

The Comprehensive Guide to Church Consultant Training





3	The Purpose of this Guide
4	Overview of the Society
6	Self-assessment quiz: “Am I cut out for church consulting?”
8	Church Consulting 101
11	Five Types of Consultants
13	How 11 Consultants Plan to Use their Training
14	Why Churches Use Consultants <i>by Dr. Thom Rainer</i>
15	Frequently Asked Questions about the Society’s Training
17	What You’ll Learn in Levels 1-5
19	Details on the Level 5 Consulting Project
21	Becoming a Certified Church Consultant
22	Tuition Fees and Training Calendar
23	DVD and Online Training
24	How to Start a Church Consulting Ministry on the Side
26	How to Grow Your Church Consulting Practice
29	Student Assessments of the Training

The Purpose of this Guide

Dear Christian Leader,

God may have directed you to read this because he wants you to help a specific church – possibly the one you currently lead. Or maybe you already work with one or more congregations, and you want to sharpen your consulting skills or earn credentials.

If you have a passion to revitalize the church, this guide will help you determine whether consultant training is your next step.

There is a desperate need for church consultants. The majority of today's churches don't know how to break free from mediocrity, and many don't realize how they could benefit from outside help. There are lots of great books pastors can read on how to turn around their churches, but sometimes it takes a hands-on approach by an unbiased consultant to effect real change.

The Lord has given us a prescription for church health in his Word. He has provided us with many examples of churches that prevailed through adversity. And he wants us to participate in building the kingdom through building healthy congregations.

So, if you're ready, let's explore the world of church consulting!



Tom Harper

President, Society for Church Consulting

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and *Leading from the Lions' Den: Leadership Principles from Every Book of the Bible* (B&H Books, 2010)

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An Overview of the Society for Church Consulting

Whether you're a pastor, denominational leader, staff member, lay leader, consultant, or volunteer, you can probably name a hurting church. It could be your own. Or a congregation you're trying to help.

The Society for Church Consulting exists to revitalize those churches. We train, equip and certify consultants. We prepare them and other ministry leaders to battle the decline of today's church.

The Society for Church Consulting (SCC) was created in response to three major needs:

- 1. The need to provide training and ensure competency in all aspects of church consultation.** SCC addresses this need through a comprehensive training program which leads to full certification.
- 2. The need for pastors to recognize consultation as a means of helping their churches.** This will be accomplished, in part, by publishing information about church consultation in media that reaches church leaders.
- 3. The desire among church consultants to network with and learn from each other.** Training conferences and Society meetings give consultants many opportunities to expand their network and their knowledge.

SCC offers excellent membership benefits for those who wish to access information and resources used by church consultants.

***The #1 reason to join the Society is this:** To learn the latest cutting-edge thinking and techniques used by successful church consultants.*

Membership in the Society

Do you deal with church conflict, low giving or membership decline? You're not alone - according to Dr. Thom Rainer (author of *Simple Church* and *Breakout Churches*), the vast majority of congregations are mired in mediocrity. They're not growing.

If you're ready for revitalization, you are invited to become a member of the Society for Church Consulting. It's an inexpensive, low-commitment way to connect to hundreds of successful church consultants.

For more information or to join, visit www.ChurchConsultation.org.

Certification

If you've devoted your life to revitalizing the church, SCC wants to help boost your consulting ministry. Have you consulted with any congregations in the past? Your experience helping churches could qualify you for certification.

If you're just getting started, you'll get the best available training and supervised field work through our advanced classroom, DVD programs, and occasional webinars.

SCC's goal is to arm you with everything you need to take churches to the next level. After you pass certification requirements, the Society will add you to the online consultant directory, and provide you with opportunities for advanced training.

[More info on certification](http://www.churchconsultation.org/certification) - www.churchconsultation.org/certification

Am I cut out for church consulting?

A self-assessment quiz

If you're not already involved in full-time or paid church consulting, this quiz will give you some perspective on your readiness for this potential new chapter in your life. The following seven yes/no questions and self-scoring instructions will give you a quick affirmation to move forward or consider other options.

1. Do you have more than five years of experience serving on a church staff?
Yes _____ No _____
2. Do you understand how a church can be unhealthy?
Yes _____ No _____
3. Do you feel a deep desire to help churches become healthy?
Yes _____ No _____
4. Do you currently have an adequate source of income?
Yes _____ No _____
5. Do you have any experience in the business world?
Yes _____ No _____
6. Do you know of at least three churches that are in significant decline?
Yes _____ No _____
7. Have you ever been involved in resolving serious church conflict?
Yes _____ No _____

(Give yourself one point for every "Yes" – then find your score below.)

SCORE: 6-7

You have the highest chance of success if you decide to pursue church consulting.

You have the experience, desire and opportunity necessary to help struggling churches. You are a natural candidate for professional training. You may also want to consider establishing a consulting business after a time of "trying it out." However, if you're between jobs, we don't advise that you jump into consulting as a primary source of income.

SCORE: 3-5

You have a good chance of success if you decide to pursue church consulting.

If you scored in this range, you should *not* consider becoming a full-time consultant, but you still have what it takes to revitalize churches. If you work at it, you may secure some paid consultations, but don't limit yourself to doing only those. You have some qualities that can and *should* be put to use in churches, regardless of their ability to pay. We recommend that you investigate various resources and training to equip you for this work.

SCORE: 0-3

You have a modest to low chance of success if you decide to pursue consulting.

As you evaluate your next steps in ministry and life, we advise that you consider focusing your time, efforts and resources on your home church rather than consulting others.

Investing your talents in your own congregation will probably be more fruitful because you know the people, issues and opportunities in an intimate way. Consultant training can refine your skills, but your main goal should be to support your church's leadership and laity in every way you can.

No matter what you scored, remember to pray, and listen for the Lord's leading. Search the Scriptures. Talk to pastors and other church consultants. And take stock of what you really expect out of your consulting efforts. If your main goal is income, you are likely to be disappointed for a while. Make sure you can support yourself while you build your clientele.

True success is measured by the churches you help. The best consultant training candidates have an insatiable desire to glorify Christ and see his church expand on the earth.

Church Consulting 101

What is church consultation?

Church consultation begins with a clear goal of analyzing existing conditions in a church and suggesting improvements for its overall health. It is a process where a qualified consultant, who is not a member of the church, provides insights and recommendations to improve how well the church functions according to the purposes of the church, as described in Acts 2:42-47.

I've heard of church growth. What does church health mean?

The idea of church growth is often related to numbers – the number of new members, persons baptized into the church, etc. Church **health** is related to how well the body of Christ functions in terms of fulfilling God's mission and purpose. Healthy churches are most effective when the six purposes of Acts 2:42-47 are intentional, active and balanced:

- **Fellowship**
- **Worship**
- **Ministry**
- **Discipleship**
- **Evangelism**
- **Prayer**

What do church consultants *do*?

Based on the goals of the church, consultants perform one or more of the following services when called on by church leaders:

- Listen
- Investigate
- Recommend
- Encourage change
- Analyze
- Help implement change, when needed

What areas are covered in a comprehensive consultation?

Church consultations vary in terms of their focus and intensity. Most focus on specific areas of church health, though a comprehensive consultation would be desirable. This full-service consultation focuses on the following areas:

1. Finance
2. Planning/goal setting
3. Growth barriers
4. Outreach/evangelistic approaches
5. Community analysis
6. Mission/vision
7. Assimilation effectiveness

8. Perceptions/attitudes toward the church among attendees
9. Data and statistical analysis
10. Small group/Sunday school
11. Worship issues
12. Leadership effectiveness
13. Prayer emphasis
14. Missions
15. Personnel issues
16. Programming/ministries analysis
17. Facilities analysis
18. Denominational issues
19. Ministry staff alignment

What are the steps involved in a church consultation?

Church consultation services may vary widely, though the most effective consultants include each of the following steps in their work (in sequential order):

1. Consultation request
2. Initial interview
3. Proposal to church leadership
4. Acceptance
5. Consultation work
6. Initial verbal report to leadership
7. Written report (presented to the senior pastor first)
8. Final report
9. Presentation to church leadership
10. If needed, proposal for future action
11. Follow-up

What criteria do churches use to evaluate candidates?

When exploring church consultation, church leadership should discuss the experience and qualities the consultant, or his/her consulting organization, might need to ensure their effectiveness...with this church, at this particular time.

Here are some questions they may ask:

- What types and levels of ministry experience does each consultant candidate offer?
- Does the consultant have experience with our particular denomination or independent church? Please note many consultants do work across denominational lines with great effectiveness.
- To what degree does the consultant have experience with churches of our size and life stage?
- What has the consultant accomplished during his or her ministry? In other words, what fruit has his ministry born as part of a church organization and as a consultant?
- Does the consultant show genuine interest and enthusiasm for working with my church?

- Does the consultant demonstrate the maturity and attitude needed to effectively work with this church's leaders? The most effective church consultants are confident, but humble; straightforward but diplomatic.
- How effectively does this consultant communicate verbally and in writing? Assess the organization, content and style of the consultant's communication.

Is there a code of ethics for church consultants?

Following is the code our certified consultants agree to uphold:

As a church consultant I will...

- Work under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and hold to the authority of the Bible.
- Be honest and not knowingly misrepresent facts.
- Divulge any potential conflicts of interest as soon as they are known.
- Only accept projects that can be completed in a professional and timely manner.
- Safeguard any confidential information or documents.
- Not divulge any confidential information without the consent of the church client.
- Abide by all applicable local, county, state and federal laws.
- Accurately and honestly report all time worked and expenses incurred.
- Maintain my personal integrity and nurture my walk with Christ.

The Five Types of Consultants: Which is Right for Me?

By Tom Harper

The majority of our trained leaders use their newly honed skills to enhance their *current* jobs and ministries.

There's another benefit if you have the opportunity to train people, or work with pastors on a regular basis. Imagine teaching them the church health intelligence you've learned ... and seeing what they can do with it.

It can be immensely gratifying to pass on this knowledge and watch other leaders and their churches grow and flourish.

In a minute, I'm going to summarize the five main types of church consultants. But first, an important point. Full-time paid church consulting is not usually a viable career option unless you meet most of the following criteria:

- You have significant experience in church leadership
- You're a published author
- Your speaking calendar is full
- You are already financially stable
- You have experience running a consulting *business*
- You have a basic knowledge of marketing and sales

Though only a minority can start from scratch and quickly generate enough revenue to support their families, there are still exciting opportunities – and a huge need – for people like you who truly want to bless the church with your experience and knowledge.

You are the ones who will make up the majority of the “special forces” God is sending out into the world to help His church.

Now let's look at the practical choices you have for putting your consulting skills into practice.

1. **Part-time Consultant** – This is a conservative way to build a consulting ministry with the least risk possible. Whether paid or volunteer, if you start performing consultations – even a few per year – you will establish a reputation that, over time, will generate word-of-mouth referrals. If you stick with it, you'll get more projects and be able to charge more for the paid ones. The momentum you build now could launch into full-time consulting some day.
2. **Full-time Independent** – If you already work with clients in the business world and have made a career out of consulting, you may want to consider adding churches to your client list. But it's not prudent to completely walk away from secular clientele – the hours you can bill to them are much more lucrative!

3. **Denominational Consultant** – Your job in this scenario is to guide many churches in your convention, association, diocese or denomination to greater health and growth. Your title might even include the words “coach,” “strategist” or “church growth.” This is a viable option for someone with business or administrative experience who wants to cross over into ministry. (Plus you can earn a salary for this job.)
4. **Volunteer Consultant** – If you commit to doing 100% tithed consultations, you may have some difficulty transitioning into paid work later. So now’s a good time to plan your future in the church consulting field and work toward that end. Most volunteer consultants find plenty of local congregations to work with.
5. **Leadership Trainer** – Your talents may lie in teaching and training. If so, you could apply yourself in many areas in a church, denomination or other ministry. Your own church, for example, could launch leadership training for its members or business people in the community. Are you a pastor or denominational leader? Expand your scope of responsibilities to include teaching other ministers how to lead their churches to greater health.

Some people don’t fit neatly into any of these descriptions. They either transition between the different types of consultants or are “hybrids” of more than one. So don’t be discouraged if you don’t see an option that seems a perfect fit. God may have a unique situation in store for you.

My intent in categorizing the consulting opportunities this way is to help you strategize your personal vision of the future. If you feel “called to consult,” it’s best to get as much advice as possible.

Talk to other consultants, mentors, church leaders, pastors, family and friends about your plans.

“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.”
(Prov. 15:22 NIV)

How 11 Consultants Plan to Use their Training

The following comments will help you understand how other consultants plan to use their skills – and hopefully give you ideas for your own ministry.

1. “I plan to involve denominational leaders in bringing this training to churches that are struggling with growth and/or problems.”
2. **“I’m already doing some church consulting** and hope to do more in the future. I hope to have a comprehensive view of consulting to guide my process.”
3. “In my local church and also in conjunction with revivals/church renewal weekends in other churches.”
4. “I can use the overall skill training when I work with churches in my present ministry.”
5. “First, I think the material and training you have put together is very good.... I look forward to this helping me carry out my ministry as a Director of Missions.”
6. “I plan to offer church consultation as part of my work at the (state) Baptist Convention.”
7. **“I plan to develop this as a part time/full time career.** I feel I have had unique experiences that will enhance the opportunity to work alongside churches in whatever capacity, to help them move forward.”
8. “[I’ll use the training] in the process of my job as Church Growth Director of the Baptist Convention of New York. This will assist us in getting to the core of the needs of the churches.”
9. “Helping a few other congregations, but mostly **for use in my current position** as Education Minister.”
10. **“Ongoing assessment within my own church;** working with the elders to continue to plan and execute that plan for greater health; **offering my services in consulting to our region.**”
11. “My goal is to offer consulting services to churches across denominational lines. This has always been my desire and the training has given me the tools to accomplish this.”

Why Churches use Consultants

By Thom S. Rainer

An analysis of over 700 church consultation requests we received during the last five years reveals both *reactive* and *proactive* reasons why church leaders seek qualified, outside church consultants.

Typically a senior pastor or minister (or a person calling on his or her behalf) contacts a consultant with questions about a specific issue, usually a painful one, within the church. Chief among the problems and *reactive* reasons for seeking a consultation include:

- Attendance has plateaued or declined.
- Planned giving and/or offerings are declining.
- Persons attending do not return or join the church.
- There is conflict within the church, specifically between pastoral leadership and lay leadership or between groups of laity.

Consultation requests based on a desire to *proactively* address the church's health and growth fall into three primary areas:

- The church does not have a plan for ensuring its growth either short term and/or long term, and wants to have a plan.
- The church desires to start a major effort in its life and ministry; e.g. building expansion, mission effort, capital campaign, etc.
- The church is doing okay, but is not sure what its strengths and weakness are at this point in its life.

As part of our analysis, we sought to understand why the number of consultation requests more than doubled over the past two years. The answer, very clearly, has to do with time. Specifically, the church leaders requesting the consultation needed to assess and address issues more quickly than it could with its own staff. I expect this trend to continue.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Society's Training

What are the prerequisites for the training?

People interested in **Level 1** training typically have the following background (though none are required):

- Responsibility as a pastor, minister, administrator or worship leader of a church
- Those considering starting a church consulting practice
- Denominational leaders with responsibility for multiple churches
- Lay leaders, elders, deacons and board members

Do I have to go through all five levels of training?

No. You can do as few as one or as many as five. We have found that over 80% of those trained at Level 1 are interested in higher levels of training.

Is financial assistance available?

The Society offers discounts to members and even greater discounts to members who are students currently enrolled in any form of degree program . You may also seek to have your tuition paid by a sponsoring organization, such as a denominational association, conference, business or church.

Who conducts the training?

Highly experienced church consultants conduct the training. These instructors include Dr. Chuck Lawless, Dr. John Ewart, Dr. Gary McIntosh, and Dr. Bob Whitesel. Occasionally, if a district or convention has a highly advanced church health initiative, we will have representatives of the Society conduct training and then license the district or convention leadership to conduct future training. Licensed trainers must be certified by the Society.

Can I skip Level 1 and enroll in a higher level of training?

Since higher levels of training build on concepts and information conveyed in lower levels, students must complete prior levels. For example, persons accepted for Level 3 training must have completed Levels 1 & 2.

How much time does a church consultation require?

Time requirements vary a great deal. If you are conducting a comprehensive church consultation, which is described in Level 1 training, you can expect 1-2 days on site and at least 2-3 days in analysis and report writing. More often than not, churches request consultation that focuses on two or three specific areas of church health. We do recommend a phone follow-up to see how church leadership has responded to the actions set in motion as a result of your consultation.

What methods of marketing do church consultants use to generate projects?

While this topic is covered during the training, most consultants get new projects simply by word of mouth. Some do it free at first or at a low project fee just to get started.

Is this generally on-site work, via a survey, or both?

The consultant must visit the church when doing a comprehensive church consultation. You may have a client church that wants you to present results and recommended actions to its leadership.

What kind of income can a church consultant expect?

This is covered in Level 1 in some detail. While many consultants consider their work an offering or tithe, hourly fees for others may range from \$50 to \$150/hour. Churches overwhelmingly like to work on a total project fee basis, which is established in part by considering how much time the consultation will likely require. But these fees are easier to achieve after you have experience, and should not be your sole motivation for consulting with churches.

What is the Church Health Survey? I saw this included in the topics covered in Level 1 training.

The Church Health Survey is a 160-question survey that helps a church discern how it is doing in the purposes of the church found in Acts 2:42-47: Fellowship, Ministry, Discipleship, Evangelism, Worship and Prayer. It was developed by Dr. Thom Rainer, and is currently administered by Dr. Chuck Lawless and the Lawless Group. The survey is covered in-depth during Level 1 training. (It is not sold directly by the Society.)

How can I become certified?

When you successfully complete Level 5, which includes an actual church health consultation project, you are eligible to apply for certification in the Society. This certification signifies to prospective clients that you achieved a level of competence by virtue of receiving extensive training and completing a Level 5 “practicum.”

[More info on certification – www.churchconsultation.org/certification](http://www.churchconsultation.org/certification)

What You'll Learn in Levels 1 - 5 Training

We currently have two alternative tracks for Levels 1-4 Training.

Track 1 (Generalist)

Level 1: Introduction to Church Health & Consultation

- Definition of church consulting
- Model of a healthy church
- How to guide a church toward evangelism
- How to lead a church through change
- Understanding and using the Church Health Survey™
- Overview of the consultation process and suggested fees
- Ten winning strategies of church consultants

Level 2: Comprehensive Consultation: First Steps/Components

- Areas to cover in a comprehensive church consultation
- Growth barriers & strategies for overcoming them
- How to conduct a congregational and community analysis
- Church diagnostic tools
- Understanding church finances and borrowing issues
- Personal finances of the minister/pastor

Level 3: Advanced Issues in Church Consultation

- How to conduct interviews in church consultation
- Developing strategic plans
- Statistical & data analysis
- Sunday school & small group issues
- Consultants & prayer ministries

Level 4: Best Practices in Church Consultation

- Consultation requests
- Writing a consultation proposal
- Acquiring clients
- Developing a brand in consultation
- Facilities & community tours
- Preparing for the Level 5 church consultation project

Track 2 (Strategic Planning Consulting)

Track 2 trains you in a comprehensive 6-7 month project working with a church.

Level 1:

- Strategic Planning Consulting Introduction and Overview
- Forming a Strategic Leadership Team
- Conducting an Initial Church Analysis

Level 2:

- Monthly Meeting Objectives
- Mission and Values

Level 3:

- Community Outreach
- Making Disciples

Level 4:

- Mobilizing Members for Ministry
- Church Staff
- Church Setting
- Church Finances
- Vision

Note: Either Track 1 or Track 2 qualifies you to move on to your Level 5 Project

Level 5: Church Consultation Project

The purpose of Level 5 is to provide the student with the opportunity to conduct a comprehensive consultation coached by one of the Society's highly experienced instructors.

See the next section for the detail of this Level 5 project.

Level 5 Consulting Project

The process starts with you lining up a church to engage, keeping in mind it will likely involve interviews with staff and members, data analysis, surveys and more. The church you select must be pre-approved before you can actually register for Level 5 training.

How do you find a church? One way is to network among churches in your area. Another method is talking with denominational leaders that oversee many churches. Some students offer the consultation at no cost simply because they need the experience. (However, the church should be willing to cover at least your out-of-pocket costs as outlined in your proposal to them.)

We're often asked, "Can I do my Level 5 consultation project with the church I currently serve as pastor or staff member?" The simple answer is "No" with one major exception. If you are an interim pastor serving in a consultative role to prepare for the next pastor, using your church for a Level 5 consultation may be approved.

Following are the specific steps involved in the Level 5 process:

1. Find a church that is willing to utilize your consulting services. Send an e-mail to ChuckL@churchconsultation.org with the following information: name of church, location, average worship attendance, and how you received permission to do the consult. Also include a brief summary of what you already know about the church and what areas you will be addressing during the consultation.
2. If Dr. Lawless approves the church, he will notify you and the Society. Go to www.churchconsultation.org to register for the Level 5 training project.
3. Explain in an e-mail to Dr. Lawless if you plan to use the **Church Health Survey** and/or a demographic study.
4. Write a proposal letter for the church and e-mail it to Dr. Lawless, who will respond with any proposed changes. Do not send the letter to the church until Dr. Lawless has approved it.
5. Copy Dr. Lawless by e-mail when the letter is sent. Be sure it includes any recommended corrections.
6. Analyze the statistical information sent to you by the church, in addition to any community demographic material. Send Dr. Lawless a three-page report (double-spaced) on summarizing your analysis of the numbers. Include any other documents that might help Dr. Lawless understand your conclusions.
7. You will receive Dr. Lawless' comments on your report in a reasonable time period.

8. Send Dr. Lawless a plan detailing how you will spend your consulting time on site (interviews, facility inspection, community surveys, etc.).
9. Do the on-site work.
10. After the on-site consult is finished, e-mail Dr. Lawless a draft of the full consultation report and email it to Dr. Lawless. This report should clearly indicate that you have completed a comprehensive consultation with the church.
11. Call Pam Lawless at 919-435-1333 to set up a telephone appointment with Dr. Lawless to discuss your written draft. Do not send the report to the church until you have made the corrections that Dr. Lawless requires.
12. Send the final report to the church and to Dr. Lawless. Though we do not require you to make a presentation to the church, we prefer that you do so to complete the consultation.
13. Write a three- to four-page (double-spaced) evaluation of your consultation experience. Talk specifically about what you learned about consulting through this process. Send the report to Dr. Lawless.
14. When Dr. Lawless receives and approves your final report, he will notify you and SCC that you have completed the Level 5 consultation project.

Next Step: Certification



About Certification

If you're already a practicing consultant, or are exploring the possibility, we invite you to investigate credentials with the Society.

Have you consulted with any churches in the past? Your experience could qualify you for certification.

Certification benefits:

1. Recognized "Certified Church Consultant" credentials
2. Society logo to use on business cards, Web sites, brochures, etc.
3. Listing in the online consultant directory
4. Frameable membership certificate & code of ethics

Requirements for applying for certification

1. Must be a Society member in good standing
2. A required minimum of five consecutive years in consulting work OR complete Levels 1-5 training with the Society (provide proof of training and/or client work)
3. Submit a 1,000-word paper on your philosophy of consulting
4. Submit two consultation reports
5. Submit three ministry reference letters
6. Agree to abide by the Consultant's Code of Ethics

Certification fee: \$189

Annual renewal: \$99 (Requires proof of training and client work)

[View the Application](http://www.churchconsultation.org/certification_application) (www.churchconsultation.org/certification_application)

Tuition Fees and Discounts

For classroom training, tuition is \$395 per level (discounted for members and student members). We've grouped our four levels of classroom training into three days (rather than four) to shorten your travel time and help you save on airfare, gas and hotel expenses.

DVD training is also available at www.churchconsultation.org/training_resources . Levels 1-4 are \$189 per level (discounted for members and student members).

Consultant Training Calendar

All in-classroom training conferences are Levels 1-4, which are condensed into three consecutive days.

Please check our Web site (www.churchconsultation.org) and go to the Live Training tab for updated training dates and other information.

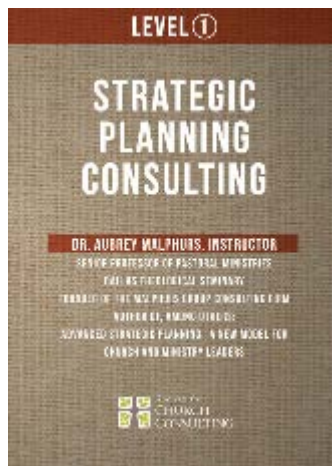
DVD Training

Note: If you complete our DVD training, Track 1 or 2, we require that you write and submit for approval a 1-2 page report for each Level completed. These reports document for us that you actively engaged the material. We ask you to report your likes, dislikes, learnings, etc.

DVD Generalist Training (Track 1)



DVD Strategic Planning Consulting (Track 2)



(The above is Level 1 of 4)

To see all available DVDs and special offers, visit:

www.churchconsultation.org/training_resources

How to Start a Church Consulting Ministry on the Side

By Tom Harper

If you have a passion to revitalize churches, Christ can use you in exciting ways to turn around hurting congregations.

Are you a veteran of the business world? Your experience and skills may be sought after by the church. Is an extensive pastorate in your background? Your wisdom could help a pastor deal with the challenges in his church.

But many consulting veterans urge a slow approach to exploring a consulting career. It's not for everyone. Obstacles like lack of money or experience can cripple a promising consultant before he or she accepts client number one.

Before you chase your dream, pause to consider the following strategies that may increase your chances of success.

1. Get professional training. By now you know about the consulting courses offered by the Society. I also recommend theology classes if you've never worked in a church. Many seminaries and universities offer convenient distance-learning courses.

2. Read leadership and consulting books. You can browse Amazon.com or visit any book store and peruse the business section for titles by the likes of John Maxwell, Bill Hybels, Ken Blanchard, Jim Collins, and others. Also check out these books on building a consulting practice by Karl Weiss: *How to Acquire Clients*, *How to Establish a Unique Brand in the Consulting Profession*, and *Value-Based Fees*. Also helpful are *The Interventionist* by Lyle Schaller and *Biblical Church Growth* by Gary McIntosh.

3. Find a guinea pig. In the Society's Level 5 training, you'll be coached as you work with a real church. Even if you don't enroll in the formal training, find a willing church that could use some free help (but don't make any promises you can't back up). When you create your own personal case study, your learning accelerates. You'll develop a valuable repertoire of anecdotes that will serve you in future consultations. If you succeed in this first exercise with a real church client, you'll know whether to pursue consulting.

4. Write a business plan. Answer these questions: "If I went into consulting full-time, what would my practice look like? What kinds of churches would I work with? What would be my area of expertise?" Think about how you would promote your services and find clients. Consider how much you'd charge (I don't recommend charging by the hour; it's better to start off quoting on a project basis). Flesh out every aspect of your dream as if you were jumping into it full force. Now scale it back and fit a separate paying job into the picture. If you build a profitable practice on the side, rather than putting full-time financial pressure on it right away, you'll find more joy and success.

5. Get a mentor. If you're serious about this, get advice from pastors and other consultants. Some people build a personal advisory board and have formal meetings. If you don't know anyone who's currently consulting, join the Society to meet certified members and talk to the instructors.

6. Get published. Writing stuff people want to read is not easy. Once you feel confident in your writing, submit articles to ChurchCentral.com (which publishes general articles on church health), or query the publications and Web sites you read often.

I applaud you for your interest in church consulting. It's an exciting calling for anyone with experience leading businesses or churches.

But a final (repetitive) word of caution. If your resume doesn't boast years in either ministry or the marketplace, I urge you to delay your dream. That doesn't mean cancel it – but first invest time in getting some real-world experience. Dr. Glen Martin says you need “blood on your tunic” before you're qualified to work with a church. War wounds signify wisdom. Experience ultimately benefits the churches you'll work with.

After all, church consulting is not a hobby. It is a calling worthy of your best efforts. It requires diligence, experience, education and excellence. Advising a church can cause a ripple effect throughout eternity.

I pray the Lord gives you a personal dream of fortifying the church. May he also inspire you with a perfect plan for your consulting ministry.

Growing your Church Consulting Practice

By Bob Browning

The tasks associated with growing a consulting practice are largely the same if you are an independent consultant compensated by fees or employed by an organization that provides a salary.

Before you try to grow your practice, make sure you have done the necessary work to know your strengths and limitations as it relates to helping churches. You should have confirmation from current or prospective clients that the specific services you will offer are really needed and offered at a reasonable price. There's an adage in the marketing world that applies well to church consultation work:

If there is a need in the market, and if the product/service meets that need and is priced right ... all promotion works.

Another very important thing to have at the top of your mind and tip of your tongue is your **Unique Selling Proposition**. In other words, know why a pastor should work with you rather than any other consultant. My unique selling proposition has been "You could likely achieve what you want to do eventually. Given the results I've helped people achieve, I can get you farther toward that goal, and much faster, than you could on your own."

Here are the top four tasks associated with growing a consultation practice based on my experience:

Task # 1: Establish your credibility among leaders who may have a need for a church consultant.

One of several tools to use is a short biography prepared for prospective clients who want more information about you and your background. Make sure your bio accurately portrays your background with a focus on experiences related to your consulting strengths. Emphasize results you've achieved.

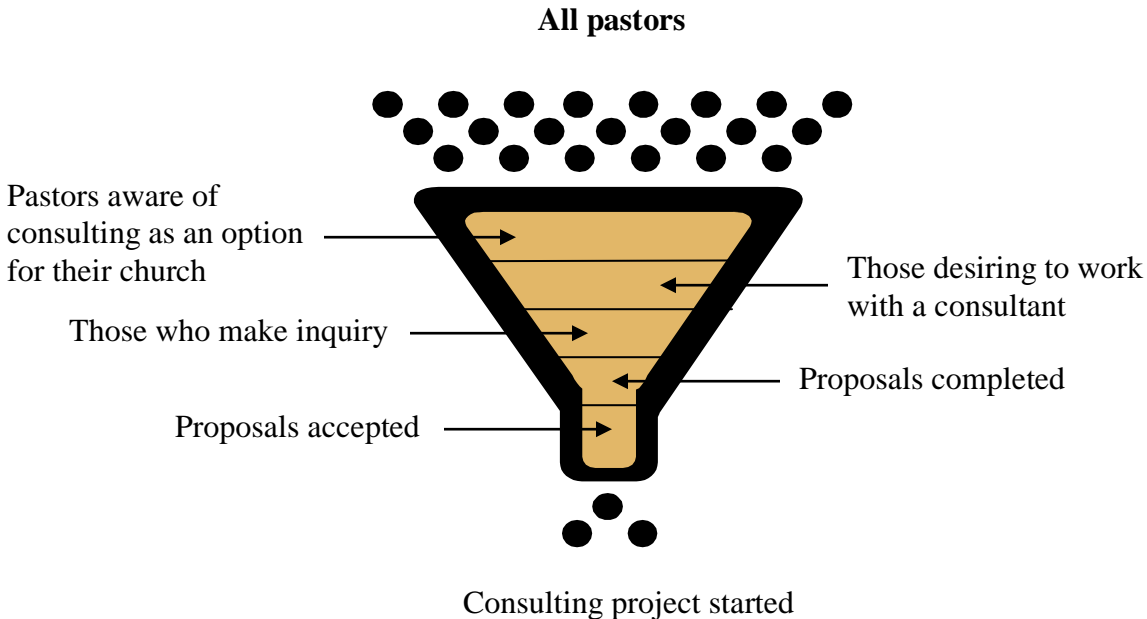
The principal and arguably the most effective way to establish credibility is through publishing. Write a book or publish articles for publications that reach a high concentration of pastors and church decision makers. Pay close attention to the content of your writing. Be sure to include facts and observations based not just on theory, but facts. If you need help writing, consider hiring a freelancer.

Consider publishing fact-filled special reports, guides or quizzes that print or online media would want to publish.

Task # 2: Create a base of awareness

Church consultants (new ones especially) need to generate awareness in a way that results in inquiries from pastors who have genuine interest in a consultation.

Imagine the universe of prospects for your consultation practice as being in a funnel. Your task is to move prospects from the top of the funnel to the bottom, where active consultation projects come out.



Here's an example: Let's say you're a consultant specializing in small churches. You decide to write a mini-guide titled ***"Ten easy ways small churches can attract new members."*** The guide is published online as a free downloadable document. Readers provide contact information in order to get the guide. As the guide is downloaded from a site like ChurchCentral.com, you receive an e-mail that provides the readers' contact information.

Task # 3: Remind prospects faster than they forget

At any given time only a small percentage of pastors who are aware of your consultation services need a consultant and have the budget and motivation to contact you. That's why it's important to build a database of prospective clients and contact them regularly.

Good tools to accomplish this task include e-mail newsletters, brochures, podcasts and what's called "reminder media." Let's say you do podcasts on topics centered on church growth. You could send prospects a set of headphones that are imprinted your name or logo.

Task # 4: Commit to networking among pastors, denominational leaders and other consultants.

Consulting is a people business. This is especially true of church consulting. Explore all your options for building relationships with pastors currently in your sphere of influence.

If you have several good prospects and only a limited time with which to connect with them, it's important to prioritize them. Spend your precious time and resources with prospects that have a genuine interest in and need for your consulting services. This will help you avoid investing too much in prospects that have either low potential or low probability of converting to actual projects.

Make a detailed list of all opportunities to meet and spend time with pastors you have not met. This could be interfaith groups, denominational meetings or church-related conferences. Prioritize these opportunities in terms of the number and quality of the contacts you can make.

Above all, it's important to do *honest* networking. As church consultants we're about being the Lord's servants when consulting with churches, not about making money.

Perhaps the most important advice I can offer is to have realistic expectations. Church consulting can be a slow-build endeavor. Even highly experienced, well-known consultants do other things to generate income including training, speaking, writing books and leading churches.

Student Assessments of the Training

“I am glad to see that there are many others who sense the same type of call to consulting. For a long time I thought I had to figure this out by myself. I bet many pastors feel the same way about their ministries.”

“I very much appreciated hearing the lecture and I am thankful that something like this exists. It is much, much better than reading a book. The disk with the PP and handouts allows for review of those materials too. I will do level 2 after I sit down and watch level 1 again all the way through to make sure I have soaked up all that I can from it. Thank you for making this available!”

“I appreciate the consultant training more than I can tell you. I begin work July 2 as a congregational strategist for the Baptist General Convention of Texas. I will use the tools every day in my work with pastors and churches.”

** The following are excerpts from the written reports submitted by a consultant who completed Track 1 Levels 1-4 DVD training.*

“The purpose of consulting is to help a church discover how to move forwards and to remove the blocks to vital spiritual health.” I found that this definition of ‘consulting’ resonated with my own experience of 40 years in pastoral experience. Many times people came into my office in the UK, Canada and in the USA, with a plan that would “revolutionize” my church; but they never took the time to discover where we were along the spiritual road. Thus when I retired, I sought to draw alongside pastors in hurting and struggling churches in order to help them discover where their church’s true needs were and to assist them in any way I could. At this present time I am doing this with a Baptist church in Michigan. This course has provided me with much of what I needed.

1. In the light of this, the **Church Health Survey** has provided me with a Biblically based effective tool, to offer to churches. Unfortunately, for those of us who live in Canada, it appears costly because of the dollar exchange rate.) I have looked at other surveys and feel that this is superior because it focuses on the six foundational structures of the church as laid out in Acts 2:42-47. In addition, I found the idea that the survey reflected the church’s *perception* of itself rather than the consultant’s perception and that for every question asked there were positive recommendations for improvement. This has become a strong emphasis in my work with churches.

LEVEL 1 TRAINING:

2. I found the emphasis on **ecclesiology** running through levels 1-4 most encouraging. There seems to be a lot of misunderstanding of what the church

is meant to be, even among pastors. It was refreshing to hear that the Bible lays down the building blocks of the church.

3. The emphasis on **evangelism** was heartening. Without it the church cannot grow numerically or spiritually. As I travel around preaching, I am amazed how unwelcoming churches really are. Some I have visited I would not want to be a part of, if I was looking for a church home.

I found the idea of evangelism through “community” and “small groups” a significant way of reaching our post-modern world with the Good News. It’s a very challenging concept. It was a reminder to me that the last church of which I was Senior Pastor grew from 90 to over 500, through evangelism of this nature. A lot of the principles of the **REACH program**, I have been sharing with the church I am working with in Michigan. The stress on a **Visitors’ Ministry** was a very welcome note because it is sadly lacking in so many churches.

4. The emphasis on “**making disciples**” was refreshing. It refocused our attention on the Biblical pattern of evangelism and the development of training mentors.
5. Dr. John Ewart’s **emphasis on prayer** was challenging and reassuring. It is not just new methodology that is required but a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the life of the consultant and the church in which consultation is taking place.
6. **Handling conflict** was a very helpful section. None of us like conflict, me included, but I felt the positive slant on it was encouraging, as so many churches are experiencing it and being paralyzed by it.
7. I found that Dr. Ewart’s emphasis on the personal, **spiritual preparation** of the consultant reassuring and stimulating. We must ‘walk with God’ if we are to help others to do so. His stress on prayer, a servant attitude, honest networking, continuing education and a faith outlook was a real challenge. It is something I must hold constantly before me. It is something I always encourage pastors to maintain. As far as learning goes, so many leaders only read what they agree with. This just blinds them to reality.
8. The interview process was very helpful to me. It is something I will follow carefully.

LEVEL 2 TRAINING:

1. Dr. Ewart’s **perceptions of the church** voiced what most leaders are struggling with, yet so often fail to act on. The church indeed is crying out for renewal, but unfortunately most are fearful of it.

2. I found what was said about the difference between **Mission and Vision** very helpful. I have found that a number of churches confuse the two. This clarified my own thinking.
3. **Growth barriers:** the delineation of these was a real encouragement to me. I had built my own list of barriers to church growth. This has given me a new confidence to articulate these things to churches, where they appear to apply.
4. Conducting the **Congregational Analysis** -- the emphasis on the **church life cycle** was very instructive and a useful illustration. Often I have thought about these things but have been unsure as to whether they had any foundation. This was reassuring. The procedures outlined gave me a structure on which to build when seeking to assist a church in discovering its real needs.
5. **PERCEPT** – This was totally new to me. I have checked out their website and am going to ask them if their demographics are only focused on the USA or do they extend into Canada.
6. Understanding **church finances** was very helpful. I have always had an aversion to figures! I would probably call a colleague who was more experienced in this realm. But what was shared gave new light on some issues that I had not previously thought about. I had never experienced any financial difficulties in the churches where I have served. I put this down to preaching regularly on stewardship. But some of the issues raised here threw some new light on the subject.

LEVEL 3 TRAINING:

This was a most rewarding session to listen to and note. Dr. Malphurs logical presentation was brilliant. I had previously read his book on strategic planning, so that this made this session a most worthwhile exercise. He really challenged me by his statement, “I’m not aware of any church that God is blessing with growth that doesn’t have leaders with strategic thinking as one of their skills set.” Some of the figures he quoted were really challenging. It forced me to think again about how to reach pastors that I know who are in churches that have plateaued or declining, and are quite content to do nothing about changing their situation.

The phenomenal growth of mosques in the US in the period of 1990-2001 was an amazing 42%. What a challenge.

His analysis of the **church’s changing landscape** was insightful. There was some overlap with what was shared in Level 1. But this just underscored what I had previously learned or heard.

I feel that his **Strategic Envisioning Process** is something that I will adapt to my own ministry among the churches. In addition, I appreciated his distinction between **aspirational values and actual values**.

LEVEL 4 TRAINING:

Once again Dr. Ewart dealt with **mission and vision and strategy**. I found this helpful, that mission statements should be easy for people to memorize. So often they are lengthy and people just ignore them. Hence they have very little useful purpose. I have been working with the pastor of a church, to shorten the churches mission statement. It is too complex and means nothing to an outsider. It is also framed in archaic wording.

The comment about “**pastors reaching the ceiling of their competence,**” was very challenging, particularly as it relates to pastoral change. I will certainly keep this in mind when talking with pastors. I have often thought this might be the case, as one business leader said, ‘people so often get promoted to the level of their incompetence’, but somehow had not fully related it to the pastoral ministry.

The hard facts about **assimilation**, and the need for a church to have an “**assimilation process,**” were underscored in my mind. I feel this is so important because of the post-modern emphasis on the social side of life.

The four step plan for **effective follow up** of visitors to the church was really helpful and should become the part of the regular ministry of the church. This is critical to growth.

From a practical perspective for the consultant, the **writing of the report** to the church was really helpful. I will always keep before me the list that must be covered.

I also found **acquiring clients** of great value to me. For me, this has always been fraught with a measure of difficulty. I realized I needed to develop a website and network among those I know. The section on **consultation fees** gave me some indication of how to charge for my services.