

Jim's Tool Box

Hello, MissionInsite (Part 2)



After many years of using Percept/Link2Lead, the West Ohio Annual Conference has contracted with **MissionInsite** to provide demographic data planning and

research purposes for the annual conference as well as the districts and local congregations of the annual conference.

In last month's Tool Box I described several of the features, tools, and downloads available with MissionInsite. In this month's issue I want to highlight a tool that is available on the MissionInsite homepage. It is accessible before logging into MissionInsite. On the MissionInsite homepage (available [HERE](#)), there is a "Survey" tab at the top of the page. Click on that tab and select "Start Survey." You do not even need to be a registered user on MissionInsite to take the survey.

The survey consists of eleven multiple-choice questions. The questions cover the following ministry topics/categories:

1. Identity
2. Leadership
3. Organization
4. Hospitality and Worship
5. Christian Education and Counseling
6. Small Groups and Mentoring
7. Equipping Ministers
8. Outreach
9. Property
10. Finance
11. Communications

Each question offers five responses, and the user selects the response that best describes the condition in her/his congregation. Here is a sample of the question assessing the congregation's outreach ministries:

Does your church deploy and support servants for mission and outreach?

I do not know.

We have an outreach committee that helps us contribute to denominational mission funds, and community groups rent our building.

We have an outreach committee that supports denominational and local charities, coordinates short-term projects, and develops prayers for mission in worship.

We have mission teams of all kinds (local, regional, and global) who raise money, send volunteers, and advocate for public policy. Our building is used for major outreach programs that are extensions of our church.

We deliberately mentor people from small groups to mission teams of all kinds. We send volunteers to do good and share faith, and establish outreach ministries in multiple sites beyond the church building.

I asked three pastors in three different settings to respond to the survey and send the results to me. I wanted to see how the survey would respond to different responses that pastors made in "real world" settings. Congregation A is a large multi staff suburban church with many ministries. Congregation B is a smaller congregation in a county seat town, and Congregation C is a smaller open country rural congregation with a part-time pastor.

Each pastor chose a different response on the Outreach question that I have posted above. Here is how the computer generated response varied for each setting depending on the way the pastor responded to the survey question:

Congregation A:

Survey Response Selection: *We have mission teams of all kinds (local, regional, and global) who raise money, send volunteers, and advocate for public policy. Our building is used for major outreach programs that are extensions of our church.*

Comment: Your church is heavily invested in outreach. Many are short-term, some are long-term, and they all involve both fund-raising and personal service. Hopefully the policy of your church is that the congregation will never send money without sending volunteers too. Your building is buzzing with community groups using the facility seven days a week, but tension is increasing because church groups feel they are actually being squeezed out. Therefore, you must become very rigorous to make sure any community group using the facility is compatible with your core values and beliefs, and perfectly aligned with your congregational vision and mission. You also need to consider acquiring new sites for outreach mission and faith community, networking them together electronically from the 'mother' church. Focus and develop a long-term 'signature outreach ministry'. This is a ministry that perfectly reveals your congregational DNA; gives tremendous public visibility to the church and draws people through outreach into worship and other spiritual growth opportunities; and absorbs a lot of church funding and volunteer energy among members. Keep adding sites and major outreach ministries. Use MissionInsite to research the demographic trends, physical and spiritual needs, of publics in an expanding radius from your church property. The Opportunity Scan tool will help you do in-depth analyses of specific streets or neighborhoods. If you are a denominational church, be cautious about top-down conformity with national policies. Make sure that advocacy for public policy emerges from your own congregational core values, beliefs, vision, and mission. You can always risk being controversial so long as mission is objectively linked to the identity and purpose of your church, and not just the vote of a slender majority or the preference of influential people.

Congregation B:

Survey Response Selection: *We have an outreach committee that helps us contribute to denominational mission funds, and community groups rent our building*

Comment: Many churches limit intentional outreach to fund-raising for denominational projects, raising money for other professionals to do mission. This is partly because for a long time denominations preferred professionals do the mission, fearing that 'amateurs' from the congregation might do damage to credibility or effectiveness. This attitude has significantly changed in the last decade, as denominational leaders realized that people want to be 'hands-on' actually doing mission, and that this was a great way to mature Christians. This limitation also happened because church members were already volunteering through other service clubs and non-profits, even though their work was unrelated to church and often unknown to other church members. Meanwhile, the church rents church property to community groups, and claims that to be 'mission' (not just income). In order for your church to grow, you need to awaken a mission heart among the people and become more intentional about hands-on outreach. The best way to awaken the mission heart of church members is through immersion in community life. Use MissionInsite to target specific streets, neighborhoods, micro-cultures, or publics so that your members can go observe and overhear the needs and questions of strangers. Next, establish a policy that property cannot be used for income, and will only be donated; and that property cannot be used by an outside group unless church members are personally involved in the direction and implementation of their mission. Commission these church members in worship, and pray for the mission regularly in worship. Invite participants in that mission to Sunday worship, special church celebrations, and fellowship opportunities.

Congregation C:

Survey Response Selection: *We have an outreach committee that supports denominational and local charities, coordinates short-term projects, and develops prayers for mission in worship.*

Comment: Your church has a big heart and an inclusive attitude, so that compassion for people in the community is natural to your family church identity. This has led you to support local charities with financial contributions, property use, and church volunteers. Hopefully you are including prayers for each and every outreach project in the routines of worship through the year, and invite participants back to Sunday worship, special events, or fellowship opportunities. Use MissionInsite to better understand the needs of the community and spiritual questions on their hearts. This will help you do good and share faith without being intrusive or judgmental. Several steps will expand

your outreach and grow your church: First, always provide basic training and upgrade coaching for outreach leaders, because they start experiencing things and asking spiritual questions they have never asked before. If they become too threatened or confused, they will drop out. Second, make your outreach projects as cross-generational as possible, so that busy families can work together and use outreach time as a way family bonds can be deepened. Third, begin to focus a single, big, bold, and ongoing outreach ministry that will be continuously celebrated in worship and motivate volunteer energies among members. This is often called a 'signature outreach ministry' because it reveals your congregational core values, beliefs, vision, and mission perfectly; and it becomes a major route for newcomers to then access the life and worship of your church. Study carefully the lifestyle segments from MissionInsite, and pray for God to reveal this significant mission to the leaders of your church.

Possible Uses for the Survey

As you can see, each of these comments is different based on the answer that the pastor gave on the survey. Taken as a whole with all eleven questions and the computer generated responses, the survey could be the basis for a good discussion by a strategy team in a local church or in various teams or committees that have responsibility for different parts of the congregation's mission (small groups, worship, hospitality, etc.) Of course the results are all subjective based on the way that the person taking the survey answers the questions. It would be interesting for several persons from a congregation or a team in a church to take the survey and then share the results with each other. One nice feature of the survey is that you can email a copy of the results to yourself after you view the results online.

Another nice feature of the comments on the survey is the way in which each response offers ways to use MissionInsite and the tools provided by the website. On the results of the Outreach question, several ways are listed in the three different comments that suggest ways that a strategy or a program team in a local congregation could use the MissionInsite program as a way of going deeper into the ministry area.

I think this free tool on the MissionInsite website is a useful tool both for basic mission assessment and for starting conversations about various parts of the congregation's mission. Users can take the survey several times. You could also see what results you get when you give slightly different answers. However, the tool will be most useful if the user gives the answer to the survey that most clearly matches the reality in the local church setting.

If you take the survey, I would appreciate receiving a copy of your results and any comments you might have about the survey or the comments offered for your congregation.

Get Signed Up!

All you need to do to get started is to register with MissionInsite as a local church user. Click [HERE](#) to download instructions for the registration process. This guide also includes an “**id**” **account number** for the West Ohio Conference account under which you register as a user. Please be aware that you will receive an email back from MissionInsite. You will need to click a link in that email to activate your account. *Be sure to check your spam folder if you do not see this confirmation email.*