



NOT ABLE TO SEND TRIPS?

The Seven Things You Must Do
to Keep People Engaged

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Friends in Missions:

What a season it's been with COVID-19 changing the entire landscape of the world. This has presented entirely new challenges for the world of short term missions. But here's the great and amazing thing... missions is far more a way of life than it is what we do. And with that mindset there are so many ways to refocus our energy so that we can continue that lifestyle no matter what the circumstances that surround us might be.

This is a challenge to you! You are in the precious position of being a guide and a leader to others in the world of missions and believe it or not, your voice and direction are needed now more than ever. Someone said it well, we braced for COVID-19 like a snowstorm and we should have braced for an ice age. Hey, that's okay! Let's embrace what we've been given and step up to our role of equipping and sending.

Wondering what ServiceReef has to gain from all of this? That's a good question and we're quite fine with you asking! ServiceReef is 100% committed to the missions mobilization of people. This is our core DNA and this is what everybit of our technology revolves around. ServiceReef is about far more than technology too. We're in the thick of this with you as we serve in other missions leadership positions and are diligently working to help guide and shape this new season of missions. We believe we have a lot to offer as we've worked with literally thousands of organizations to better their engagement and we believe we can help you do the same.

This resource is a tool to help reshape your mindset and to take advantage of this unique season. Honestly, we're pumped about what this season can mean for you and your organization and if approached well, this will only be a catalyst for you to have even greater impact on the world. We're thankful to be working with you and others who are greatly shaping the world around us and continuing to mobilize people to mission.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Will Rogers
CEO & Co-Founder, ServiceReef

#1 – Focus Your Message

Big Picture: Focus your message on living a missional life whenever and wherever you are. It's a lifestyle, not just a single experience.

Missions and the vision we are inviting people into is far greater than simply engaging in a short term trip. We are inviting people into a radical lifestyle shift and a challenge to how they view the world. Short term trips are an excellent way to achieve that but they are not the only means. And in a season where trips cannot be sent, there is still a need for your leadership and direction.

Focus your message on the bigger picture... the vision that we are all called to serve others and that missions is a way of life, not just a trip we attend. Even reflecting on the Great Commission, Christ doesn't say "go...", He says, "as you go...". And so our invitation to people who serve is both inviting them into specific opportunities to serve but also into a lifestyle of service and mission.

Help unpack this for your participants. Here are a few ideas:



Drip Emails - send a series of emails to your alumni and current participants to coach them on this mindset. Just remember that Rome wasn't built in a day and it's okay to take your time coaching and walking people through this process.



Teaching Nights - organize teaching nights of fellowship and teaching around this bigger picture.



Adjust Your Website - take a look at your website and see where you can communicate this greater vision in your overall message.



Train Your Leaders - make certain your key leaders and team leaders are fully "in the know" and equipped to teach others in this mindset.



Create a Course - create an online or small group course specifically for your organization or church to guide people through this vision.

Remember the big picture WIN... creating a movement of people who live on mission. Yes, the short term trip is a goal but it's a stepping stone goal to a larger goal. Everything shifts to when you focus on a greater goal.

#2 - Equip Your Leaders

Big Picture: Your leaders are your greatest vision advocates... equip them to multiply your vision.

A CEO once asked me if you were rolling out a new initiative... if the time should first be spent engaging your internal teams or making an announcement to the public. Answer... you should always first engage your internal teams. It's a matter of respect but it's also just a good strategy. You want your internal teams supporting whatever shifts you may have and you certainly don't want to agitate some of your greatest advocates!

Most organizations have a core team that manages all of the short term trip strategy and logistics, but you also have key leaders, team leaders, and volunteers. All of these should be engaged in this process. After all, they are already invited to your team for a reason! Invite them into more of the strategy now to help craft this new path forward. Here are some suggestions.



Brainstorm with Them - invite each of these groups or representatives from each group into a brainstorming session about how you are going to engage during this season of no short term trips. This can be live or virtual but host something that asks for their options, ideas, and feedback.



Pitch the Concepts - once you have a plan in place, pitch the whole idea to them, and ask for their feedback. Don't just tell them what's happening, invite them into what's happening and give them a chance to shape things.



Make them Advocates - call them to action by asking them to be advocates of this new strategy. You need a lot of voices out there helping to make this shift. Engage your leaders to be voices for your new strategy.



Specific Communications - make sure you are including them on the "early release" of your thoughts and plans. It just builds capital with those who are key to helping you scale your message.



Honor them Well - once things have all been rolled out for your new strategy, come back and honor your leaders well and give them thanks. Maybe even send them a note and a small gift of thanks.

However, you build your strategy, lean into your core team to help you make it a success. You don't need to carry the weight of all of this on your own. Truth is, you probably already have an incredible team to help bring this all to life.

#3 - Communicate Well

Big Picture: Communicate well and often so your participants feel honored and stay well engaged... don't allow room for doubt.

Seasons of uncertainty can bring doubt and confusion and as things shift around us, we're all wondering what's next, how do we navigate things, and what should we be doing. That's only natural as humans as we think about our base needs. What's great is how this sets you up for success in being a guide for your participants to help show them the path forward.

Being a guide is one of the most important things you do for your participants. They are looking to you for direction and even if you don't have all the answers, I'm certain you have a picture of what the next few steps you're taking might be. Great! Communicate that and be transparent about things. People don't need to know the entire plan but they would like to know what's the next step or two. So let's unpack a few things you should consider in your communication strategy.



Create a Plan - even not knowing how long things might be on pause, go ahead, and create a rhythm of communicating every so often. Perhaps it's once a week or every other week. Just have some consistency.



Engage Multiple Parties - remember it's not just about your trip participants - it's also about your team leaders, your field partners, your donors, your volunteers, and anyone else who is involved in the process.



Send Prayer Needs - a great place to start in your communications is sharing key prayer needs from your partners with your participants. This is something that can always be of value.



Point to Current Opportunities - international trips might be on pause, but what can you be doing in your own neighborhood now? Point your participants in a direction that allows them to use those servant-minded skills now. Remember Acts 1:8 with the intention to reach Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.



Create Benefit - we are all inundated with communications and emails. That said... make yours stand out. The simplest way to do that is to make your communications beneficial to your participants (focusing on their needs and not your own).



Think Sequentially - this is more advanced, but consider leveraging your overall communication series to help teach something but doing that in parts. For example, you might have a 10 part teaching that's communicated over 20 weeks.



Be Creative - these can certainly be simple text emails but also think about adding videos, giving assignments, inviting into online discussions, and more. Be creative in what you communicate to make it fun and engaging.



Create a Community - consider creating some online community and always point back to it so that your participants can connect with each other and see that they are never alone on this journey.



Share Stories - stories are powerful means to engage our hearts and minds. Share what stories you have but also ask people to share their stories. Mix these with international experiences and local to help cast that local vision.



There are so many ways to engage and communicate well in a season of pause. Our challenge is that you don't actually pause, but rather shift that energy into something new and impactful.

#4 - Shift To Local

Big Picture: You must give people the opportunity to serve wherever they are... but soon!

Many times we don't think of missions as something that's local. We won't dive into that whole discussion... I'm just going to move right into an assumption that we need to shift into being hands and feet right here around us. Our belief is that missional living should be a way of life and something you're doing overseas and right here at home. This season just gives us the opportunity to focus well on local engagement.

So a really quick refocus here... we're trying to keep our people engaged. Our big picture goal is to engage people in missional living but right now we can't travel overseas. We're shifting that energy, even if our entire organization is focused globally, to something local, if even just for a season.

Here's why this is so important. You are a guide for these people and they have trusted you to help them explore how to use their talents and where to use their giftings to serve others. Remember your role and jump in with both feet as their great guide. They need you. There is a thirst in their heart to serve and you have a great opportunity right now to connect that thirst with a chance to give of themselves. Here are some tips to make this happen:



Research - finding local opportunities isn't that difficult when you start digging a little. Start with a general search online for ways to serve locally but then reach out to known organizations and churches to learn more.



Promote - be an advocate for serving local and make sure you're advocating this to your audience. It's good for them to hear your voice (like we talked about earlier) and to stay the role of the guide through this process.



Organize - the icing on the cake is when you can host and run your own local serving events. These are great ways to keep your entire audience engaged but also great for specific teams to focus them on an activity that helps build that team.



Stepping Stone - continually remind your team leaders and volunteers that every single serving opportunity is a stepping stone to the next one and there's very little difference in what they are doing right here at home and what they will do soon overseas.



Live Generously - help guide people to living generously. Sometimes you simply can't serve locally but there are other ways you can give. Help people know all the ways they can participate in serving their local community.



Consider Anxiety Levels - everyone has their own level of comfort and even anxiety around the world today. Take into consideration the level of comfort of your people and build opportunities for various perspectives.

#5 - Share Stories

Big Picture: Stories are powerful and they are what people remember... share them well and often! Sharing a story well brings glory to God.

Stories are powerful things... many refer to stories as the language of the heart. I think we can all relate to hearing someone share some life experiences and all we walk away with are the stories they shared. Stories just work like that. They become anchors for us to recall purpose and meaning.

Well, this is one prime season for you to be capturing and sharing stories! As you work on how you engage your audience during this season, focus your messages around certain stories. We recommend you consider making 80% or more of your messaging focused around your stories. Let's unpack a few ideas for how to do this well.



Ask for Stories - this is a great season to reach out to past participants AND your partners to ask for stories about what's happened in the past so you can intentionally share about the shared impact you are having.



Then & Now - capture stories from the past but also from what's happening around us right now. Remember you want to keep the fire alive for your global work but also you're shifting to engaging local as well. Balance these two perspectives.



Participants & Partners - it's great to share stories from both the perspective of your trip participants but also your partners. Both can share impact, lessons learned, and invite others into similar experiences.



Give Direction - it's not just asking people to share stories, it's also giving them direction on how. Consider giving them some examples, ideal length, and key questions to cover in their story.



Pictures - it's always better to tie a story with a picture so people can feel even more like they are there with the person in that story and experiencing things with them. Pictures also help bring greater visual appeal to the reader.



Create a Story Blog - use tools like ServiceReef to build a combined story blog from all of your stories so these populate in one place for people to read. A story blog can be a powerful way for people to explore on their own.



Drip Stories - incorporate these into your communication strategy and create some drip schedule (ex: every other week's stories) to your members. Of course, it's more information to receive but it's also encouraging news.

#6 – Lift Up Partners

Big Picture: Partners are critical to the success of missional engagement – use this season to help shine a light on them.

Partners often get taken for granted in our web of missional engagement. We work so closely with them and our people know them so well that we often forget to take a step back and really focus on helping others learn about them. This is a great season to tell their story and help educate your audience about these amazing partners. Here are a few ideas.



Find Out Their Needs - reach out to your partners during this season and ask about their needs during this time. That's partnership right?! Reach out to ask about their needs and to see if there's some way you could support those needs.



Host a Webinar - schedule a webinar with each of your partners and invite all of your members to attend. It's good to give these some structure (ex: start with prayer, ask a few set questions, etc.). This is a great way to introduce your audience to your partners.



Share Ways to Engage: either through email, webinar, or any other vehicle... find ways to share their partner needs and let people know how they can engage with that partner. You don't have to be the middleman all the time... help connect your audience directly with your partner for more updates.



Prayer Teams - consider creating prayer teams for each of your partners that commit to meeting each week and praying for your partners. These teams can be such an encouragement to both your organization and your partner.



Interview Your Partners - make time to connect with your partner for an interview and go through a series of questions. You can take those questions and turn them into a partner focus page on your website or a great blog entry.





Retool Your Partner Webpages - take a look at your website and where you feature partners. Perhaps you could do a better job telling the story of each partner, why you partner, and how you go about partnering with other organizations.

Use this season to bring special attention to your partners and build up the resources to more clearly explain who it is you partner with and why. This is a great season to bring a lot of clarity to your wonderful partnerships.

#7 – Prepare for Relaunch

Big Picture: Your relaunch will communicate a lot to your audience.

Was it Ben Franklin that said, “Failure to plan is planning to fail.”? I’m not sure, but the quote is awesome! In many ways, this season has given us time to rethink many things about our mission programs. Regardless, you should be taking time this season to retool how you do things and how you’re going to relaunch. This is such a great time to rework so many of those things you haven’t gotten to but have wanted to for such a long time. Here are a few areas you might consider for assessment as you prepare for a relaunch.

-  **Participant Experience** - what is the overall experience your participants have with your organization? How could it be improved? What’s missing?
-  **Partnership** - how could you better your partnership with other organizations? What is missing? What could help set you both up for greater success?
-  **Application** - how well built is your event application? Could it use a revision and critique?
-  **Team Leader Training** - How well do you train your team leaders? How could you be training them this season?
-  **Trip Promotions** - What materials do you have to promote your trips? What materials do you have to announce your relaunch (when it happens)?
-  **Team Preparation** - How could you better your process for training trip participants? What could you learn in this season from your alumni?
-  **Communications** - What does your overall communication strategy look like for participants? How could that be refined, rebuilt, and refocused?
-  **Automated Systems** - What tools are you using to run your short term trips? Are they serving your needs? Could something do that better?
-  **Task Management** - Have you mapped out all the tasks that go into managing a single short term trip into a standard process? Could this be streamlined?
-  **Post Trip Engagement** - How do you engage people once they get back from a trip? How could you keep people engaged better?

Bonus: Reach out to [ServiceReef](#) to schedule a free assessment and focus on the key areas that could you use energy the most.

You should be building a relaunch strategy that works through your website messaging, your email campaigns, a relaunch event, expected FAQ's, and key leaders. Take the time to plan this out well and have all of your messaging and collateral in place. You'll be thankful you planned it out now and didn't wait until things open back up for trips. You can do this and we're certain you can do this well!



ServiceReef is an online software platform that helps organizations run short term trips and keep members engaged long after they return home. We've helped hundreds of organizations engage people in missional living and we're certain we can help you too.

A few other helpful resources from ServiceReef:

Assessment - a free online assessment followed up by a consult with someone from our team helping you identify a few key areas for potential improvement.

<https://www.servicereef.com/assessment>

Planning Canvas - a free worksheet to help you better plan and manage your short term trips.

<https://www.servicereef.com/canvas>

Missions Made Simple - an online community of other short term trip administrators and missions mobilizers. <https://www.missionsmadesimple.com>

Level-Up Your Short Term Trips - an e-course designed to help you review, refine, and better your short term trip program.

<https://www.missionsmadesimple.com/level-up>

