is essential that we pray for our desires and hold ourselves accountable for our goals.

USING OBSTACLES TO BUILD FAITH

In challenging students it is necessary that we don’t make the decision for them but help them to trust God in overcoming the barriers if they really want to go. Barriers and obstacles (no money, work commitments, etc.) are not final but are opportunities to see God work. Assuming a student wants to go to the conference, our job is to help him to believe God to meet his need to get him there. There is a great difference between, “Well, I guess I’ll go if God provides the money” and “I believe God wants me to go and I’m trusting Him for the money.” God can often do as much in the life of a person getting him to the conference as at the conference itself—sometimes more.

THE ROLE OF THE TEAM LEADER

No matter who is in charge of running the conference on your campus, the bottom line is what you, as the custodian of the vision, think of and say about the conference. You must get behind the promotion and recruiting. A good team leader has the ability to focus and define what needs to be done and when. It is you who defines the importance of each conference in the overall ministry plan.



Eric Swanson is a former Campus Crusade staff member who now serves as a Leadership Community Director for Externally Focused Churches. He received his Doctor of Ministry degree from Bakke Graduate University.