

# *How to Develop a Prospect File*

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We start by leading the church and each Sunday School class to discover prospects. This must be accomplished through a combination of several activities and projects. While there are a number of ways to identify prospects, here are a few:

1. Church guests
2. Parents of children that attend our church programs
3. Inactive church members
4. FRAN prospects
5. People Search
6. Need based prospects

These are only a few of the ways a church can find prospects. Now what are you going to do once you have a list of names? We must have some way to get the names of each prospect to the Sunday School classes or individuals that will begin contacting and building relationships. If we can match the prospect with someone or some class that has something in common with the prospect (age, stage of life, interest), then the possibility of building a relationship with this prospect increases. We need to develop not just a prospect file, but a system of cultivating these prospects. Here is an example of how churches have developed such a system.

The system includes these components: master file, class file, assignment, contact, and report. The following descriptions will help you understand each component and how it is used in prospect cultivation.

## **Master File**

The process begins with developing a master file. This file includes every prospect that has been discovered and whatever updated information we have on him/her. This file or listing never leaves the office. If the name is lost, we generally lose a prospect. So wherever the information is – in a file folder, an index card file, or computer – we need to make sure this information is stored safely.

## **Class File**

From the master file, prospects are assigned to the class they would attend if they came to Sunday School. This creates the class file. This file needs to be designed so that the class outreach leader can assign prospects to class members for contact. Generally, each prospect is put on a separate card so that this card can be given to the person with all important details about this prospect such as name, address, phone number, spouse name, age of children, previous contact information, and other information useful in building a relationship with this person and his/her family. If the file is for a coed class, a single card can contain the information for a married couple.

## **Assignment**

The class file can be the best organized file in the church, but we will not reach anyone if contacts aren't made. The contacts may be phone calls, cards, or visits. Whatever method is used, someone needs to see that we are tracking and contacting every prospect in the file. That person is the class outreach leader. This person is not to make all the contacts, but is to see that the class is aggressive in building relationships with each prospect. The prospect cards from the class file must be put into the hands of class members who will take responsibility for those prospects.

## **Contact**

As mentioned earlier, a contact is a call, card, or a visit. The personal visit is by far the most effective contact. However the contact is made, we need to begin to become personally involved with the prospect.

## **Report**

The results of the contact are to be written on the card and the card returned to the class outreach leader. The more detail we have of the contact, the more effective we can be in reaching that prospect. The phrase "good visit" tells us little to help us determine future actions and contacts.

Information such as family situation, hobbies, interests, and needs are far more valuable in determining what we need to do to reach that prospect. What if the card is lost? Remember the master file? Another card is reproduced from the master file.

## **Master File**

Once a contact is made and a report is given, the record must be updated on the master file. This is important for several reasons:

1. If the class card is ever lost, then the contact information will not be lost.
2. Contacts made to all the members of a family can be used to develop a strategy for the family. This is especially true if the master file is organized by family. For instance, if the first grade Sunday School teachers want to know what other contacts were made to the parents, then that information and who made the contact would be available.
3. If a person is no longer considered a prospect or if other information is changed, then the master file would be updated.

Whatever method is used to develop contact and to cultivate each prospect discovered, the key is not in the method, but the key is the church members who take a responsibility to build relationship with each prospect. The key is in building a team to reach out to those not only on the “list” but to anyone they meet.