

Taking The Pulse of Your Church Assessment Pack



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This Assessment Pack from BuildingChurchLeaders.com is a collection of tools to use with your leadership team. Each tool has been designed to help you and your team measure some dimension of ministry.

Here's how to use your Building Church Leaders assessments with your board, committees, or staff:

- ◆ Print and photocopy the assessment tool you'd like to use (you have permission to photocopy for church or educational use)
- ◆ Hand it to your team to complete
- ◆ Lead a discussion based on the team's answers.

For more assessment packs, complete training themes, or other training tools for church leadership, see our website at www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com.



Checking the Vital Signs

Evaluate your church's ability to confront, recognize, and connect with its congregation.

Galatians 6:10

Is your church drifting and you don't even know it? Churches that overlook important aspects of ministry can grow weak and irrelevant. The following assessment focuses on problems that can mean the difference between a sick church and a healthy church. In each category, rate your church to determine your strengths and weaknesses.

Cultural connection. The Gospel never changes, but cultural attitudes that shape how people communicate constantly change. Evaluate whether your church is connecting with the community.

| | 1= in touch with the community | | | | 5= out of touch |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---|---|---|-----------------|
| Outreach events | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Youth programs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Worship style | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Unrewarded efforts. Without recognition, diligent workers are given the impression that their sacrifice of time and energy is not important. Under this system, they will burn out. When leadership changes its focus from one ministry to another, many volunteers will feel abandoned if they lose their recognition.

| | 1=rewarded | | | 5=unrewarded | |
|------------------------------|------------|---|---|--------------|---|
| Sunday school teachers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Greeters, ushers, musicians | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Volunteers and other workers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Unaddressed conflict, unaddressed sin. Sometimes the first step for a church trying to regain its footing is to resolve the issues smoldering below the surface. This requires confrontation. It's no one's first choice, but at times it's the only viable option when a church finds itself adrift because of hidden sin.

| | 1=ready to confront | | | 5=not ready to confront | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|---|---|-------------------------|---|
| Disputes between members | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Marital conflicts | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Gossip | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

—BOB MOELLER

Discuss

1. According to the assessment, what are our greatest strengths and weaknesses?
2. How does our congregation communicate discouragement with the church? How do we as leaders hear about a member's frustrations?
3. What measures will we take to confront and resolve issues with people in the church?



Build a Body That Helps Itself

Make your church healthier by putting ministry in the hands of lay people.

1 Corinthians 12:27–28

A church with a healthy pulse will be actively involved in training its members in ministry. Rather than turning over ministry to pastors and a select few leaders, ministry should be embraced by the congregation. But without the right vision, training, and service opportunities, members will neglect their calling to serve the church with their gifts. With proper training, however, the church can be energized to service and love.

Use the assessment below each statement to measure your church’s commitment to equipping its congregation for ministry. Rate yourself under each heading as proficient, mediocre, or needing work.

| Vision | Proficient | Mediocre | Needs work |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Our pastors and lay leaders understand the importance of equipping others. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The congregation understands the New Testament vision for the church as a body ministering to itself. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Our church is committed to discipleship. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Our vision to equip the congregation is communicated regularly and clearly. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Development | | | |
| Our congregation is given opportunities to explore and learn about their spiritual gifts. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| We seek to train our congregation by offering them opportunities to minister. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| We teach, mentor, and disciple those we seek to prepare for ministry. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Our leaders step back to allow other leaders to accept responsibility. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Action | | | |
| We train others in hospitality and evangelism. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| We delegate teaching opportunities to our lay people as we recognize their abilities. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| We use small groups to train and encourage members to use their gifts. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Our Sunday morning service involves lay people. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

—GEORGE MALLONE

Discuss

1. What are some ministries in our church that easily integrate lay people into positions of active involvement and leadership? What are some ministries that we would like to see increased involvement in from the laity?
2. What are the central ministries of our church? List three simple steps we can take right away to involve more lay people in those ministries.
3. List some specific areas of ministry in which each of us would be willing to train another member.

BEFORE YOU CHANGE



What Kind of Congregation Do You Have?

Determine the prevailing attitudes of your congregation before you chart your next step forward.

1 Corinthians 10:31–33

Churches vary by time, place, and the mix of people in the congregation. Some congregations are always trying new things, others trust their leaders to guide them in the right directions, and still others resist change. Discovering what type of congregation you have can help you decide how to successfully interact with your members. Rate your church on the following scale: 1) this is true of my church; 2) this is somewhat true of my church; 3) this is not true of my church.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Our church is made up of innovators and risk takers. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| We easily experiment with different kinds of worship styles. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Our congregation is ready to accept change. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| We regularly introduce new songs and other forms of liturgy. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Leaders feel little pressure to have the congregation approve administrative decisions. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Our church could be described as “experimental.” | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Our congregation completely supports the vision of our leaders. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| We add classes or another service without much criticism. | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Now, add up your answers and find your church on the following scale:

8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24

Entrepreneurial

Trusting

Unchanging

With an idea of what kind of congregation you have, you can predict how your church will handle change, accept new leaders, and adapt to different styles of worship. Knowing your congregation will also prove invaluable for how you communicate when the time comes for you to propose new ideas to your congregation.

—ERWIN MCMANUS, CHERYL SANDERS, AND KEN FONG

Discuss

1. Based on where our church falls on the scale, what are some principles for communicating with our congregation?
2. What are some of the potential dangers for being the type of congregation we are? What are the advantages?
3. Which area of your church’s ministry most needs to change? How would the congregation react to any change in this area?

BEFORE YOU CHANGE



Readiness for Change

Evaluate your ability to communicate with the congregation before proposing new directions.

Luke 14:28–30

Are you thinking of proposing a change in your church? Perhaps you want to expand a ministry, hire a new staff member, or change the way you worship. Even the best change can meet opposition if the congregation isn't ready to receive it. Knowing how to communicate change can make all the difference when it comes to winning the support and trust of the congregation.

Use this assessment to determine how well your church leaders communicate change to the congregation in the following areas:

| | We do this well | We do this adequately | We do not do this well |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| We are sensitive to timing. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| We begin by having conversations about the needs we see, especially with other leaders. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| We prepare information on the logistical and financial impact of our proposal. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| We seek input from the congregation, especially those who will be affected by the decision. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| We inform people how proposed changes will affect them. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| We invite feedback and listen to criticism. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| We refine and adapt our ideas according to the opinions of others. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| We incorporate the needs of other ministries into our ideas. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| We make a formal proposal to the congregation or committee that will decide. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| We praise the efforts and ideas of everyone who is working for change. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| We are patient and persistent. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

—KENT R. DAVIES

Discuss

1. How much time would our church need to get support for a building project? Hiring a new staff member? Renovating our classrooms?
2. In which steps did we score “we do not do this well?” How can we improve this before our next proposed change to the congregation?
3. What kinds of change will people in our church resist most? Which kinds will they resist least?



Thinking Through Communication

Leaders must find the best way to connect with their congregations.

Ephesians 4:29

Church leaders constantly handle sensitive issues. Because of this, a clear understanding of how to communicate with the congregation is essential. Some congregations expect openness. Other congregations, and types of information, require leaders to use discretion in which people are notified—a more “closed” method of communication. Regardless of which style they favor, all churches are called to respect privacy and avoid the dangers of pride and power secrets carry.

Find the proper communication style for your church. Rate your leadership’s preferred style of communication in each situation as either open or closed. (Assume that it is legal for the church to inform the congregation in each situation.) For each answer, provide reasons why this is the most effective way to communicate with your congregation.

| | Open | Closed |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A staff person is fired. This is effective because _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A lawsuit is brought against the church. This is effective because _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The church receives criticism in the local media. This is effective because _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The church needs to back out of a business deal. This is effective because _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A staff person resigns in anger. This is effective because _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A member of the congregation inquires what the pastor’s salary is. This is effective because _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A member of the congregation wants to see financial records. This is effective because _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A church member comes under church discipline. This is effective because _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

—JACK HAYFORD

Discuss

1. Overall, do we have an open or closed style of communication? What are the benefits of our style? What might we need to do to change our communication style?
2. Who are the people who need to know all the details of issues in our church?
3. What does the congregation think of our communication style?



Connecting with Your Church

Consider the environment of your community when deciding how to communicate.

Deuteronomy 28:3

Churches have unique expectations for communication. Some congregations expect the pastor and leaders to communicate every decision that affects the church; other churches only expect to be told when something important happens. Some churches spread news through informal networks, others through printed announcements. Issues even become personal in churches where parishioners are accustomed to open communication.

Assess the communication of your church's official leadership, the informal leaders, and the congregation. When you finish, compare your answers with other leaders.

Complete each situation by writing how you think the lay people in your church expect to be notified in each of these three situations.

The pastor is going out of town for two weeks: _____

The elders want to change the way the church takes the offering: _____

The church needs to raise more money to cover operating expenses: _____

In each church, there are people at the center of communication. "Transmitters" disseminate information; "receivers" provide feedback and perspective. List key transmitters and receivers in your church.

Transmitters: _____

Receivers: _____

Many towns and neighborhoods have diners or shops where locals go to talk. These are the informal communication centers of the community. Sometimes church meetings and programs can begin to take on aspects of a communication center. What are three ministries that function both as church events and communication centers in your church?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

—JOHN KOESSLER

Discuss

1. What are the expectations of our congregation for how we communicate with them?
2. What do we risk by not knowing the communication style our congregation prefers?
3. What do we need to change about our church's communication style?



Plan a Successful Survey

Ask the right questions before you survey your church.

Proverbs 21:5

Surveys are a great way to determine what your congregation is thinking and feeling. They can help determine if a program's goals are achievable, or if the methods you use are effective. But a survey is only one step in a strategy. A survey needs to be part of a thought-out plan. Here are seven questions to answer before you begin to research your congregation.

1) How well do pastors, staff, and lay leaders understand why we need this survey?

2) What is the plan for analyzing the information?

3) If the research challenges the status quo, is our congregation willing to change?

4) How well does our current leadership style communicate that we value the congregation's opinions?

5) Is our topic sufficiently focused to accomplish our goals in one short survey?

6) What are the specific goals of the ministry we want to survey?

7) What demographics do we need to target in our congregation to get the feedback we desire?

—JAMES F. ENGEL

Discuss

1. What are the benefits of surveys? What are the limitations?
2. Surveys are most useful in situations where change is a possibility. What are the areas in our church that are open to change? Which areas are off limits?
3. What are the action steps that we need to take before we can survey our congregation? What are the action steps we will need to take after the survey?



Research Done Right

Organized planning will make your congregational survey succeed.

Proverbs 15:22

Once you identify an area you would like to research, an action plan is essential to make the most of the data you collect. Focused questions will yield useful results: the narrower the topic of your survey, the fewer questionnaires you need to distribute. Some hints for conducting a successful survey:

1. Use the best phrasing. Do not be vague or negative. Don't ask, "Why don't people come to Sunday school?" Ask, "What is the greatest strength of our Sunday school?" A) class leaders; B) fellowship; C) food; D) other.
2. Develop an action plan for after the survey. Know what you are looking for before you evaluate the results.
3. Prepare to analyze. List the different criteria you want to study. For example, "How did youth respond?" or "How important are the factors of age, gender, race, and location to the responses?"

Use this checklist, developed by an executive in survey research, to see if you have taken these steps.

- Appoint a committee to oversee the process of planning, research, and analysis.
- Know what specific issues you want the data to illuminate.
- Brainstorm scenarios for what the results might look like. Challenge yourself: "If we discover ____, what will we do or not do as a result?"
- Inform everyone involved of what you are trying to survey.
- Use specific questions.
- Be direct.
- Phrase questions positively.
- Use a maximum of 20 questions.
- Have respondents answer from a list of possibilities.
- Ask people what they are doing, not what they wish they were doing.
- Provide space for additional feedback.
- Computerize the results (consider hiring a market research or tabulation company to do this if your church lacks the technology).
- Compare how different demographics responded.
- Determine the implications of the data.

—CRAIG PARRO AND JAMES F. ENGEL

Discuss

1. What are the ministries in which we most desire the congregation's feedback?
2. To accurately gauge our congregation, how many surveys should we distribute?
3. Is our church more likely to use surveys to discover new information or to support opinions already held?