

Assessing Findings

Assessing the findings and developing recommendations and approaches to responding to the information is vital to a successful audit.

Make sure you report findings and proposed responses (or assurance responses are in the works) to the congregation as soon as possible. This increases their trust in the process and the time it took to respond.

Look for trends or themes within the findings. For example, did the majority of people say they wanted certain types of information they're not now receiving? Are there clear priorities for how they want to receive the information? Was anything clearly different from demographic to demographic (younger people vs. older members; new members vs. long-term members; active members vs. less active members)?

Identify the strengths. From within the themes, identify the strengths. Examples: The newsletter seems to meet several needs. The Web site is easy to navigate. Etc.

Identify needs (challenges). Examples: People want more information about opportunities outside of the local church. The Web site is not being accessed frequently (why?).

Develop recommendations and strategies for the communications ministry based on the challenges. Sample recommendations:

- 1) Develop an overall communications plan
Goals and objectives would include what is developed as a communications mission statement as well as what was heard in the surveys.

For example, perhaps the top three things people said they needed were 1) more information about ways to be involved in ministry; 2) more timely information about church activities; 3) faith-sharing training. These would set the stage for what content is delivered and then how it is delivered.

Strategies for delivering the content would also come from the surveys and recommendations might look like this:

- 2) Increase the use of technology.
Strategies would include specifics, such as, use video more often to tell the story; begin using online discussion forums for various groups in the church.

- 3) Make the Web site more user friendly with clearer links to specific areas. Make the e-newsletter shorter or more/less frequent.
- 4) Add additional stories/columns to the print newsletter.

Tackle your recommendations as you can, considering time and resources. Do the easiest things first and move toward the more complicated changes.

