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11

Managing Outreach

Orienting the Church Toward Achieving Its Mission

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**"You can give people responsibility and authority; but without
information they are helpless. Knowledge is the ultimate power
tool."**

--Bill Gates¹

Growth of a Little Country Church

Corinth United Methodist Church sits on a peaceful country road only a few miles from a bustling university town. Less than a mile from the church, new homes are being built to accommodate Gen X and boomer families moving into the area. However, for most of these new residents, Corinth UMC is invisible.

For many years, Corinth UMC had been situated in the ideal location. It was across from a small schoolhouse that had been

¹ Bill Gates, *Business @ the Speed of Thought* (New York: Warner Books, 1999), 408.

the center of this farming community until 1955. After the school closed and relocated, a four-lane bypass had cut a swath across the adjacent farmland, cutting off Corinth from the nearby town. Although the road on which Corinth sat intersected the bypass, few community residents traveled the country road because it was a dead-end lane.

However, Corinth had an energetic new pastor and a dedicated team of lay leaders. They were of one accord in realizing their future was hampered by their nearly invisible location. Subsequently, a team was launched to map out appropriate programs and a marketing strategy to inform the community of the new ideas emanating from the church down this "dead-end" country road.

They met with me to discuss their choice of a leader for their marketing team. "We've chosen June Mason (a pseudonym)," began Jack. "She's got the best understanding of what needs to be done." June's farm abutted the church property, and she was the matriarch of one of the oldest families in the church. Definitely of the builder generation, and somewhat refined and retiring, she was not the candidate I envisioned. It seemed to me she might be out of touch with the marketing strategies and outreach ideas this church needed. I was soon convinced otherwise.

"We built the church here in 1937 because we wanted to be across from the school, to minister to families," June said quietly. "We've got to keep that tradition alive. And the steeple was our advertisement for years," she continued. "We built the prettiest steeple and lit it too. Some people complained about putting a light on it. But it was to remind the people that there was a church here. But now people can't see it from the bypass. It's too far away. So we're going to start ministries that will be what our steeple used to be: a light to tell the community that Christ is here."

Over the next several months, June's team created an amazingly sophisticated strategy consisting of family-oriented programming, advertisements, radio ads, an eye-catching logo, a billboard, directional signage to the church, and even advertisements on placemats in nearby restaurants. The exhaustive nature and creativity of this plan was nothing short of amazing, especially considering that it had been created under the auspices of someone who did not fit my image of the ideal "marketer." I soon learned that June's appearance belied her outgoing and likeable personality. Her deep concern for the church reflected an intuitive understanding of its problems. In addition, she had run a farm for many years. Whether dealing with grain, cattle, or churches, she understood the importance of marketing.

Before long, Corinth was enjoying a surprising influx of newcomers--more in one three-month span than in the entire previous year. With a newcomer assimilation process in place, Corinth began to add new Sunday School classes and fill its daycare center. This little country church in the wrong location was buzzing with an excitement that amazed visitors. June had led the charge into the world of marketing, a realm many churches hesitate to go.

Marketing: An Ignoble Task?

Many churches hesitate because they consider marketing strategy to be an ignoble task for the church. There is no such timidity in the business world. According to research conducted by executive recruiting firm Korn/Ferry International, most CEOs and executives start out in the company's marketing division.² Professors Louis Boone of the University of Alabama and David Kurtz of the University of Arkansas point out that approximately fifty percent of the cost of all products is due to marketing costs the company feels are necessary to reach people.³

Why does the business world feel so compelled to invest in marketing, while the church eschews such endeavors? The reason

² Louis E. Boone and David L. Kurtz, *Contemporary Marketing* 11th ed. (Mason, OH: South-Western Publishing, 2004), xxxix.

³ Ibid.

may be marketing's reputation for abuse. Bait-and-switch advertising, false advertising, price fixing, and deceptive pricing are just a few of the maladies that have tarnished marketing's image. However, in every human realm, including marketing, there is the temptation for manipulation and exploitation. In our discussion of managerial ethics, chapter 18 of this book underscores this reality. Although marketing can be abused, it must not be shunned simply because of its potential for misuse. Marketing is a valuable tool for getting across a message. As such, it becomes another resource the Christian can use to communicate the Good News.

Let's begin our investigation into marketing with a definition: Marketing is basically about meeting needs. Viewing marketing through this lens, we can identify four components.

The Four Stages of Marketing

Stage One: Identify the needs of people.

Stage Two: Design something, such as a ministry or program, to meet those needs.

Stage Three: Communicate information about those ministries and services to the people who need them.

Stage Four: Evaluate the satisfaction levels of those who receive the ministry and/or service.

From this four-stage definition, many church leaders immediately will recognize that they are already involved in some marketing. Most churches are engaged in stages one and two. However, because many people regard stage three as suspect, it is the stage the church often ignores.

In chapters 3 and 4 of this book, which focus on strategic planning, we examined stages two and four.⁴ So in this chapter we shall address stages one and three.

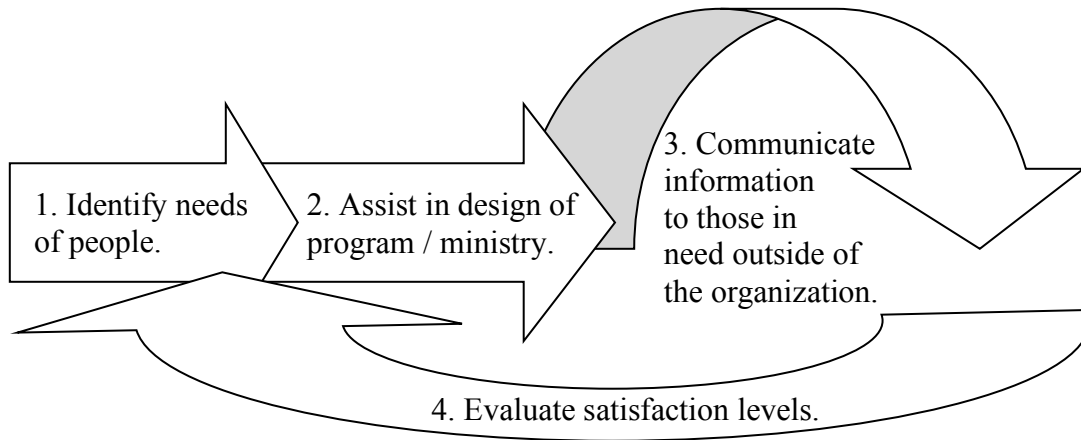
"Outreach" Instead of "Marketing"

Before going further, let's look at an alternative designation for marketing. Because the term "marketing" has a somewhat callous resonance in church circles, I shall use the more amenable (and theologically defensible) term "outreach."⁵ By outreach, I will mean a strategy that addresses the same four areas or tasks explained above and diagrammed in figure 11.1.

⁴ Often, the four stages of marketing are addressed by several disciplines concurrently. In the business world, the marketing department may work with executive management to establish strategic goals. Thus stages are often a combined effort of several disciplines. This is why we address stages two and four in the earlier chapters on strategic planning.

⁵ The business world also has begun to embrace "outreach" as an alternative term for marketing. In many universities, such as The Pennsylvania State University, the marketing department is now called Penn State Outreach Marketing and Communications, <http://www.outreach.psu.edu/>.

[Production, see sample and design fig. 11.1]



[Insert following caption below chart]

Fig. 11.1. The tasks of outreach

[End of fig. 11.1]

Stage One: Identify the Needs of People

To Whom Are We Reaching Out?

To identify the needs of those to whom we are reaching out, we first must ask the question, "Which people?" In the business realm, this group is often referred to as an organization's target. But "target" has an unpleasant ring in the ears of many Christians. However, the term "mission field" historically has been an acceptable synonym, one that identifies the people a church feels it has a mission to reach.

Avoid Outreach Myopia

As a church begins stage one, it should first conduct an honest self-appraisal to ensure that it is not suffering from outreach myopia. Labeled "marketing myopia" in the business world, this is the malady that occurs when an organization is too shortsighted to see beyond what it is doing now. AT&T for years saw itself strictly as a telephone company. After deregulation, it had to escape this myopic view and transform itself into a multifaceted communication network. This expanded understanding thwarted myopic tendencies and allowed AT&T to successfully branch out into new and profitable areas, including the Internet, cable TV, international satellites, and wireless communication.

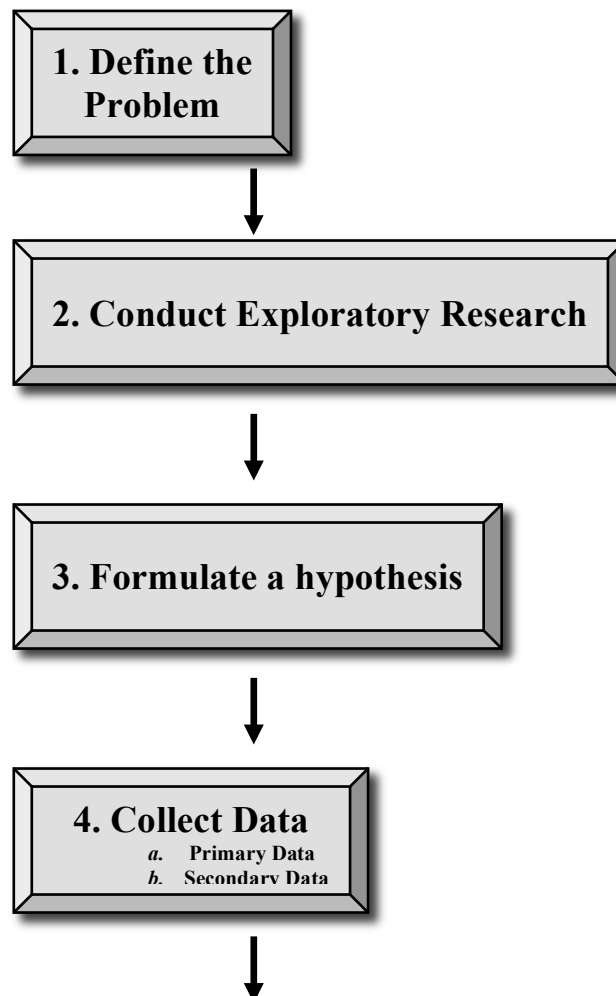
Outreach myopia arises when a church becomes so consumed with the day-to-day running of the organization that it fails to address or identify the needs of those outside their fellowship. Jesus appears to address this myopia when he urged his disciples to "open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life" (John 4:35-36). Jesus' analogy that his disciples must be harvesters harvesting a "crop for eternal life" reminded them to see their mission field and its magnitude.

Find Your Mission Field

Finding your mission field requires hard-nosed investigation into two areas: (1) the things that you do well and (2) the needs of your mission field.

What an organization does well can be defined in its core competencies. However, identifying the needs of your mission field involves a five-step process. Let's look at this graphically in figure 11.2 before we investigate each section individually.

[Production, see sample and design fig. 11.2.]



5. Identify Needs

[Insert following caption below chart]

Fig. 11.2: The outreach research process

[End of Fig. 11.2]

[Production, if possible, use the gray boxes as subheads below on the next hierarchical level after the "Find Your Mission Field" heading above; this would be the same level as "Avoid Outreach Myopia" (also located above)--the lowest level so far.]

1. Define the Problem

Defining the problem begins with conducting a strategic analysis of the organization. This includes a SWOT analysis, which investigates the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the organization.

In the church management field, identifiable church illnesses are often referred to as "pathologies."⁶ These terms are employed because problem conditions are more readily embraced by congregants when described in terms of maladies that

⁶ C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Be Healthy* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979).

affect the "body" of Christ (the church). Common church illnesses include the following:

- **Geriatrophy.** This term comes from combining the word "geriatric," the branch of medicine that deals with the diseases of old age, with "atrophy," indicating a wasting away or failure to grow. Geriatrophy is the wasting away of an aging church because it does not have an influx of younger generations. This is the primary killer of churches in America. Younger generations often feel the aging congregation neither sufficiently understands nor reaches out to them. Thus younger generations go elsewhere. This further weakens the aging congregation, leading to an eventual and painful demise. *A House Divided: Bridging the Generation Gaps in Your Church* describes a seven-step growth process to facilitate the peaceful coexistence of three generations.⁷
- **Ethnikitis.** This church illness is caused by a change in the ethnicity of a neighborhood. It is the second biggest killer of churches in America.⁸

⁷ Whitesel and Hunter, *A House Divided*.

⁸ C. Peter Wagner, "Principles and Procedures of Church Growth: American Church Growth," (lecture, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, January 31-February 11, 1983).

- **People Blindness.** This malady prevents a church from seeing the important cultural differences that exist between groups of people who live in close geographical proximity. These differences tend to create barriers to the acceptance of the church's message.⁹
- **Hyper-cooperativism.** Hyper-cooperativism describes a local church's loss of identity when all or most of its outreach efforts are conjoined with those of other congregations. Studies have shown that in interdenominational outreach efforts, fewer people respond to the outreach.¹⁰
- **Koinonitis.** Sometimes called "fellowship inflammation," this term is derived from the Greek word for fellowship, *koinonia*. This describes a church in which spirituality and unity are so high that newcomers and/or unchurched people are hindered in their efforts to be assimilated. If growth does occur, it is usually "transfer" growth of Christians from other churches.
- **St. John's Syndrome.** This illness is congregational "lukewarmness" about which Christ warned in Revelation 3:16. It is characterized by an apathetic attitude toward

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Wagner, *Frontiers in Missionary Strategy*, 139-60.

spiritual disciplines and formation. It is often the disease of second-generation churches.

- **Sociological Strangulation.** This malady occurs when the facilities/staff are unable to keep up with the influx of people. The famous "80 percent Rule" is that if in any regular service your worship facility is 80 percent full, you are entering into sociological strangulation. "The shoe must never tell the foot how big it is," stated Robert Schuller.¹¹
- **Cardiac Arrest.** As the name implies, this is a serious and all-too-common church illness. Sometimes, the "heart" of the congregation has been so hurt by some traumatic event that the congregation would rather die than continue on as before. *Staying Power: Why People Leave the Church Over Change and What You Can Do About It* examines this serious problem and explains how unity can be preserved.¹²

¹¹ As quoted by C. Peter Wagner, "Principles and Procedures of Church Growth."

¹² Whitesel, *Staying Power*.

When Are You Not Ready for Marketing?**[Note: this subhead is lower than the boxed subheads; this is now the lowest heading of the hierarchy; it and its companion subheads I setting shifted to the left and in roman light face]**

Several of the above maladies are internal illnesses that must be dealt with before a church can initiate an external outreach strategy. Koinonitis, St. John's Syndrome, and Cardiac Arrest in particular must be addressed before a church reaches beyond its walls. In such circumstances, it is more important to make progress toward internal unity and wholeness than it is to initiate an aggressive outreach strategy.

Don't Market Beyond Your Reach

Defining your problem also means defining the scope of that problem. If your problem is Geriatrophy and you need to reach younger generations, first determine how far you should expect those generations to travel to your church. Marketing or reaching out across a geographic zone that is too large may limit your success.

In looking at outreach, we can identify two limiting factors regarding scope: geographic reach and social reach.

Geographic reach means finding the geographic size of your mission field. For most congregations, this will be the size of the area from which they attract existing and potential

constituents. To discover your geographic reach, take these five steps:

1. Place pins representing existing attendees on a physical (or computer) map. Draw a boundary around the area where most of these pins lie. This is your rough geographic boundary (RGB).
2. Look at major transportation arteries that connect your church location with potential constituents. Compute how far along these arteries a person could travel in 12½ minutes. (However, if you live in a metropolitan suburb or a rural area, increase this to 22½ minutes.) In a different color ink, draw a boundary around this area. This is your potential geographic boundary (PGB).
3. Now draw a third boundary (using a third color ink) that roughly falls between the two boundaries. This is your combined geographic boundary (CGB). Most of your outreach should be confined to avenues that target your mission field in your CGB.
4. Recalculate your RGB, PGB, and CGB yearly.

Social reach means that a congregation should not attempt to reach out to those who are too far removed from its categories of age and/or ethnicity, unless it is willing and prepared to make sweeping cultural changes. For example, a congregation comprised of Hispanic builders/seniors (born in and

before 1945) may successfully reach out to Hispanic boomers. The only social barrier will be age. However, if that same Hispanic builder/senior congregation sought to reach out to Asian-American boomers, the combination of two social barriers (age and ethnicity) might thwart the process.

Another more common scenario would be if a predominately builder/senior Caucasian church tried to reach out to boomer Hispanics moving into the neighborhood. The combination of two social barriers (age and ethnicity) means that success would be more tenuous. However, if a congregation's survival was at stake, such chasms might need to be bridged. In such circumstances, the reaching organization will have to radically subdue its own preferences and even adopt the culture of those they seek to reach. This is similar to missionaries in a foreign mission field, who are expected to respect and even embrace the cultural preferences of those they seek to reach. The lesson here is to cross as few social barriers as necessary for survival when calculating your church's mission field.

2. Conduct Exploratory Research

The next step in locating your mission field requires researching the problem, both

theoretically and practically. This is often the second most overlooked step (next to step three). In step two, leaders should undertake the following:

1. **Read** books, articles, research, Internet pages, and so on (both Christian and secular), on the perceived problem. Do not limit yourself to one source. Delve into a variety of information sources.
2. **Look for successful examples** of organizations that have overcome the problem you are facing. More often than not, problems besetting your church will be common to the other churches in the area. Overcome any inclination toward competition or envy, and enthusiastically investigate churches that have been successful in overcoming the problem you are encountering. But be careful that you do not simply accept their explanations. Pastors often attribute growth to the wrong sources.¹³ Thus, conduct an independent investigation of the churches you think might be overcoming the problem you face. Look closely, and use impartial judgment.
3. **Get outside help.** During this stage, an outside consultant is invaluable. Denominational departments often offer such help, but these can be influenced by denominational

¹³ Whitesel, *Growth by Accident, Death by Planning*.

preferences or politics. As is also true in the business world, an independent and outside consultant may be the best utilization of your money. The Great Commission Research Network serves as a clearinghouse for consultants trained in the mechanisms, procedures, and strategies of church management, growth, and health.¹⁴

3. Formulate a Hypothesis

Step three is the most overlooked area in the process of identifying your church's mission field.

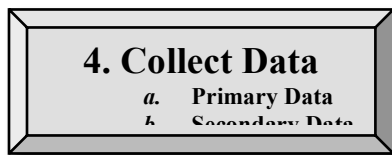
Frequently, initial insights gained in steps one and two can be so euphoric that leaders will forget to sit down and codify the problem. Before researching the mission field, it is imperative to know what you are looking for.

For example, many churches will discover that they are suffering from unbalanced generational ratios. In the case of Corinth Church, June's marketing strategy team discovered that seventy percent of the congregants were aging builders/seniors (those generations born in and before 1945). However, an investigation of county records revealed that boomer and Generation X families (those families born after 1945) made up seventy-two percent of community residents and were the area's

¹⁴ The Great Commission Research Network, <http://www.ascg.org/home>.

fastest growing segment. So the team discovered that Corinth Church's generational ratios were opposite the community's ratios. Thus the church was suffering from geriatrophy.

Corinth then formulated a hypothesis: "Corinth is dying because we do not have programs and ministries attractive to community residents born after 1945." To test this hypothesis, they advanced to the next step.



To confirm its hypothesis, an organization must look at primary and secondary data.

Secondary Data

Secondary data is data that is already published. The marketing strategy team at Corinth Church investigated governmental, denominational, and business data to better understand the new people moving into the area. It soon became clear that these new people were boomers and Gen Xers with young children. The large home sites and quiet country life were attractive to families who were moving to the outskirts of the bustling university town.

Secondary data resources available from county offices, planning commissions, libraries, and the Internet include (but are not limited to) the following:

1. *Monthly Catalog of the United States Government Publications*, published annually
2. *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, published annually¹⁵
3. *Survey of Current Business*, updated monthly
4. *County and City Data Book*, published every three years on counties and cities with over 25,000 residents

Primary Data

Primary data is information collected specifically for the task at hand. Usually this is conducted through a process called "sampling." Sampling requires taking a representative "sample" of an overall population and deducing certain area-wide conclusions. While those unfamiliar with sampling may question its accuracy, research confirms sampling to be a very reliable barometer of community needs.

A House Divided: Bridging the Generation Gaps in Your Church explains how a church can conduct a simple sampling of community needs. These suggestions appear below in abbreviated

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, "Statistical Abstracts," <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/statab.html>.

form. For a fuller explanation (along with sample phone and interview scripts), see especially chapter seven, "Step 3: Identify the Needs of the Unchurched."¹⁶

Focus Groups

As small gatherings of six to twelve individuals, focus groups are designed to bring to the surface feelings that often remain buried in one-on-one interviews. Focus groups help organizations "focus" on information or advice from the group. Four guidelines should direct a focus group.

1. *Group makeup.* Groups should be made up of those in your mission field. For example, convene a group of non-attendees if you wish to solicit advice on what non-attendees are looking for in a church. Regrettably, churches often poll existing members to discover what should be done to minister to outsiders. This will yield an inaccurate perspective--one conceived by those already on the inside. You will get more of the same and, thus, more of what has not worked in the past.

¹⁶ Whitesel and Hunter, *A House Divided*, 144-60.

2. *Group location.* Choose a neutral location in which to convene a group. Many unchurched or dechurched people will feel awkward in an ecclesial setting. Put them at ease by meeting them on their own turf, such as in a library, school, city building, or other public facility.
3. *Meeting setup.* It is important to have a comfortable and private meeting venue. Make sure the chairs are comfortable. Have writing utensils, paper, and refreshments available. In addition, ensure that the location is not open to public scrutiny. People will share more freely if they feel they are in a comfortable, private, and accommodating environment.
4. *Use a moderator.* A moderator will help to facilitate, but not dictate the direction of the conversation.

a. The moderator's job is to

- (1) put the focus group participants at ease;
- (2) implement the focus group agenda;
- (3) steer the group away from controversial topics and injurious remarks;
- (4) tactfully elicit comments from less verbal members;
- (5) keep the discussion on track.

b. The moderator's agenda should pattern itself along these lines:

Introductions

MODERATOR: "Let's introduce ourselves . . ."

(Moderator introduces himself or herself. Participants introduce themselves.)

MODERATOR: "The purpose of our focus group is to discover *(put your hypothesis here)*. Your advice will be very helpful to us. In addition, the meeting will conclude promptly at *(give the time)*." (In the case of a church suffering from *geriatrophy*, the hypothesis might be: "The purpose of our focus group is to discover what people your age are looking for in a church . . . ")

Data Gathering (Sample)

MODERATOR: "Why do you think some people of your age choose not to attend church services?"

PARTICIPANTS: *(Response)*

MODERATOR: "What do you perceive to be the needs of people your age?"

PARTICIPANTS: *(Response)*

MODERATOR: "What needs of people your age can the church best address?"

PARTICIPANTS: *(Response)*

MODERATOR: "If you could tell the pastor of *(your organizational name)* one thing, what would it be?"

PARTICIPANTS: *(Response)*

(Close the meeting with acknowledgment and gratitude.)

One-on-One Interviews

These types of interviews are the best avenues for obtaining detailed information. However, they also can be intimidating for the interviewee. Thus it is best for a church to approach this judiciously, undertaking the following guidelines:

1. **Door-to-door or street interviews.** These types of interviews are not as well received today as they were in the 1950s and 60s. Some groups, such as Campus Crusade for Christ, successfully used these methods to speak personally with millions about their relationship with Christ. However, because overly zealous marketers have

utilized these approaches, today it is best to proceed with caution. If you decide to conduct a door-to-door or street interview, follow the sample guidelines in figure 11.3 to ensure that you conduct your research effectively and appropriately.

2. **Phone Interviews.** Because of the caveats of door-to-door and street interviews, the telephone interview has become increasingly popular. Again, interviewees may be reticent because of the overuse and questionable practices of a few. Proceed cautiously, using a variation of the sample survey in figure 11.3.

3. **The number of interviews required.** Demographers have discovered that a random sample of 1,500 people can provide surprisingly accurate information about the larger population as a whole.¹⁷ However, many congregations will find this beyond their "person power" to conduct. Nonetheless, a reasonably effective alternative is to sample one percent of your mission field. For instance, if you discovered from the U.S. Census abstract that there are 30,000 Gen Xers in your mission field, then a sample of 300 (1 percent of 30,000) would give a reasonably accurate picture of their needs.

¹⁷ David G. Myers, *Exploring Psychology* (New York: Worth Publishers, 1990), 13.

The questions in figure 11.3 can serve as a guide to testing your outreach hypothesis in any of the above types of one-on-one interviews.¹⁸ (In this example, the goal will be to uncover the needs of a younger generation.)

[Production, see sample and design fig. 11.3.]

"Hello. My name is _____ (name) _____ and I am conducting a short survey for _____ (name of congregation) in _____ (city/town) _____. Would you mind if I asked you a few anonymous and brief questions?"

- If "YES," continue.
- If "NO," conclude by saying, "Thank you for your consideration. Good-bye" (if through the phone), or "Have a good day" (if through personal interview).

Survey Parameters

"We wish to interview individuals who were born in the years _____ (year) _____ to _____ (year) _____.¹⁹ Were you born in or during these years?"

- If "YES," continue.
- If "NO," conclude by saying, "Thank you for your time. Good-bye/Have a good day."

Open-ended Questions

QUESTION No. 1: "What do you think a church could do to help people age _____ to _____?"

QUESTION No. 2: "Why do you think people age _____ to _____ do not attend church services?"

QUESTION No. 3: "What are people your age looking for in a church?"

¹⁸ Whitesel and Hunter, *A House Divided*, 156-58.

¹⁹ For Generation X, birth years are 1965 to 1983; for boomers, 1946 to 1964; and for builders, 1945 and before. Birth years are easier to use than specific ages, since the latter will keep changing. However, it is helpful to use the exact ages in the remainder of this survey.

QUESTION No. 4: "What advice would you give me so that a church could help people age _____ to _____ more effectively?"

QUESTION No. 5: "Are you actively involved in a church, synagogue, mosque, or other religious house of worship at this time?"

Conclusion

"Thank you for your time. Your advice will help _____ (*name of congregation*) of _____ (*city/town*) better address the needs of people in our community(ies). Thank you. Good-bye" (*if through the phone*), or "Have a good day" (*if through personal interview*).

[Insert following caption below chart]

Fig. 11.3. Sample survey questions

[End of Fig. 11.3]

5. Identify Needs

Finally, your task is to identify the specific needs of your mission field so that you can select strategies based upon these needs. Several processes can be helpful in this area. One of the most productive and easiest to implement is called the debriefing and correlation procedure. This process is threefold:

1. Immediately upon completion of the interview, meeting of the focus group, or other sampling method, the leader(s)/moderator(s) should rank the needs they perceived. At that same time, they should write down creative ideas and suggestions generated during the interview process.

2. After all interviews have been conducted, the leaders/moderators should meet on their own and combine all rankings into a master list, ranking them from most to least prevalent.
3. Gather all leaders/moderators and correlate responses and suggestions gleaned from the interview process. Then proceed to stage 2.

Stage Two: Select Strategies to Meet the Needs of Your Mission Field

We investigated the tools for selecting strategies on strategic planning in chapters 3 and 4. With that in mind, let's look at figure 11.4 to see how strategies that might meet the needs of those in Corinth's mission field could be graphed.

[Production, see sample and design fig. 11.4]

A List of Needs	Potential Strategies
<i>This list of needs was culled from the data-gathering process.</i>	<i>Brainstorm to create a list of potential strategies.²⁰</i>
Child care for working mothers of preschool children.	Day care provided by the church. Carpooling service for preschoolers in the area.

²⁰ Whitesel, *Growth by Accident, Death by Planning*.

	<p>Have the youth group organize child care on Saturday morning so mothers can grocery shop or spend time with other mothers.</p> <p>Serve a breakfast for mothers with preschool children once a week from 6 to 8 A.M. Staff it with stay-at-home mothers or Builder/Seniors.</p>
After-school care for school-age children.	<p>Kid's Club provided by church after school day ends.</p> <p>Join with other community churches to provide after-school recreational activities.</p> <p>Start an after-school choir called "Praise Kids."</p>

[Insert following caption below chart]

Fig. 11.4.²¹ Mission needs and strategies

[End of Fig. 11.4]

²¹ Whitesel and Hunter, *A House Divided*, 160.

Use figure 11.4 as a basis for the marketing team and the strategic planning team to rate each strategy based upon how well it builds upon your SWOT analysis. Then implement each strategy (the most highly rated first), as resources and time allow.

Stage Three: Communicate Information About Appropriate Ministries and Services to Needy People

Outreach Caveats

Employing football terminology, author Herb Miller once urged churches to "throw your message to wider receivers."²² By this, Miller meant that a church must share its message effectively and widely to those outside its walls. Many churches attempt this but often fail to witness any response from the community because of one or more of the following caveats:

1. **Results are expected too quickly.** Many times a budget committee will allocate money to advertising and then attempt to judge success or failure within a short span of time. In the marketing realm, years may be required to establish customer loyalty. Thus marketing is a long and

²² Herb Miller, *How to Build a Magnetic Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 15.

slow endeavor. While evaluation is important, evaluating results of strategies that have been implemented for less than eighteen months to two years can be hasty. Visiting a church (much less joining one) is an important cultural, spiritual, and personal decision. Often a great deal of time will elapse before results are identifiable.

2. Christians advertise in the wrong places, typically to

other Christians. Every Easter I am amazed by the sheer number of churches that advertise on the religious page of local newspapers. Nestled among dozens, if not hundreds, of similar ads, a small church such as Corinth has little chance of increasing visitor flow.

Unfortunately, ads on the church page are predominantly read by other Christians, not by the unchurched people most churches are attempting to reach. Unchurched people most likely decide what they will do this weekend by reading the entertainment page or the sports page. Thus, for the church, these pages (that often cost more) can yield the biggest return on investment, since they reach more unchurched people with their message.

3. Christian advertisements often promote the same things as

other churches. Churches have many differences, but they also have many things in common. Thus, when churches promote their commonality with similar sayings, they can

overwhelm and confuse the reader. For example, one church page at Easter was filled with churches offering "a place for your family to grow," "contemporary ministry for today's families," and "family friendly and Christ centered." These descriptors were all variations of a fundamental desire to welcome people into fellowship and discipleship. Now, there is nothing wrong with this objective, for we have seen that discipleship is the goal of the Great Commission (see Matt. 28:19-20). However, when many churches side-by-side promote this same objective, it can confuse the potential guest. The reader might feel that every church is the same. As church leaders, we know that this is not the case. Therefore, describe your core competencies in your advertisements so potential attendees will know your strengths and personality.

Employ the Right Advertisement

Marketing students are familiar with the three types of advertisements and the appropriate times to employ them. However, in the religious world, these three types are largely unknown. Here is a brief overview of each, and a graphical representation in figure 11.5 of their appropriate use.

1. **Informative advertisements.** These advertisements provide basic information and announce availability. The ads may give directions to a church or tell about a new worship service or ministry. However, due to their informative nature, they are short lived. As the new ministry or worship service continues, interested parties will become informed. Thus the informative ad will lose its value.

Churches overuse informative ads. These ads almost exclusively describe service times, directions, and so on. However, in doing so, they neglect to convey their core competencies. In the marketing world, informative advertising is employed only at the inauguration of a product or service. That should be the same strategy a church uses.

2. **Persuasive advertisements.** These advertisements plainly describe the core competencies of a church and, as a result, what the church offers. They explain the benefits of specific programming in more detail than an informative ad. This is often the missing element in church advertising. Congregational leaders know the rationale and benefits of a new program but sometimes overlook the receivers' corresponding lack of knowledge. Churches must use persuasive advertising

to explain how programs and ministries meet the specific needs of the people in their mission field.

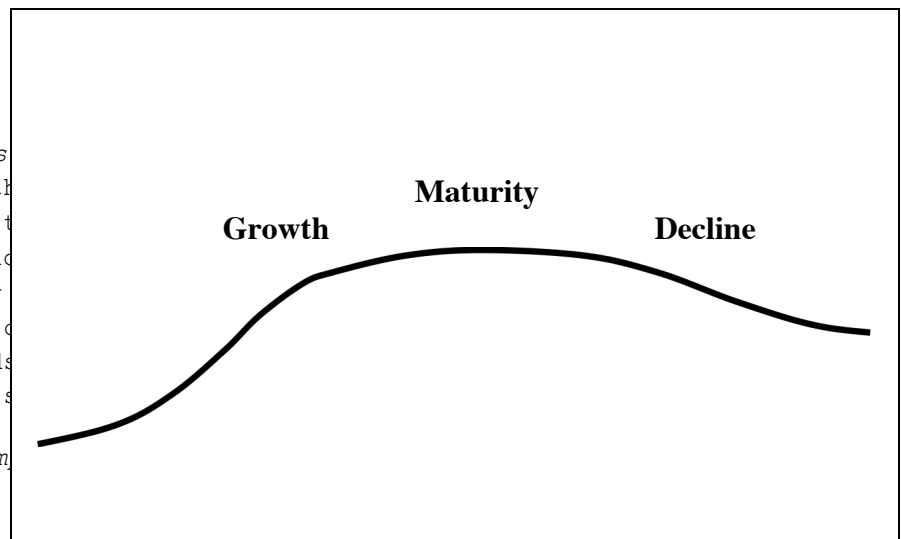
3. **Reminder advertisements.** These ads reinforce previous promotional activity. They are usually short, concise, and designed to remind the receiver of the persuasive advertisements they follow.²³ Many churches err by employing reminder ads before they have established their core competencies in persuasive ads.

Figure 11.5 shows how informative, persuasive, and reminder ads are utilized at different stages in the life of a church or program/ministry.²⁴

[Production, see sample and design fig. 11.5.]

²³ *Reminder advertisements* Christ in conjunction with laying the groundwork by their faith, Campus Crusade found it." Finally, after Crusade launched a media "it" button. The billboards support the young person's

²⁴ Boone and Kurtz, *Contem*



GROWTH CYCLE

of a new church, new
worship service, or a
new program / ministry

**Introduction
of a church
or ministry**

Informative Ads

Necessary at
inauguration of a
ministry, church, etc.



Informative Ads ➤

Persuasive Ads

Necessary throughout
a church's growth



◀ Persuasive Ads ➤

Reminder Ads

Needed as program
progresses



◀ Reminder Ads

[Insert following caption below chart]

Fig. 11.5 Advertising and a church growth cycle

[End of Fig. 11.5]

Advertising Media Alternatives

The types and effectiveness of various advertising media are staggering. To help the reader consider the options and their suitability, figure 11.6 compares various forms of media. The "Percent of Total Budget" indicates how much money churches spend in each category.

[Production, see sample and design fig. 11.6]

Media Type	Percent of Total Budget 25	Advantages for Churches	Disadvantages for Churches
<i>BROADCAST</i>			
Network television	17	Mass coverage, repetition, flexibility, prestige	High cost, temporary message, public distrust; may be reaching a larger geographical segment than the church's

²⁵ The reader will notice that an estimated 20 percent of total expenditures are not spent on these avenues, but rather on miscellaneous media such as phone directories, transit (bus, subway, train) displays, posters, exhibits, and so on.

			mission field
Cable television	8	Same strengths as network TV; less market coverage since every viewer must also be a cable subscriber	Same disadvantages as network TV; however, ads are more targeted to specific viewer segments
Radio	8	Immediacy, low cost, flexibility, targeted audience, mobility	Short lifespan; highly fragmented audience due to differences in musical tastes
PRINT			
Newspapers	19	Tailored to individual communities; ability to refer back to ads	Short lifespan; papers are read quickly
Direct mail	19	Selectivity, intense coverage, flexibility, opportunity to convey complete information, personalization	High cost, consumer resistance, dependence on an effective mailing list
Magazines	5	Selectivity, quality image production, long life, prestige	Lack of flexibility
Billboards	2	Quick, visual communication of simple ideas; link to local congregation with directions; repetition	Each exposure is brief; environmental concerns

<i>ELECTRONIC</i>			
Internet	3	Two-way communications, flexibility, fuller information, links to more information	Difficult to measure effectiveness

[Insert following caption below chart]

Fig. 11.6. The church and the media²⁶

[End of Fig. 11.6]

The Broadcast Media: Network Television, Cable Television, Radio

Traditionally one of the costliest endeavors, the rise of local cable outlets has opened the door for the church on a budget to advertise. Radio stations are also effective, offering relatively low-cost advertising outlets. Here are some guidelines to keep in mind when using the broadcast media.

1. *Oversee quality in your advertisements.* Local cable channels and radio stations are often looking to fill space. Thus they may be less judicious about what they allow to be aired. Radio stations often find it difficult to fill required public service announcement postings or Sunday morning time slots. Because these media outlets often lower their expectations, the church must take it

²⁶ "Advertising Boom in U.S. Ended in '01," *Advertising Age* (May 13, 2002): 24.

upon itself to ensure a high level of quality that honors God and the church's constituents.

Today, a number of organizations and denominations offer churches professionally rendered advertisements for print, electronic, and broadcast media. If they can be personalized as well as correlated with a church's core competencies, these prefabricated advertisements can help to increase quality.

2. *Advertise in the right places.* With radio, do not advertise on Sunday mornings because the primary listening audience is Christian (unless this is your mission field). Instead, advertise during drive time, lunch, and other times when the station's demographics indicate a significant listenership.

Remember that radio listeners are highly segregated by musical style. Investigate various stations and the ages, preferences, and socioeconomics of their listeners to decide which station will best help you to reach your mission field.

3. *Broadcast media is especially effective with persuasive and high quality advertisements.* Earlier we saw the need for persuasive advertisements; however, be careful not to appear unreasonable or obsessive. Well-meaning, but overly ardent, Christians have made many listeners wary

of Christian advertisements. For that reason, professionally created ads, although expensive, are more effective. On some occasions, the church might want to advertise against its stereotype. For instance, Vineyard Fellowship of Dayton, Ohio, understands that many unchurched people are turned off by churches insinuating they are better than other churches. Thus Vineyard Fellowship advertises its church with the byline, "a pretty good church." Their refusal to compete with their ecclesial neighbors has made them stand out.

The Print Media: Newspapers, Direct Mail, Magazines, and Billboards

If handled appropriately, the print media continues to be a good place for the church to advertise. Here are some guidelines.

1. *Advertise in the right places.* As noted earlier, churches should avoid running print ads in religious sections of the paper or religious magazines, instead concentrating on areas the unchurched would be more likely to peruse. With direct mail, ensure that you have an effective mailing list and that you are targeting the right mission field (i.e., be sure you are not targeting people too far away to attend, or of the wrong generation).

2. *Write your own stories for newspapers, magazines, and so on.* Smaller community newspapers are often looking for information to fill their pages. When they cannot find enough, they will print space-filling trivia. Whenever a reader sees an abundance of these space fillers, it should be a signal that this newspaper is searching for content. Because journalists at smaller newspapers are not readily available to write stories, a church should pen its own stories. If a local church writes an engaging story and attaches attractive pictures, the local newspaper may gladly print your self-created story. Five to six column inches of a story may translate into several hundred dollars of advertisement. However, professionalism is important. Look in your church for schoolteachers, journalists, part-time writers, and so on, to entrust with this duty.

3. *Use billboards for impact and to display directions to the church.* Corinth Church's location on an out-of-sight rural lane meant the church had to increase its presence on the nearby bypass. A billboard would be an excellent advertising alternative (and cheaper than relocating the facilities to a more visible site). In addition, the billboard would offer directions to the church.

Electronic Media: The Internet

At one time, the telephone was the greatest communication tool at the consumer's fingertips. The appeal to "let your fingers do the walking" though the phone directory reminded people that it was easier to find out about an organization from their phone directory than it was to visit the organization in person. As a result, churches advertised heavily in phone directories. Today, we might say instead, "Forget your fingers, and let your browser do the surfing." A survey by the Online Publisher's Association discovered that even more than using the web for communication (e.g. email) or social networking (e.g. Facebook or Twitter), most people use the Internet for gathering information about products, organizations and news.²⁷

The Internet contains more information than any phone directory imaginable. Faster, smaller and easier to use computers, netbooks and smartphones mean searching for information on the Internet is the norm. Today, churches must offer a professional, uncomplicated, but extensive Web sites that are also friendly to mobile devices such as netbooks and smartphones. Here are four keys to Web effectiveness:

²⁷ "Consumers are Spending the Lion's Share of Their Time Online With Content," Online Publishers Association, Sept. 17, 2009, <http://www.online-publishers.org/press-release/consumers-are-spending-the-lionshare-of-their-time-online-with-content>.

1. *Have your Web site professionally designed.* It has been said that building a poor Web site is easier than creating a good one. A brief voyage across cyberspace will confirm this hypothesis. Thus it is wise to employ professional Web designers to create your Web presence.
2. *Make sure the Web site is listed with the major search engines.* It does little good if people cannot find your Web address. Use services or software that keep your Web site listed with the popular search engines.
3. *Update your Web site on a regular basis.* Just as you would not think of distributing the same church bulletin with the same outdated information week after week, you must continually update your Web site. Today, most communication and data gathering takes place via the Web. Generation X and Generation Y are especially adept at using the Web to gather information. If a young person today wants to know about your church, chances are that person will begin by looking up your Web site. The last thing you want to do is to present them with outdated information, which can give them the impression that you are slow to respond or at worst archaic.
4. *Use online questionnaires to maintain research related to your mission field.* Businesses are discovering the advantages of online questionnaires, which allow

community residents to anonymously share their ideas, requests, and even complaints. Online questionnaires can easily provide a great deal of information on your targeted mission field.

Miscellaneous Media: Posters, Flyers

Probably the least effective advertising avenue for the church is the use of flyers, handouts, and posters. Because of a growing appreciation for keeping the environment unspoiled and clean, distributing flyers or posting posters has steadily lost effectiveness. These can be appropriate avenues at private events, such as church gatherings, where distribution and posting is controlled. But for public spaces and events, the other advertising avenues mentioned above are preferred.

It Culminates with the Right Perspective

While many readers will grasp the importance of marketing, others will find it challenging to introduce these principles to congregations that historically eschew such practices. Therefore, to promote such understandings, the church will need to see itself as growing out of a learning organization into a teaching organization.

Becoming a Learning Organization

In the business realm, effective organizations are often praised for becoming "learning organizations." Noel Tichy, Professor of Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management at the University of Michigan Business School, and researcher Eli Cohen describe learning organizations as those who "in order to succeed in a highly competitive global marketplace . . . need to be able to change quickly; [thus] their people must be able to acquire and assimilate new knowledge and skills rapidly."²⁸

Moving Toward a Teaching Organization

In their investigation of successful companies, Tichy and Cohen found that being a learning organization was not enough. In order for a company to thrive, it also had to become a "teaching organization."

In the church context, where teaching biblical truths is a central task, the idea of the church as a "teaching organization" can be confusing. Therefore, let's differentiate

²⁸ Noel M. Tichy and Eli Cohen, "The Teaching Organization," *Training and Development* 52, no. 7 (July 1998): 27.

what is meant in the business world by a “learning organization” and a “teaching organization.” Figure 11.7 offers a comparison.

[Production, see sample and design 11.7.]

The Learning Organization	The Teaching Organization
	← <i>Adopts all of the learning organization's characteristics but adds these:</i>
1. Insists that leaders become learners; encourages leaders to see learning as a responsibility	8. Insists that leaders become teachers; encourages leaders to see teaching as a responsibility
2. Studies the marketplace	9. Studies training principles
3. Changes quickly to reach a changing market	10. Adapts new teaching skills, tools, and procedures to reach a changing workforce
4. Encourages people to acquire and assimilate new knowledge	11. Encourages people to pass knowledge on to others
5. Encourages people to acquire and assimilate new skills	12. Encourages people to pass skills on to others
6. Helps leaders and workers <i>understand</i> the ideas and concepts that drive the company	13. Helps leaders and workers <i>master</i> the ideas and concepts that drive the company
7. Focuses on developing strategies	14. Focuses on developing leaders

[Insert following caption below chart]

Fig. 11.7. Comparing learning and teaching organizations

[End of Fig. 11.7]

Thus the “teaching organization” goes beyond learning, embracing as a core competency the ability to pass skills and knowledge on to others. Tichy and Cohen put it well:

In teaching organizations, leaders see it as their responsibility to teach. They do that because they understand that it’s the best, if not the only, way to develop throughout a company people who can come up with and carry out smart ideas about the business. . . . A teaching organization’s insistence that its leaders teach creates better leaders, because teaching requires people to develop mastery of ideas and concepts.²⁹

A teaching organization is often characterized by the following:

1. *Leaders are committed teachers.* Larry Bossidy, who transformed AlliedSignal in the 1990s, is an example of a committed teacher. Bossidy didn’t slash and downsize AlliedSignal on its way to success. Rather, Bossidy spent hundreds of hours teaching senior leaders about strategy and goals and inculcating an atmosphere of “teaching.” The remarkable turnaround of AlliedSignal in only five

²⁹ Ibid., 28.

years is a tribute to Bossidy's success as a committed teacher.

2. *Leaders are models.* The late Robert Goizueta, CEO of Coca-Cola, was a quiet engineer with a thick accent. His success at Coca-Cola and its battles with rival PepsiCo are legendary. Goizueta frequently recounted to his employees his personal experiences with his family's business in Cuba, drew on the wisdom of Spanish poets, and often quoted his grandfather. He served as a model of teaching in a humble self-effacing manner.
3. *Leaders are coaches.* AlliedSignal's Larry Bossidy wrote personal letters to each manager after meetings, encouraging and guiding them in their performance. He took it as his personal responsibility to let managers know that he was there to laud good performance and diplomatically redirect poor performance.
4. *Leaders identify workers' goals and help them develop a "leadership pipeline" toward their dream career.* GE develops a career map for each employee called a "leadership pipeline." Regularly consulted by managers, this visual graph details the jobs an employee has held and the positions that employee wants to hold in the future. The leadership pipeline helps managers to

identify the goals and aspirations of workers and assist them in fulfilling their dreams.

5. *Leaders ensure that teaching becomes a core competency of the organization.* GE, under Jack Welch's legendary leadership, inculcated its teaching orientation with the Six Sigma approach.³⁰ By developing six memorable traits, Welch ensured that employees would be embraced and that a far-flung GE organization could see itself as one large but unified organization.

When a congregation becomes a teaching organization, and not just merely a learning organization, its leaders will more readily embrace the important principles of outreach and marketing. As a result, marketing and outreach will inherit their rightful meanings as the methods through which the church presents Jesus' good news.

³⁰ General Electric, "What is Six Sigma?"
<http://www.ge.com/en/company/companyinfo/quality/whatis.htm>.