



## HOMEWORK 1: PERCEPTION

### What is Perception?

Perception is how people view your church from their own point of view. They form opinions and make assumptions based on their own background and experiences combined with what they see, hear and know about the church.

**Internal Perception** is how your church looks from the congregation's perspective.

**External Perception** is how your church looks from the community's perspective (those not associated with the church).

#### **Perception:**

**Is Reality.** Your church may communicate in many ways, but how people respond to those messages or pass them along to others is based on what they believe within their own frame of reference. Their perception is their reality.

**May or may not align with leaders' vision or assumptions.** As a church leader, you have a vivid picture of the kind of impact you want your church to make. That may or may not match up with the perception of:

- **The Congregation:** They may be on the same page with you and they're just as excited to join you in making that happen, or they may see an entirely different church from the one you have in mind.
- **The Community:** Because they're seeing your church from an outward perspective, the community may think positive and/or negative things about your church that you are completely unaware of.

## How does Perception impact YOUR MARKETING PLAN?

**It helps you identify your church's strengths so you can develop a strategy that showcases them and matches them to your target audience.**

*Example:*

*Through this marketing plan process, a church finds out that they are known in the community as being a place for healing in times of trouble. The planning committee also identifies economic turmoil and job losses in the community. As a response the church may offer financial counseling, job training, and/or support groups. They decide to use creative communication tools to promote these services.*

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**It helps you see the gaps between what your church is and what people think it is so you know where to focus your energy/resources and strategy to narrow those gaps.**

**The Congregation:** You may think you and your church are on the same page, but you can't assume anything! Understanding the connect or disconnect between your vision and the congregation's perception will help you point **YOUR MARKETING PLAN** toward your vision.

- If your congregation's perception aligns with the vision, then energy and strategy goes toward **mobilizing** your congregation to meet **YOUR MARKETING PLAN** goals.
- If a congregation's perception does not match the vision, then energy and strategy goes toward either:
  - **Educating** and **inspiring** your congregation to own the vision and want to be a part of carrying it out.
  - **Modifying** your vision so it makes the most of what the congregation is already excited about. (This only applies in cases where the congregation's perception is a POSITIVE one. If the congregation has a negative perspective, then focus goes toward helping your congregation develop a more positive perspective of the church.)

*Example:*

*A church wants to be known for being a great place for youth. They have an active youth program with multiple opportunities for teens. Youth are connecting with others and growing in their faith.*

*Through this marketing plan process, they discover that people in the church without teenage children know nothing about the great youth program.*

*They develop marketing tactics that help the congregation know more about the youth ministry so people can know it is a quality feature of the church to which they can invite their friends with teens.*

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**The Community:** Whether intentional or not, your church communicates to the community with your people, your building, your advertising and the groups you partner with. Understanding what your community perceives about your church will help you build a Marketing Plan that reflects the church's vision and values in ways that connect with people and provoke a response.

*Example:*

*A church wants to be known as being a place where people can find purpose and direction for life. Through their discovery, they find that people perceive them to be irrelevant and out of touch with current times and situations. They develop a marketing plan that focuses on making the church more relevant by changing the worship style or getting more involved in community affairs.*

## Read/Reflect

Read the following story and answer the questions.

*A few years ago, I had a vision for my family. I saw an incredible, multi-week vacation serving as the backdrop for the most memorable bonding opportunity my family would ever experience. This would be a once-in-a-lifetime adventure for me, my wife and our three children.*

*Though the trip was nearly a year away, I could "see" our time together in vivid detail: Destination - Rocky Mountains and the Grand Canyon. Activities - Hiking, rafting, horseback riding throughout God's creation. Transportation - 5,000 miles of cross-country driving as we tow our home behind us – a rented travel trailer. Goal - Our family bonding, creating memories, growing closer to God and each other.*

*So one night, as the family sat around the dinner table, I sprung my idea on them. I went something like this, "Hey kids (and I had not mentioned this to my wife yet), guess what? This summer, we're going to pack up, rent a camper and travel out West for three weeks! It will be great!"*

*To my dismay, I was met with stunned resistance. Where I expected delight, I got disgust. "Three weeks?" they protested. "In the car?" My wife, who I most expected to "get it," started balking about campground showers and snakes.*

*Licking my wounds, I retreated to my home office. In a moment of quiet searching, I realized I had broken the first rule of communication when rolling out any new big thing. I forgot to pave a pathway to help them see where we were going and why we needed to head there. I forgot to cast vision!*

*Over the next few weeks, I took small steps toward encouraging my family's enthusiasm:*

- *To my wife, I'd say things like: "The kids will be in college soon. Not much time left for us to all be together."*
- *Around the dinner table, I'd say, "I want us to experience how great America is together before you guys head out and start your own families. How do you think this trip or one like it could do that? Then I'd ask them what kind of trip they think would help us experience America together."*

*Once they started to see how this would work and why we were doing it:*

- *I'd ask my son to help pick out a travel trailer online.*
- *I gave maps to my daughter and had her plan out our journey.*
- *I took my other daughter shopping for hiking gear and supplies.*
- *I emailed and text photos to each of them – Grand Canyon, Rocky Mountains and man-made attractions along the way.*

*Yes, we did spend 21 days traveling in a camper. Yes, we logged more than 5,000 miles. We smelled mountain air, bonded on the trail and saw God's creation as we never had before. The trip was all I hoped for and more. Once I spent some time casting vision for the experience ahead and helping my family know and buy-into the reason to make the journey, they were totally on board. It was a once-in-a-lifetime adventure that I wouldn't trade for anything.*

From this story, how did the author's vision differ from what his family anticipated?

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What did the author do to help his family own the vision and see the same thing he was seeing?

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Recall a time when you wanted someone to follow you but they didn't understand where you were going. What did you have to do to convince them to come along? Or how did you adapt your journey so they would want to join you?

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## Review/Respond

Review the Values, Vision and Key Messaging/Elevator Statements from **Step 1: Values & Vision** that you recorded under **Step 1 Deliverables** on the **YOUR MARKETING PLAN** worksheet. Write your thoughts to the questions below.

What kinds of things do you anticipate hearing from your **congregation** that **align** with and confirm the values and vision?

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What kinds of things do you anticipate hearing from your **congregation** that **contradict or compete with** your values and vision?

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What kinds of things do you anticipate hearing from your **community** that **align** with your values and vision?

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What kinds of things do you anticipate hearing from your **community** that **contradict or compete with** your values and vision?

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