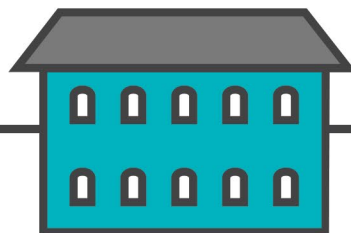




ONE TEAM.

MULTIPLE LOCATIONS.

*How Staff Teams at Effective
Multisite Churches Overcome
Distance and Lead Together*



INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, multisite ministry has become a major topic of conversation among church leaders. Championed by some of America's largest megachurches, it is hard to ignore the potential this strategy holds. Here are just a few of the opportunities provided by a multisite strategy:

- » One church can impact a broader geographic region
- » Church members can better reach their local friends and family members
- » Resources are better stewarded with multiple churches/campuses leveraging the same outputs

Leadership Network recently reported that over 8,000 churches in America have adopted a multisite approach. Based on our experience, we expect few would say they have perfected it. Leading one church in multiple locations comes with a wide array of challenges. To name just a few...

- » Providing great teaching to multiple campuses
- » Identifying the right locations
- » Developing strong launch teams of volunteers
- » Maintaining staff relationships despite physical distance

So how are the most successful multisite churches setting themselves and their staff teams up to win? We set out to answer that question.

In September 2014, we surveyed 628 churches as a part of our research on [Next Level Teams](#). In this white paper, we're providing a deeper evaluation of the 106 churches that identified themselves as multisite. As always, we're taking a practical approach to the research, highlighting findings that can help church leaders make decisions and including some thoughts from members of The Unstuck Group.

Whether you're leading one church in many locations or simply considering if multisite may be in your future, we hope this white paper furthers your perspective and helps you better reach your community...or several!

The Multisite Landscape

Before we dive into the structures and strategies used by today's multisite churches, let's take a moment to understand their true size.

How Large Are Multisite Churches?

Based on our research, churches are unlikely to take on a multisite strategy until their average weekly attendance is beyond 1,000 people. Just 4% of churches under 500 people are multisite. That only increases to 15% among those with 500-1,000 in weekly attendance. Among churches of 1,000-2,999, 45% reported they are multisite; 70% of churches larger than 3,000 people said the same! If you're considering whether or not to go multisite, you should honestly assess the size of your church. Smaller churches may not yet have the people and administrative systems in place to adequately serve multiple campuses. With further growth, those gaps can be filled.

Churches are unlikely to take on a multisite strategy until their weekly attendance is beyond 1,000 people.

How Likely Are Churches of Different Sizes to go Multisite?

Average Weekly Attendance	Percent of Churches That Are Multisite
0-499	4%
500-999	15%
1,000-2,999	45%
3,000-24,000	70%

How Many Campuses Do They Have?

The average multisite church in our study had approximately three to four different campuses (3.5 on average). Beyond three campuses, we believe multisite churches must make significant structural changes to support

several locations. Those changes can include the addition of a Central Services team that leads ministry areas across all campuses. Hiring a Campus Pastor at the original campus is also important at this point to create margin for the Lead Pastor.

The average multisite church has 3-4 campuses.

Nearly half (47%) of the multisite churches we surveyed were operating with just two campuses. That may be an indication of the challenges that arise when a church begins operating in two locations. It could also be a sign that the multisite movement is still in its early stages with many churches just joining.

Setting the Structure for Maximum Growth

Leading staff across multiple locations certainly comes with a unique set of challenges. Communication becomes more complicated and differing opinions are quickly developed. Campus leaders often hold a variety of perspectives on how ministry should be done. At the same time, senior leaders often see the need to maintain a consistent approach to ministry. So how do multisite churches move forward with unity? The key seems to be in the ways they structure their staff and decision-making.

Utilizing a Matrix Structure

In our research, 63% of multisite churches were utilizing a matrix structure. This structure sets most ministry leaders up to report to both a campus pastor and a central ministry leader. Typically, campus pastors hold ultimate responsibility for their staff members while central ministry leaders set direction for the strategy, methods, and ministry plans used in their respective areas.

Nearly 2 out of every 3 multisite churches utilize a matrix structure.

How Likely Are Churches of Different Sizes to Utilize a Matrix Structure?

Average Weekly Attendance	Percent of Churches Utilizing a Matrix Structure
0-499	17%
500-999	33%
1,000-2,999	67%
3,000-24,000	77%
All Churches	63%

Where Do Multisite Churches Make Strategic Decisions?

Nearly 60% of multisite churches use a Central Services team to make strategic decisions.

Strategic decisions define major components of the ministry plan that will be utilized at each campus. Knowing where those decisions get made is important for keeping everyone on the same page. Nearly 60% of multisite churches that participated in this study use a Central Services team to make strategic decisions. A

little less than one third (29%) make those decisions through the “main campus.” Just 12% make strategic decisions at each individual local campus.

It seems difficult for a church to make unified progress with multiple campuses setting their direction independently. **In fact, we found that churches making strategic decisions at each individual local campus are experiencing the least amount of growth on average.**

Churches early in the multisite process are likely to make strategic decisions through the “main campus.” However, beyond three locations, we find it becomes difficult for “main campus” leaders to successfully direct all campuses while leading their own. At that point, the development of a Central Services team becomes necessary.

Where Do Multisite Churches Make Strategic Decisions?

Central Services team	59%
“Main Campus” leaders	29%
Each Local Campus	12%

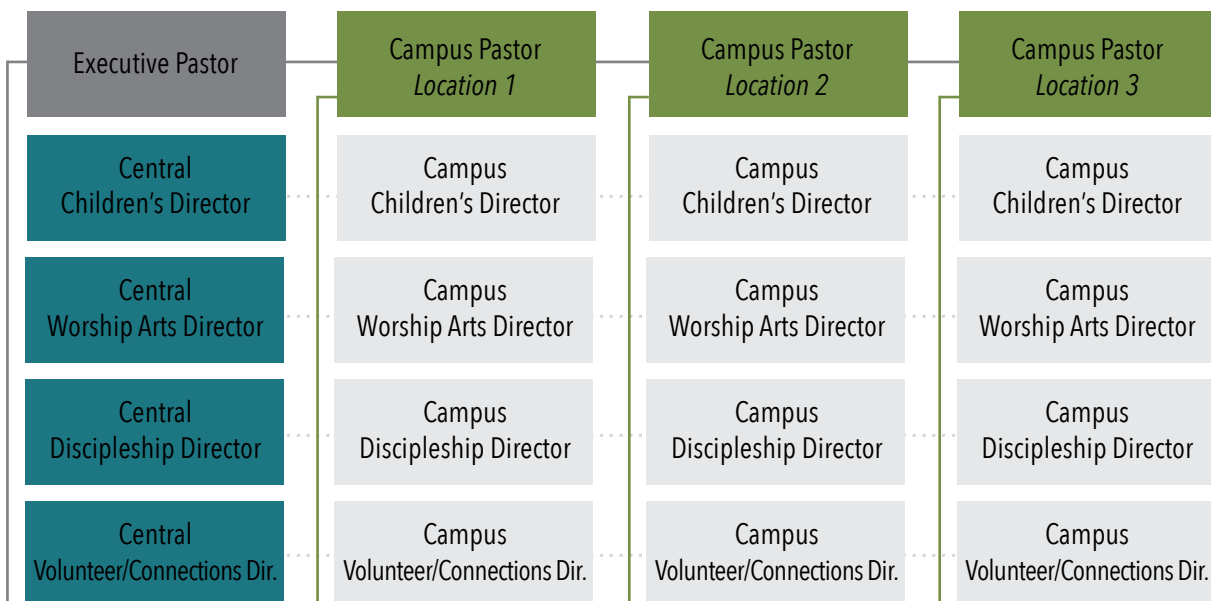
What is a Central Services team?

Central Services teams do not work for a specific campus but rather lead ministry across all campuses. It is typical for a multisite church to have a Central Services leader for each functional area, such as Children’s, Students, Adult Ministry, Creative Arts, Communications, Accounting, IT, etc.

The majority of multisite churches have developed this Central Services team. Even among the churches we surveyed with just two campuses, 50% utilize Central Services for strategic decision-making.

Among churches with just two campuses, 50% utilize a Central Services team.

Sample Matrix Structure



LEADING THOUGHTS

AVOIDING THE "MOTHERSHIP SYNDROME" EARLY ON

*by Paul Alexander, Ministry Consultant with The Unstuck Group
and Executive Pastor at Sun Valley Community Church*

One of the natural tendencies in a multisite church is to drift towards having one "main campus" that directs the entire organization. It makes sense, because at some point there was an original campus and it is strategic to minimize redundancy and the duplication of efforts when possible. But, if not careful, the original campus can quickly be seen as the "Mothership," a corporate headquarters making policies and calling all the shots. This can lead to a breakdown in unity through unhealthy competition, frustration and even resentment. Here are some of the lessons we've been learning at [Sun Valley Community Church](#) about avoiding the "Multisite Mothership Syndrome."

Multisite doesn't mean making a Xerox copy of the original campus

When many people hear the term "multisite," their initial thought is that they're making a "Xerox copy." And copies are never as good as the original, right? Don't fall into the trap of making clones or exact replicas of the original campus. There are thousands of little idiosyncrasies that make the church you're at unique, and those simply can't be reproduced. Instead invest your time, energy and resources into reproducing values, culture (best done through people), ministry principles and best practices.

Headquarters never understands what's going on in the field

Just like in the "real world," headquarters never seems to understand what's going on in the field. That's because they are "there," while you're the one actually on the field doing the work of implementing the plan. That's why it's important to create clear, broad guardrails for your teams and then turn them loose to make decisions and implement the game plan.

Clear lines of reporting and responsibility are essential

The staff at the original campus will feel responsible for the "brand" of your church. Their initial tendency will be to influence the new campus more than they should. The staff at the new campus will feel a tendency to defer to the experience of the original campus. This will slow down decision-making. A clear reporting and job responsibility structure is key to freeing everyone up to play their unique role on their unique campus.

One size doesn't fit all

A church of 250 looks and acts differently than a church of 2,500. A church of 2,500 looks and acts differently than a church of 5,000. In a church of 250, the pastor can pretty much know everyone. A church of 5,000 has the resources to pull off things that a church of 250 never could. Don't expect each campus to look and act the same. Instead, leverage the unique systems of each campus to reach its unique community.

Don't advertise your original campus at your new campus location

If what's going on over "there" looks better than what's going on "here," then why stay "here?" If the content for the weekend worship services is coming from the original campus, be cautious about language, messaging, branding and even what "bells and whistles" are put on display that other campuses may not have access to utilize. The goal of the new campus is not to get people interested in your church so they'll make the commute to the original campus. The new campus is a unique, thriving Gospel centered church for that particular community.

WHAT DOES A CAMPUS PASTOR ACTUALLY DO?

Many multisite churches utilize a Central Services team for strategic decisions and also provide weekend messages through video. So if campus pastors aren't making strategic decisions or teaching, what is it that they actually do? Here are the three most important responsibilities:



1. Champion the Vision and Culture

A campus pastor should have a gift for reading his environment and translating the vision to the people he is leading.



2. Lead a Team to Accomplish the Mission in a New Context

A campus pastor must raise up leaders and volunteers to effectively implement plans and meet goals. He must also manage the calendars and budgets of all ministries on the campus.



3. Love and Care for the Congregation

A good campus pastor makes a large church feel intimate. He is in tune with the needs of the people at his campus and personally invests in the transformation of lives.

3

Clarifying Your Strategy Before You Start

Any leader who has led a church to go multisite certainly knows that launching new campuses does not solve any problems that existed at the original campus. In fact, it can quickly turn organizational cracks into significant gaps. Small areas of confusion about how things are done receive multiple interpretations from leaders at different campuses. This can quickly create dysfunction and misalignment.

Multisite churches with a strategy implemented throughout the organization were growing 44% faster than those without one.

The impact of a clear ministry strategy in a multisite church is significant. Among the multisite churches we surveyed, those that had a strategy implemented throughout the organization were growing 44% faster than those that did not. Clarifying your ministry strategy before going multisite will enable leaders to implement it effectively across all campuses.

How Much Does a Shared Strategy Impact Growth in a Multisite Church?

Strategy Implemented Throughout the Organization?	2014 Attendance Growth
Yes	13%
No	9%

Whether you're just thinking about taking your church multisite or have already done so, here are a few questions to help you reconsider the clarity of your strategy:

- » Is there a clear ministry pathway in place to lead someone from first time guest to a devoted follower of Jesus Christ? Do each of the steps clearly connect to the next?
- » Does everyone understand which ministries and programs you do and don't provide? Do they understand why you do or don't offer each?
- » Is there a clear manual describing how each ministry and program is executed?
- » Do your ministries and programs scale to different campuses of different sizes? Is there anything you couldn't do in a smaller or portable campus?

Wondering if your strategy is clear to everyone on the team? Start pulling together ministry leaders to further define how you operate. It may seem like you're "getting in the weeds" on the front end, but your future campuses will thank you for creating a deeper level of clarity.

LEADING THOUGHTS

9 SIGNS YOU'RE NOT READY FOR MULTISITE

by Tony Morgan, Founder and Chief Strategic Officer of The Unstuck Group

By this point, it should be clear that multisite ministry is full of complexities. While it certainly creates significant opportunities, going multisite too quickly can do more harm than good. In this way, it is similar to a building project. *Adopting a multisite approach will help a healthy church reach more people faster, but it will get an unhealthy church even more stuck.*

As you consider whether or not you should take your church multisite, here are nine indications that you are not ready:

- 1. You haven't clarified your vision and values.** When that happens, the DNA of your ministry gets really fuzzy the further you get from your top leadership.
- 2. You don't have a culture of leadership development.** Because of that, there aren't enough strong leaders to launch the new location and fill the leadership vacuum at your original location. (Without a doubt, leadership is the key to success with multisite.)
- 3. You don't have a culture of leadership empowerment.** When you start launching new campuses, you can no longer make every decision from your original campus.
- 4. You haven't replicated core systems.** Think about every key next step people take at your church (i.e. membership, serving, groups, care, outreach, etc). You need healthy systems in place for each of those areas. Start by meeting at multiple times before you consider meeting at multiple locations.
- 5. You haven't been intentional about your communications strategy.** You're still embracing the "fairness doctrine" where every ministry and event gets equal treatment. That's creating lots of noise and fewer next steps.
- 6. You're not willing to embrace the tension between authority and influence.** As you add campuses, allow authority to flow through the campus pastors and influence to come from your central ministry leaders (i.e. children's, student ministries, groups, creative arts, etc.).
- 7. You're trying to find the right facility rather than the right location.** The ideal facility in the wrong location will never gain momentum. The ideal location with an adequate facility will thrive.
- 8. You fail to count the cost when it comes to time and money.** Time is needed to identify leaders and build teams to engage ministry from day one. Money is needed to fund the launch and several months of ministry until the campus is self-sustaining.
- 9. You haven't prayed and sought God's direction.** I'm amazed at the doors God opens and closes when churches take the time to wait for direction and then don't hesitate when he says, "Move."

MOVING FORWARD FROM HERE

Whether you've been leading a multisite church for years or you're just starting to dream about your first campus launch, we hope this report has furthered your perspective. We're confident that God will lead you in the right direction—and to the right communities—as you continue seeking His guidance for your future.

If you find yourself questioning if or how you should lead a multisite church, we'd be glad to assist in any way that we can. We love seeing churches leverage their resources and talents to lead regions of people into a relationship with Christ! Learn more at theunstuckgroup.com/multisite.

Making Multisite Work

*If you are considering multisite for the first time or are preparing to launch a new campus, **The Unstuck Group's** team is seasoned in multiple models across the country and can lend perspective and experience to your ministry.*

Learn how we can help.

The Unstuck Group helps churches get unstuck by providing consulting and coaching experiences for strategic planning, ministry health assessments and staffing and structure reviews. In-depth multisite services help churches evaluate and refine their multisite strategy, equipping them to reach more people in more locations. Learn more by visiting TheUnstuckGroup.com.