

The 2010 Church Consulting Future Trends Report 2010



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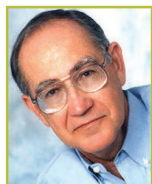
Dr. John Ewart
Director of Professional Studies & Distance Learning and Associate Professor of Missions at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.



Dr. Bob Whitesel
Associate Professor in the College of Graduate Studies at Indiana Wesleyan University; noted author on church growth and organizational change.



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Bill Easum
Church consultant and futurist; author of 15 books on church growth and leadership.



Dr. Gary L. McIntosh
Founder of the McIntosh Church Growth Network; author or coauthor of 13 books for pastors and consultants.



Dr. Chuck Lawless
Dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism & Church Growth at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; respected author on church health and spiritual warfare.



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Senior Pastor of Journey of Faith church in Manhattan Beach, Calif.; author or coauthor of 11 books on the church.



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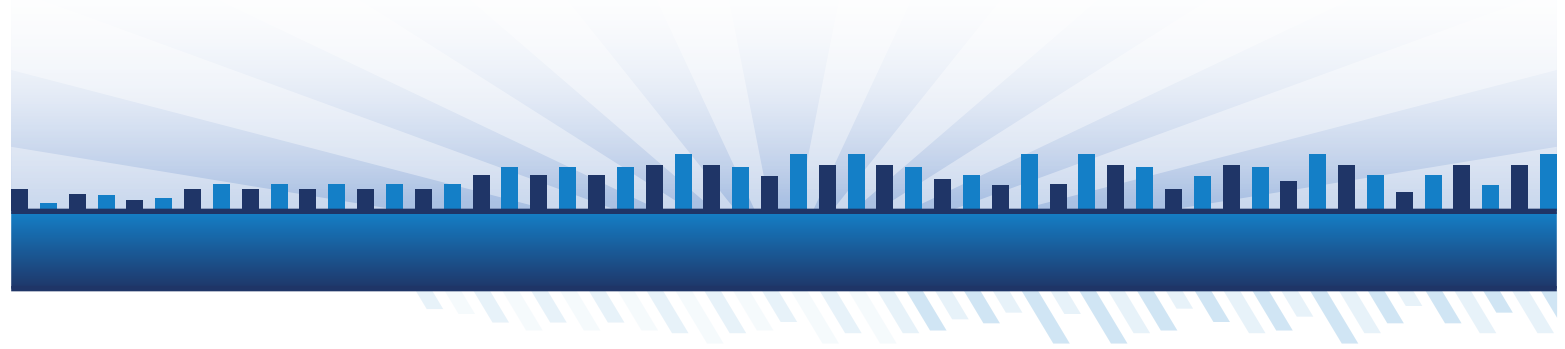
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Executive Summary	5
Pastor Survey Results	14
Consultant Survey Results	21
Commentaries	
Alan Chandler	22
Barry Winders	23
Bill Easum	24
Chuck Lawless	25
Dillard Wilbanks	26
Gordon Marcy	27
Jeff Johnson	29
John Jackson	30
Paul Borden	31
Randy McWhorter	32
Tim Gentry	33
Warner Smith	34
Will Mancini	35

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The 2010 Church Consulting Future Trends Report

Introduction: Demand is rising

The **2010 Church Consulting Future Trends Report** is a comprehensive analysis of the challenges, opportunities and trends facing church consulting. Based on two separate surveys of hundreds of ministry leaders and consultants, this resource is meant for pastors, consultants, denominational executives, leadership coaches, lay leaders and ministry students.

According to many researchers, 4,000 new churches are planted each year, but more than 7,000 churches die in the same time period. Gary McIntosh, founder of the McIntosh Church Growth Network, reports 1,300 pastors are fired every month, and another 1,200 leave their churches due to stress, burnout and related issues. Of course, many factors lead to church decline and pastor burnout. And many are preventable.

We are encouraged to see how God is using a growing number of church consultants and coaches to help turn around churches. As you'll see in our research, more ministry leaders are willing to work with strategic outsiders.

But the bottom line in our report is this: The demand for qualified, experienced consultants far outpaces the supply.

How many church consultants are there?

Our estimate of the size of the church consulting market is influenced by how we define what a consultant is. In this report, we have leaned toward inclusivity - if a person consults with at least two churches a year and has received leadership training or has extensive experience as a pastor, he or she is considered a consultant. We further define a consultant as "a strategic outsider tasked with diagnosing and making recommendations for church clients."

One factor that makes the church consulting segment difficult to quantify is that many people think they're consultants, but in reality have not been trained or have little experience. The Society must be careful not to send out ill-equipped consultants, just as Bible colleges and seminaries need to be careful about sending ill-equipped pastors.

Based on our best estimates, there are 3,000 to 7,000 active ministry consultants and coaches in North America (including part time, full time and denominational).

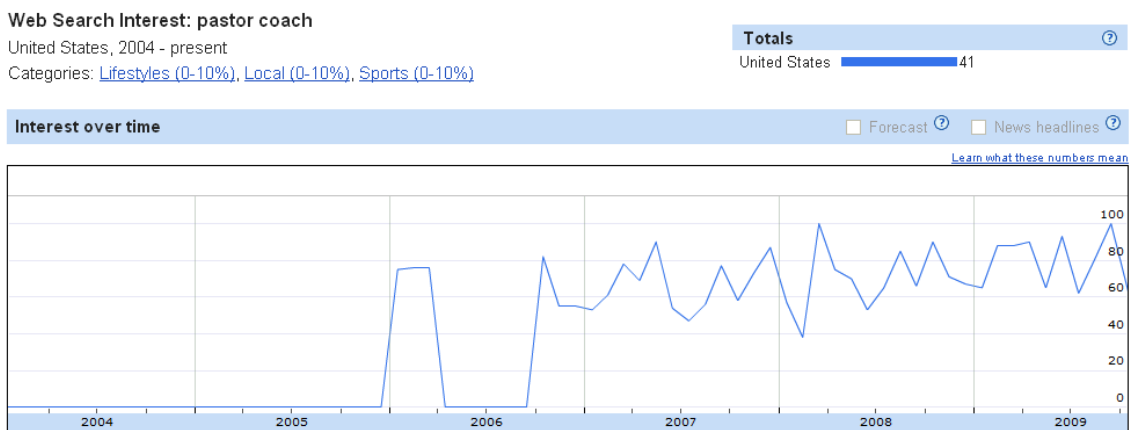
How did we reach this conclusion? For starters, the Southern Baptist Convention has around 600 directors of missions serving in this role, with an additional number of congregational strategists specializing in church turnarounds. Our LinkedIn discussion group has nearly 800 members, with about 20 percent of them serving as full-time consultants. The Society itself has 277 members. We are discovering new vocational church consultants almost every day through ChurchCentral.com and various social-networking tools such as Twitter and LinkedIn.

The interest in church consulting continues to grow, as more than 2,500 people have downloaded the Society’s Guide to Church Consultant Training in the past two years. Currently, 10 to 20 people download this free guide every week. Many of them find the Society’s site through Google.

The following chart shows a Google Insights report on the popularity of the keywords “church” and “consulting” used together in Google searches:



In the past three years, the searches for “church consulting” have stabilized, but they have not increased since 2004. The graph below analyzes the keywords “pastor” and “coach” together, a combination that has risen from zero since 2006 and continues to increase. (Note the Y axis does not reflect a total number of searches but rather a scaled number, with 100 representing the highest search volume in the entire time period.)



The main takeaway from these graphs is that church consulting has been searched for much longer than pastor coaching; however, interest in coaching seems to be on the rise. This is not enough data to indicate a definite surge in coaching and a decline in consulting, but, as you will see in the data to follow, the two approaches are becoming inseparable.

New models

We have talked to many denominational leaders over the years about their different structures and strategies for serving the churches under their care. New models of consulting, coaching and resourcing are emerging.

For example, Thriving Churches International, led by John Jackson, is creating a network of churches and supporting them with consultants, training and other resources. John and his team have a grand vision to serve thousands of churches in the coming years.

Our research methodology

This **Future Trends** report is a follow-up to a dissertation study published in 2006 by Warner Smith, pastor of First Baptist Church of Emerson, Ga. We learned much from his work and were inspired to do a broader study on the perceptions and trends as seen by both pastors and consultants.

In this project, we conducted two e-mail surveys, one of church leaders and one of church consultants. Because we sent our survey to the approximately 7,000 subscribers of ChurchCentral.com's e-mail newsletter as well as members and constituents of the Society for Church Consulting, the majority of our respondents were at least familiar with the concept of church consulting. Many either had worked with consultants or were consultants themselves.

While using our own lists introduces some bias, the larger number of respondents (320 consultants and 515 pastors) helps mitigate a potentially higher margin of error.

Survey #1: Pastors' opinions of church consultants

Despite the relative newness of the church consulting industry, 51 percent of these respondents said they had worked with an outside consultant.

Granted, because respondents were among recipients of a newsletter significantly focused on church consulting, they would be expected to be more open-minded to consulting than church leaders generally. Despite that consideration, we believe the results show the concept of using outside church advisers is gaining ground.

Where respondents had not worked with a church consultant (49 percent), reasons included:

- Consulting had not yet achieved widespread acceptance
- Cost
- No consultant in the general area

In addition, many respondents either did not perceive the congregation needed consultation, or were unable to convince other leaders that their churches would benefit from it.

Motivations to seek a consultant: Among available answers, the top six included:

- Need for a new church vision - 49%
- Irresolvable conflict within the congregation - 25%
- Decline in attendance - 24%
- Decline in overall perceived spiritual health/growth of members - 23%
- Want help launching new ministries - 22%
- Constructing new space - 22%

Satisfaction: Almost two-thirds of church leaders were satisfied or very satisfied with the results of their consultants' work, and just 10 percent were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Among those **pleased** with consultation results, common statements said the consultants:

- Listened well
- Were willing to state difficult truths
- Imaged professionally
- Paid attention to details
- Inspired
- Exhibited compassion and discernment

Among those **displeased** with results, subjective responses included perceived faults with the consultant (such as applying a “cookie-cutter” approach, showing poor presentation skills or not adequately understanding the congregation) and disappointment that the congregation had yet to adequately move forward with the consultant’s advice.

A separate question identified the top **bad habits** of consultants as:

- Poor implementation
- Being proud and opinionated
- Exhibiting impatience
- Thinking short-term
- Repurposing old consultation reports

Costs: As evidenced in the data, there is no generally accepted fee structure in church consulting. However, many consultants charge \$50-150 per hour (plus expenses) depending on the church’s ability to pay and the complexity of the project.

Costs are no doubt critical when it comes to considering outside consultation, according to the survey responses. The top barrier to working with a consultant was financial limitations (35 percent), with the second-most cited one being concern that the consultation would not be “worth the expense” (20 percent, tied with “unfamiliarity with what consultants do”).

Effectiveness: When asked about their perception of the effectiveness of most church consultants, 53 percent of respondents rated it potentially positive or very positive. “Unsure,” however, was checked by 42 percent. The relative size of that response may reflect the difference between the number of respondents who had used a consultant and those who had not.

Answers to two final questions speak well to the reputation of church consultation generally. Leaders responded by 86 percent that they would be open to working with a consultant in the future, and a remarkable 58 percent said they would consider being church consultants themselves.

Survey #2: The church consultants speak

Our survey elicited responses from 320 consultants. The following issues were the most interesting and/or surprising.

Time devoted: We were surprised that 16 percent said consulting was a full-time endeavor for them. The largest percentage said they consulted only occasionally. Almost a quarter of the respondents, however, said they consulted rarely or never.

Respondents who consult less than full time were asked what other professional endeavors occupied their time. The largest percentage checked pastor (senior, executive or associate), at 40 percent, followed by denominational employee (21 percent) and other (18 percent).

Results reflected the relative inexperience of most church consultants. Fifty-three percent of respondents said they had been active less than five years, with 13 percent consulting less than a year. A considerable majority — 78 percent — had performed fewer than 50 consultations, but 11 percent had performed between 51 and 100. One percent had performed more than a thousand consultations.

Areas of specialty: While 64 percent of respondents indicated no particular specialty, among those who did, the areas were purpose, mission and vision; strategic planning; and leadership training.

Coaching vs. consulting: We also asked respondents to evaluate the difference between “coaching” and “consulting.” Answers indicate many do both. Coaching was suggested to be more “pure” and therefore superior to consulting, but the opinion was not widely evidenced. Many said both have their place, ultimately to be adopted as a style based on the church’s need and the practitioner’s personal preferences.

Here are a few sample responses:

- “I do a little of both with churches, i.e., consult the church and coach the leaders.”
- “In my opinion, coaching is just a new buzzword for mentoring without accountability.”
- “I like the term consulting better because it speaks to more a team concept and doesn’t have the egocentric overtones of coaching.”

Finding church clients: At least some difficulty finding new church clients was expressed by 53 percent of respondents, indicating a need for better marketing by the individual consultant or the Society. Thirty-six percent said they had no difficulty finding clients (mainly because these consultants work for denominations, with no need to search for new clients).

Asked why pastors and lay leaders may hesitate to call outside help, 58 percent of consultants said they believed financial limitations were responsible, followed by unfamiliarity with what consultants do. Only 17 percent indicated a perception that churches might view consultants negatively.

The future: Trends indicated that many consultants are doing more consulting now than they were three years ago (47 percent, the No. 1 answer), and they expect to be consulting more in the next three years (66 percent, the No. 1 answer). The second-most popular answer for both questions was “about the same” amount.

Overwhelmingly, respondents believed the market is growing - both demand and supply are on the increase. This is impacted by the continued decline in churches, a greater desire these churches have to bring in outside help, more team and specialized consulting and better available training.

Some negative trends include an increasing number of inexperienced and ineffective consultants, market saturation of consultants and weak church finances (the most common answer).

Finally, an open-ended question asked how the Society for Church Consulting might help respondents perform better. A list of their responses appears later in this report.

Commentaries

In addition to surveying our two broad groups, we asked some established consultants and thought leaders to share their views regarding the future of church consulting.

Contributing experts include:

- Bill Easum
- Will Mancini
- Tim Gentry
- Paul Borden
- Jeff Johnson
- Chuck Lawless
- Warner Smith
- Alan Chandler
- John Jackson
- Randy McWhorter
- Dillard Wilbanks
- Barry Winders
- Gordon Macy

Excerpts from some of these commentaries are below:

Chuck Lawless

“More churches will need outside expertise. Let’s face it: most churches are unhealthy. More than 3,700 churches in the United States close their doors each year, and thousands more probably should. Leadership is lacking, and laity are unequipped. Few churches are really making a kingdom difference in the darkness of society. That trend is not likely to change significantly in the next five years. In fact, it may get worse as another undisciplined generation takes its leadership position.”

Will Mancini

“There has never been a more viable time for the role of the consultant, and the need is dire for more of us. In 1995, Lyle Schaller wrote that there would be a five-fold increase for the need of consultants in the next 25 years. This has been true in my experience and is the motivator behind my interest and role in the Society of Church Consulting.”

“Churches are navigating all kinds of change and complexity today and, as a result, they are in desperate need of qualified consultants. It remains true that profound knowledge comes from the outside. If you are teetering on the edge of a new ministry calling, or are just getting started, I don’t think there could be a better time to jump in!”

Paul Borden

“The use of effective pastors as consultants and congregational coaches is really working.”

“The [church] problems are common across all 40 or more denominations (including charismatic congregations) I have worked with; they just get fleshed out differently in different groups.”

“The bottom-line urgency for producing any change must be the Great Commission.”

John Jackson

“The five essential skills for future church consultants are:

- Faithful and consistent teaching leadership
- Creation of systems and environments to help people connect with God and each other
- Ability to equip and release men and women for meaningful ministry in alignment with their gifts
- Understanding of leadership principles and cultural analysis for contextual ministry
- Multiple partnership models to extend and enhance local ministry.”

Mission of the Society for Church Consulting

Our mission is to revitalize and advance churches through a network of high-quality consultants. We accomplish this in two ways:

1. Training, certifying and edifying a global community of consultants
2. Connecting these consultants with churches in need

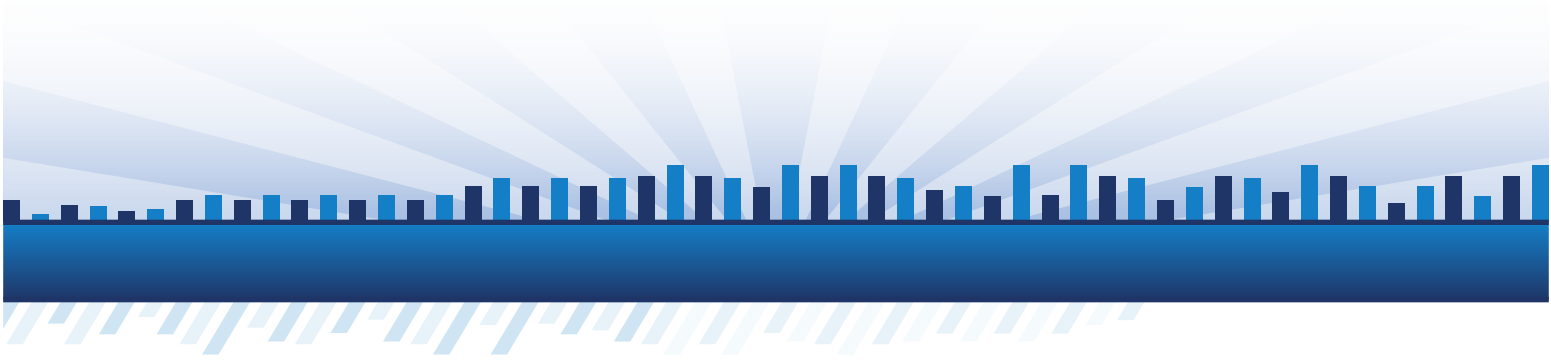
We envision a force of thousands of well-trained, certified consultants working with churches around the world.

Our certified consultants meet high standards of proficiency and professionalism. Our prayer is that they find joy and fulfillment in rebuilding God’s church.

The Society was formed to meet several needs, the most important of which is that the church is in decline, and we have a passion to do what we can to turn it around. Many churches need help to reach the lost and edify the saved, and we believe our consultants can help restore many churches to their biblical purposes.

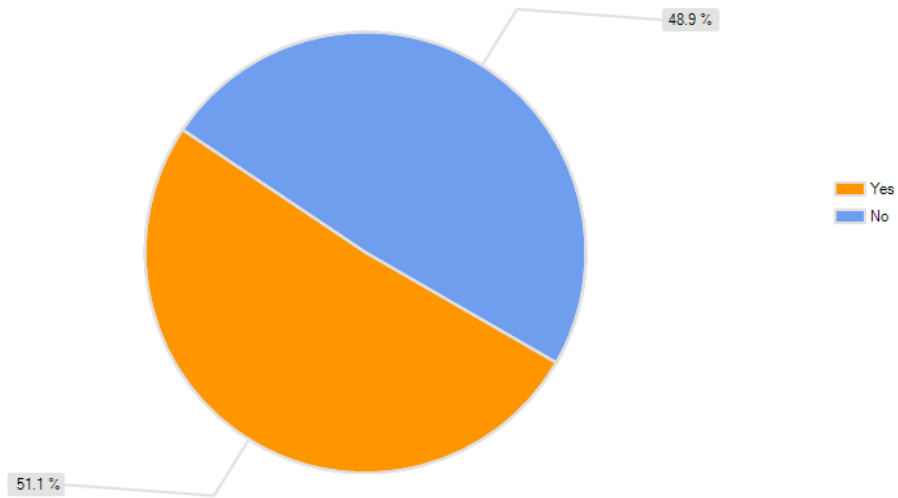
Visit the Society’s home page:

www.churchconsultation.org

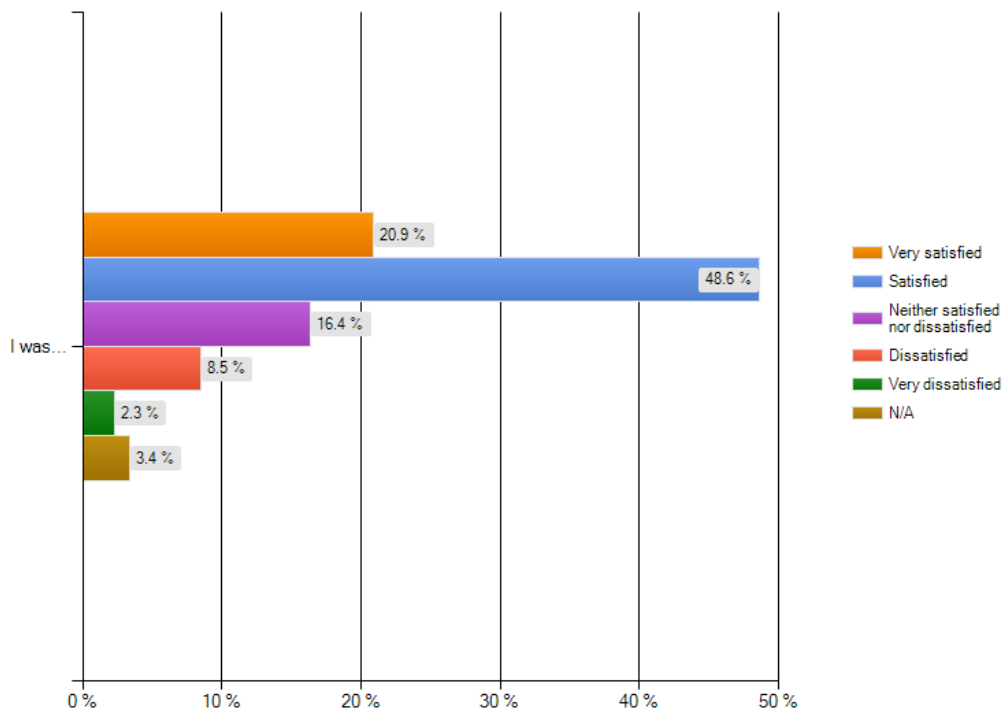


Pastor Survey Results

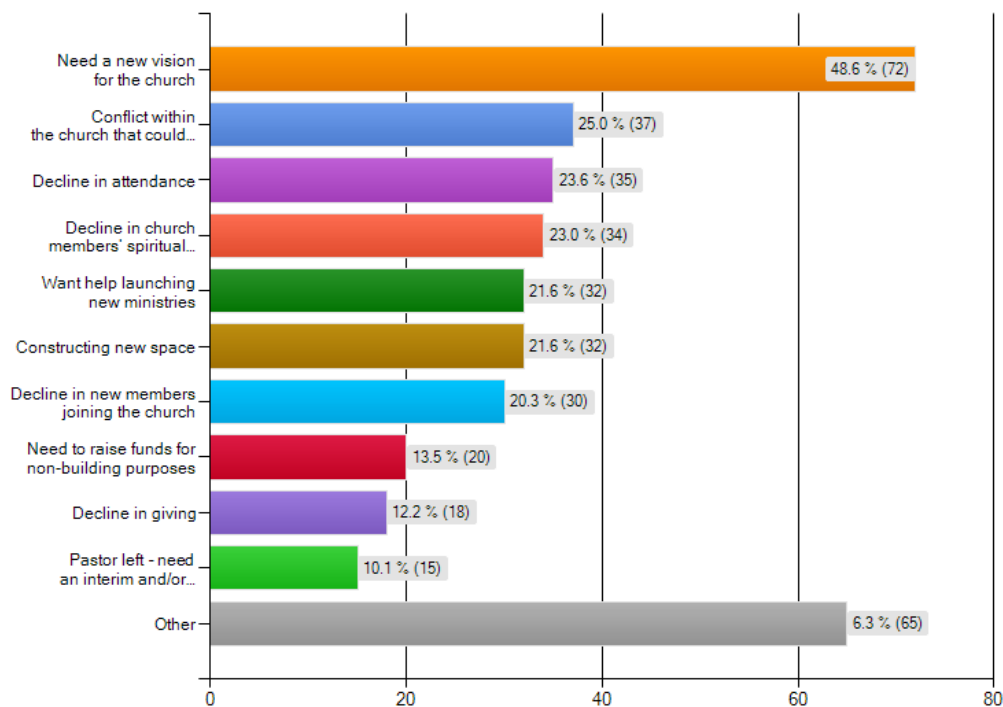
Have you ever worked with an outside church consultant? (For the purposes of this survey, we define a consultant as a strategic outsider tasked with diagnosing and making recommendations for church clients.)



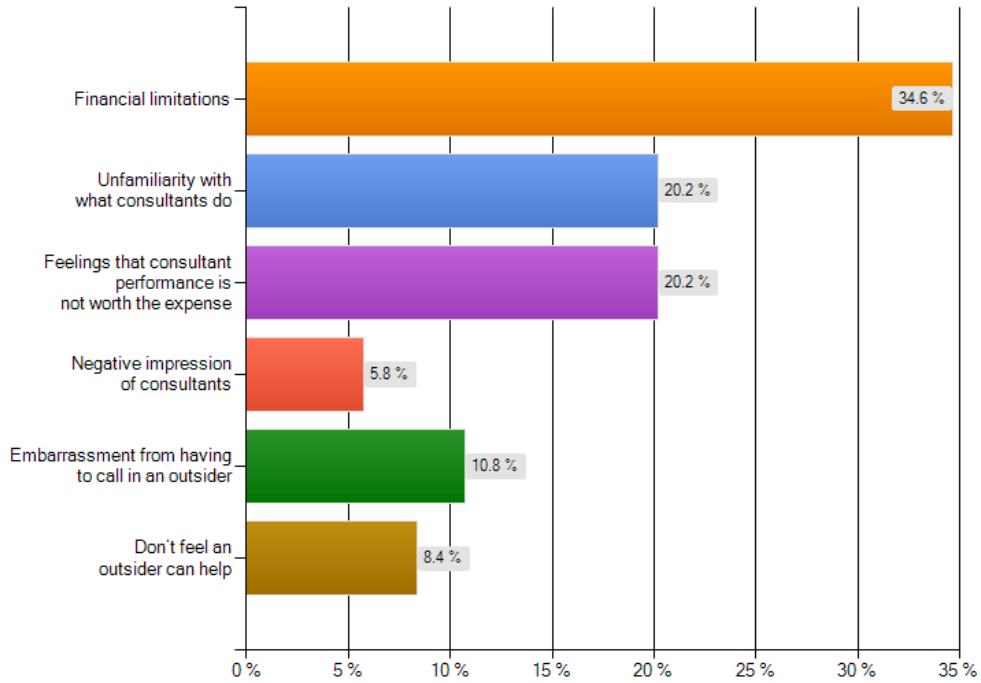
How would you rate your most recent experience with a consultant?



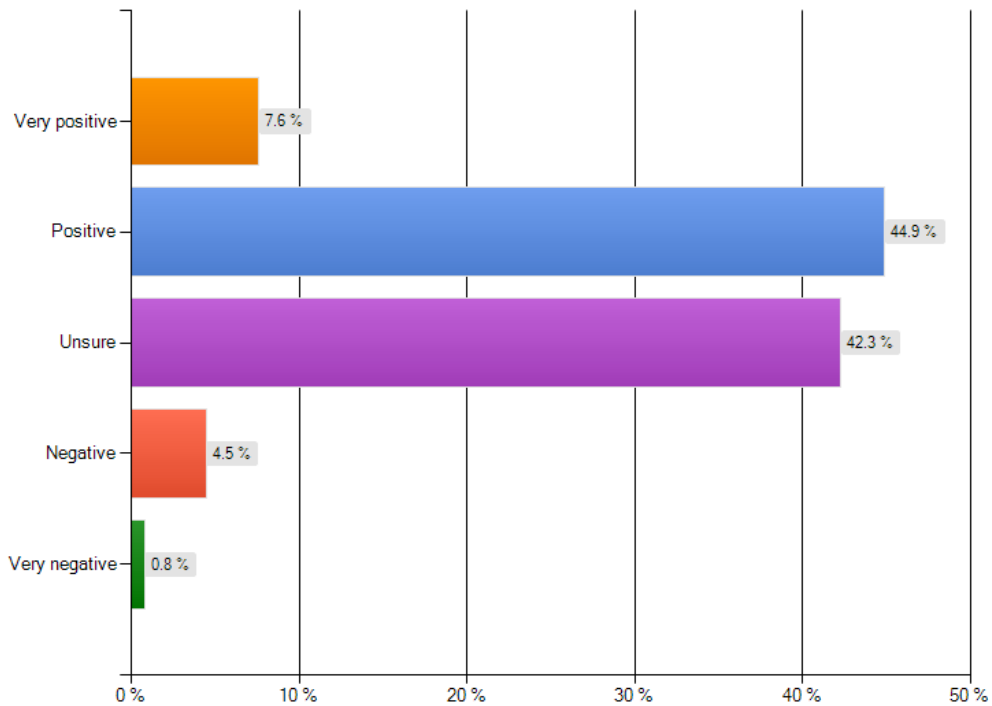
What led you to enlist the help of a consultant? (Check as many as apply.)



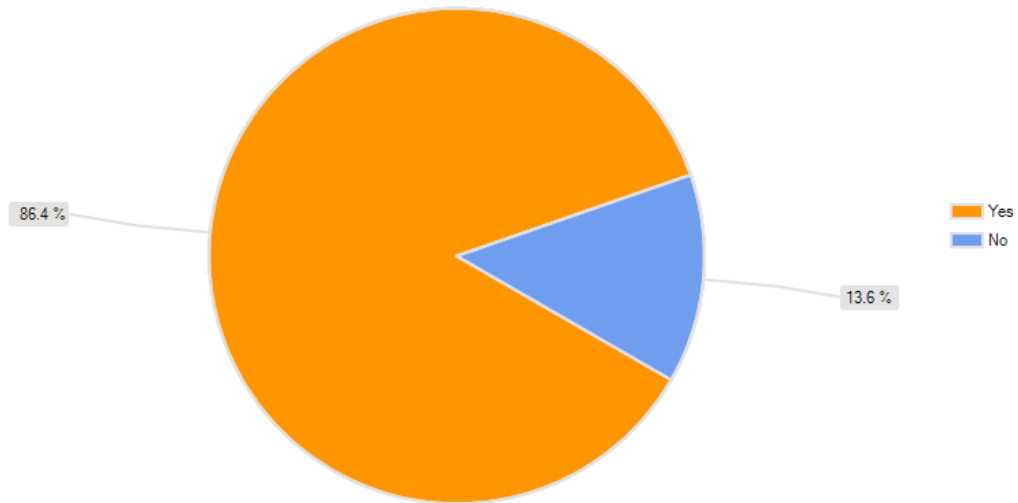
In your opinion, what is the greatest barrier that keeps pastors in need of outside help from working with consultants? (Choose one)



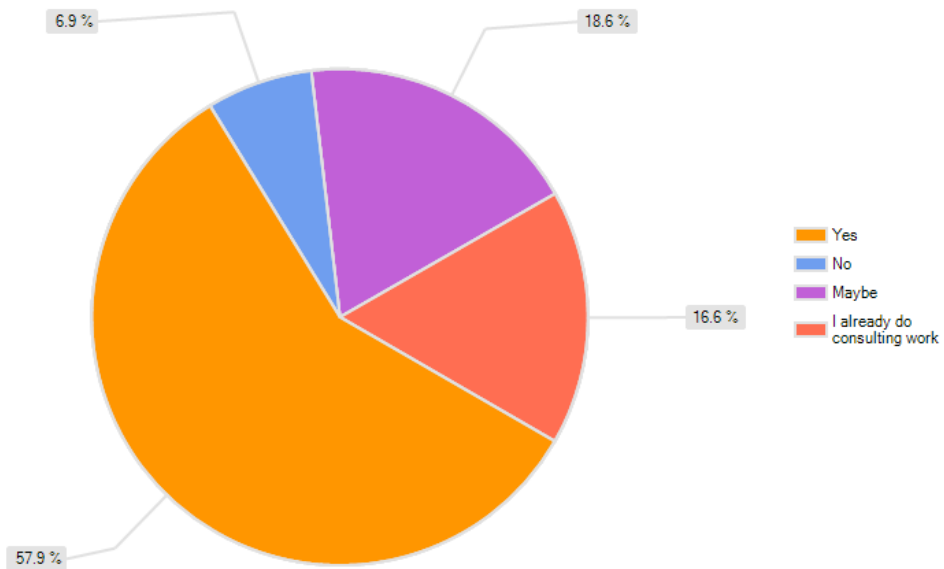
What is your perception of the effectiveness of most church consultants?



Are you open to working with a church consultant in the future?



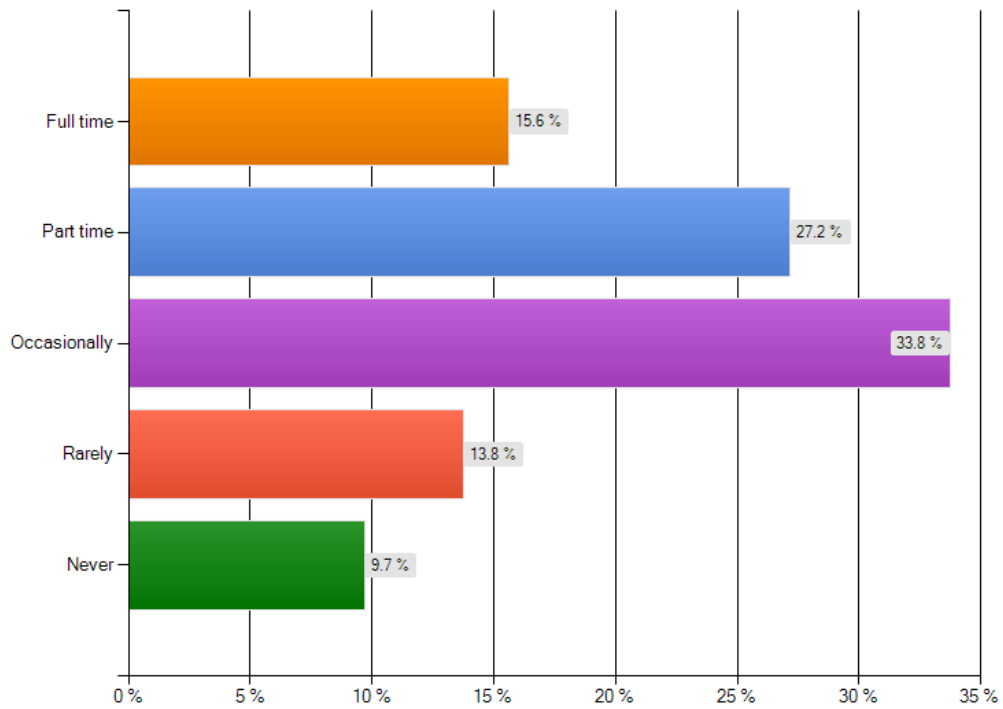
Would you ever consider serving as a church consultant?



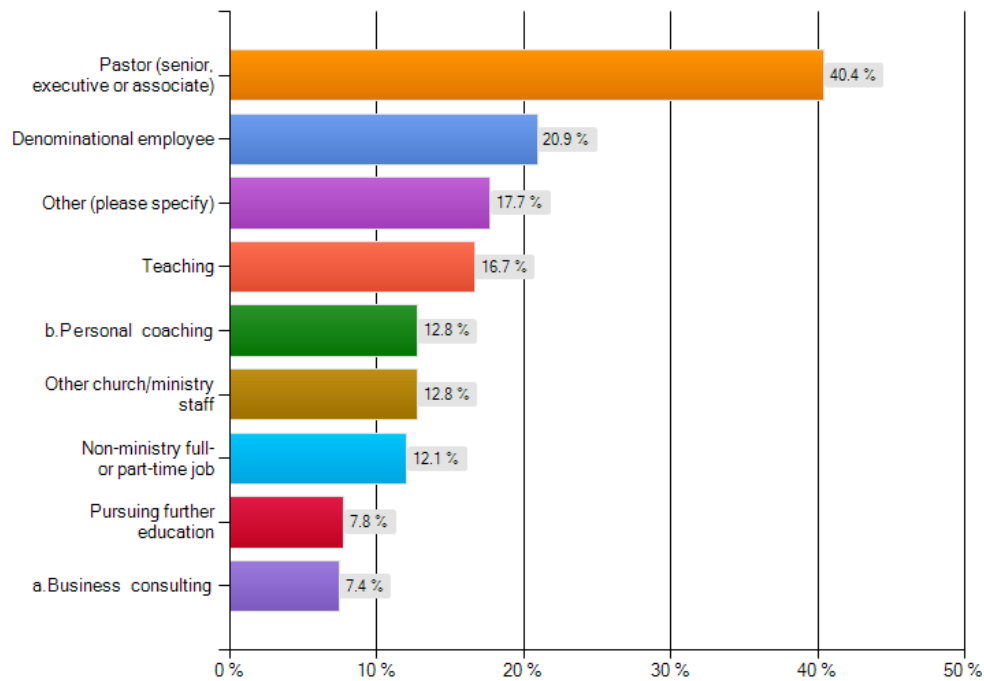


Consultant Survey Results

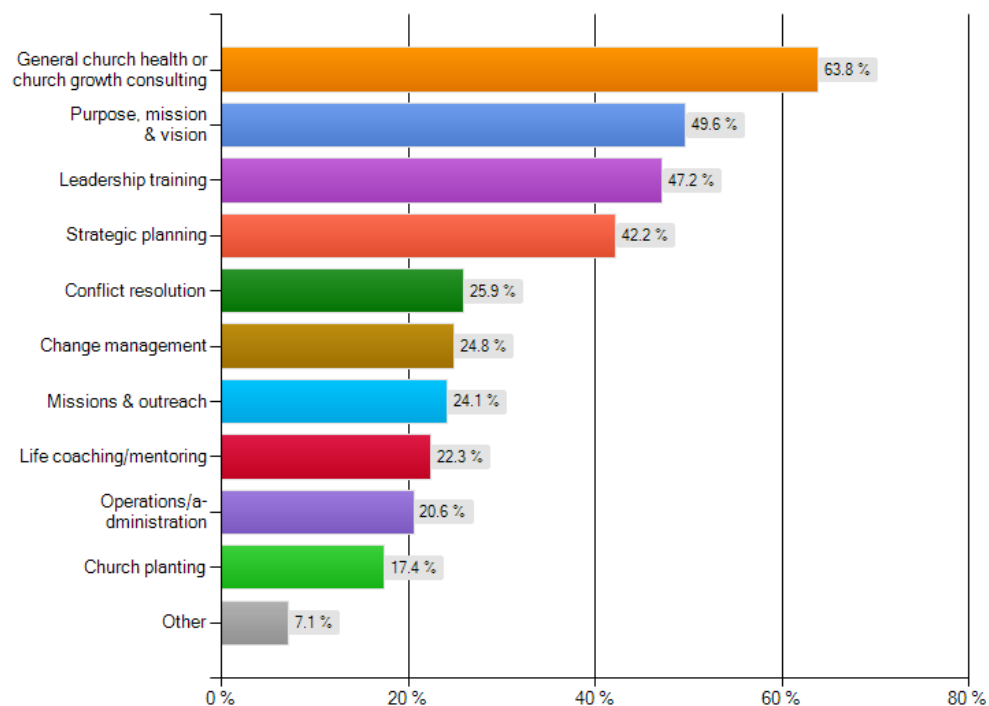
How much time do you devote to consulting with churches?



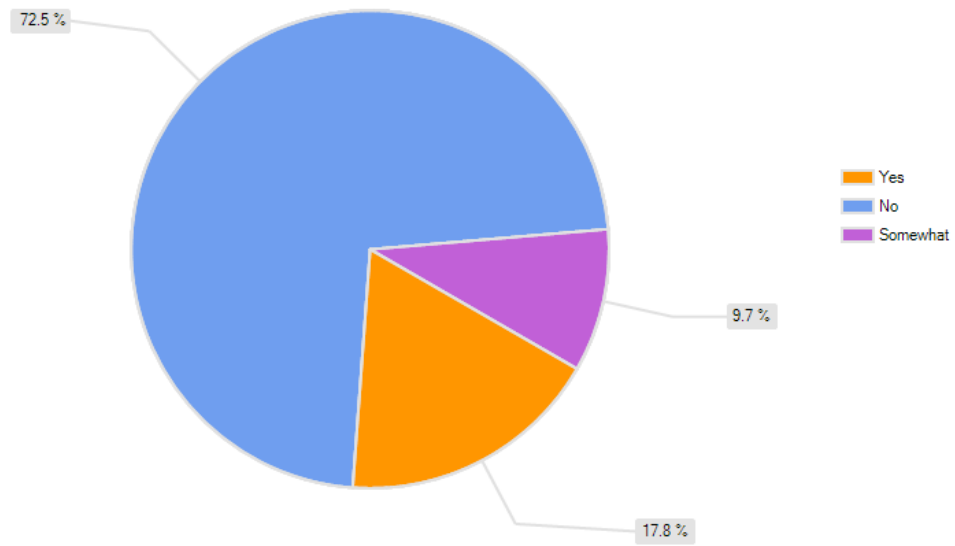
If you don't consult with churches full time, what is the rest of your work time comprised of? (Check all that apply.)



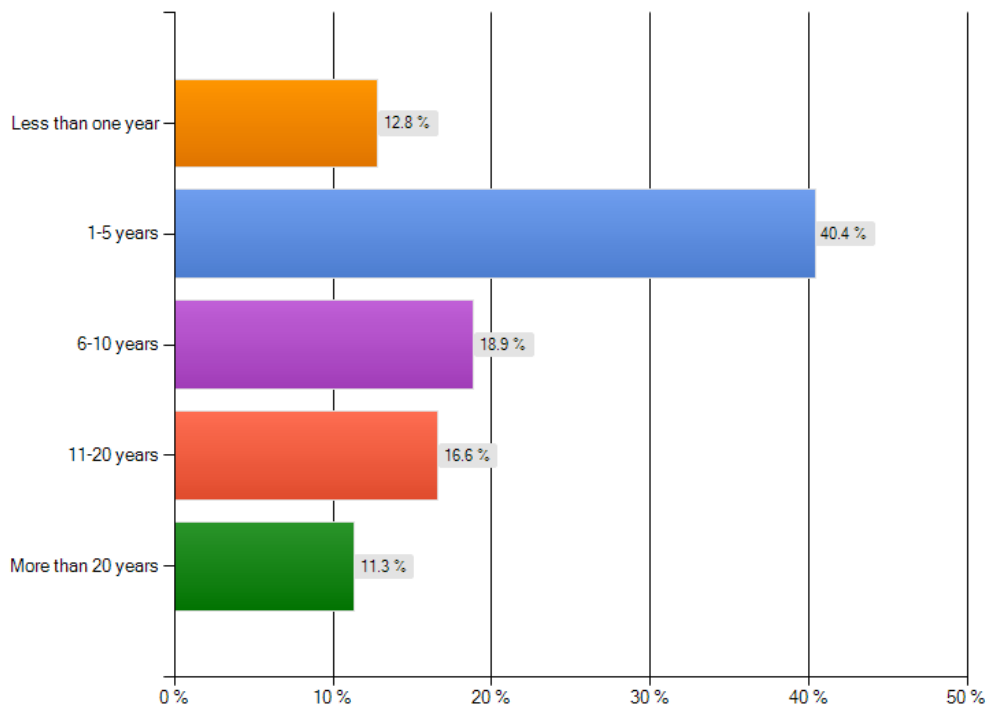
What is your consulting specialty? (You may choose more than one.)



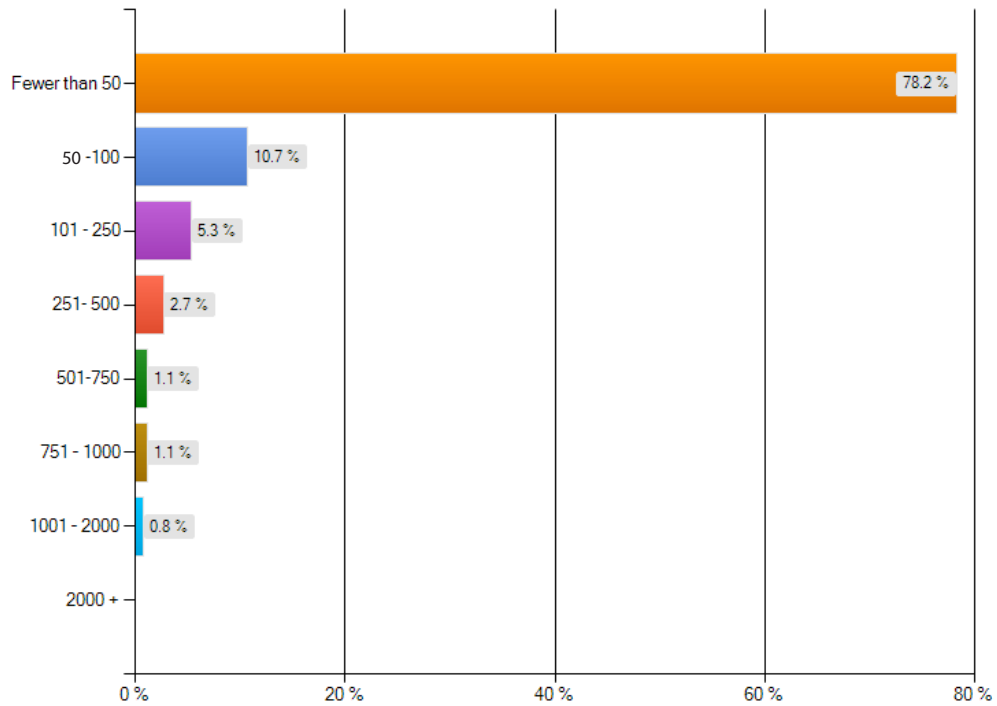
Did previous unemployment in any way lead to your current pursuit of consulting?



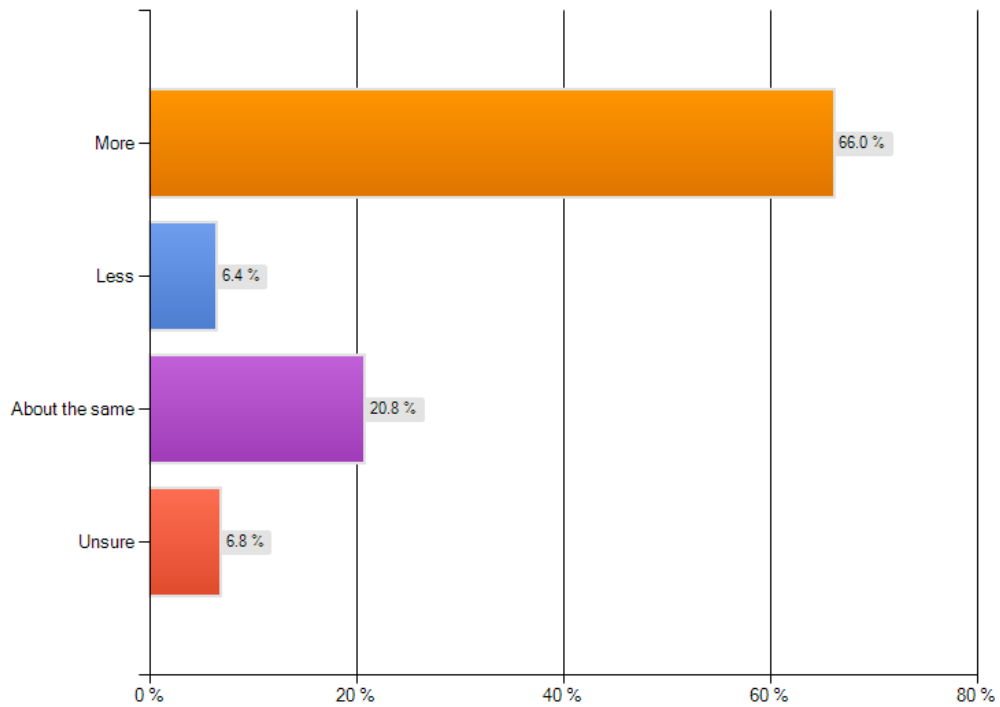
How long have you been consulting churches?



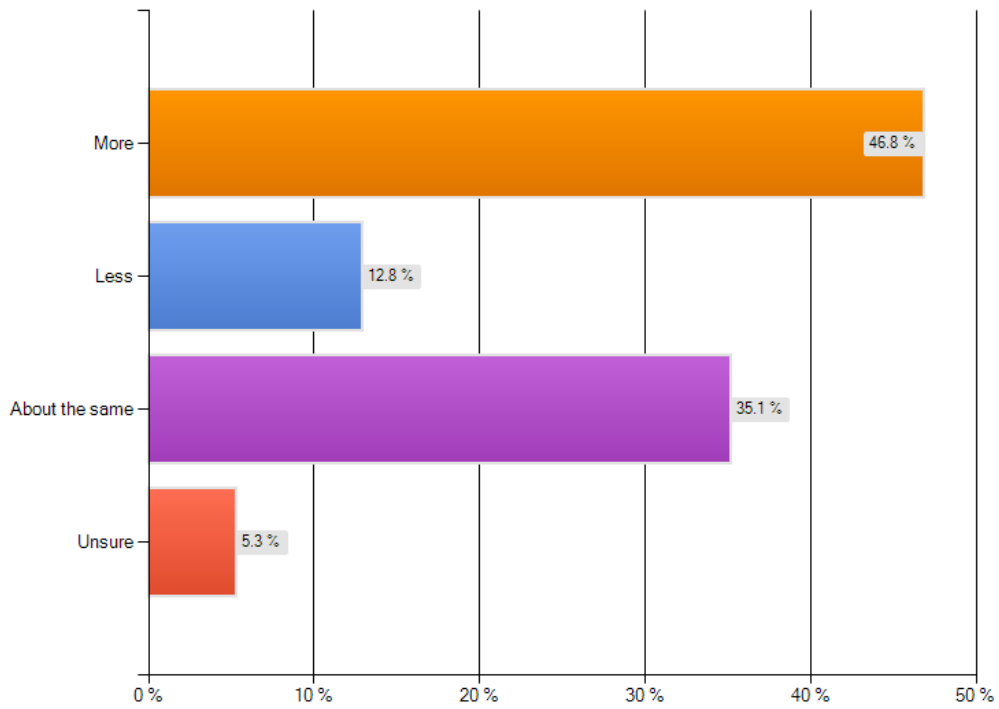
How many church consultations have you performed?



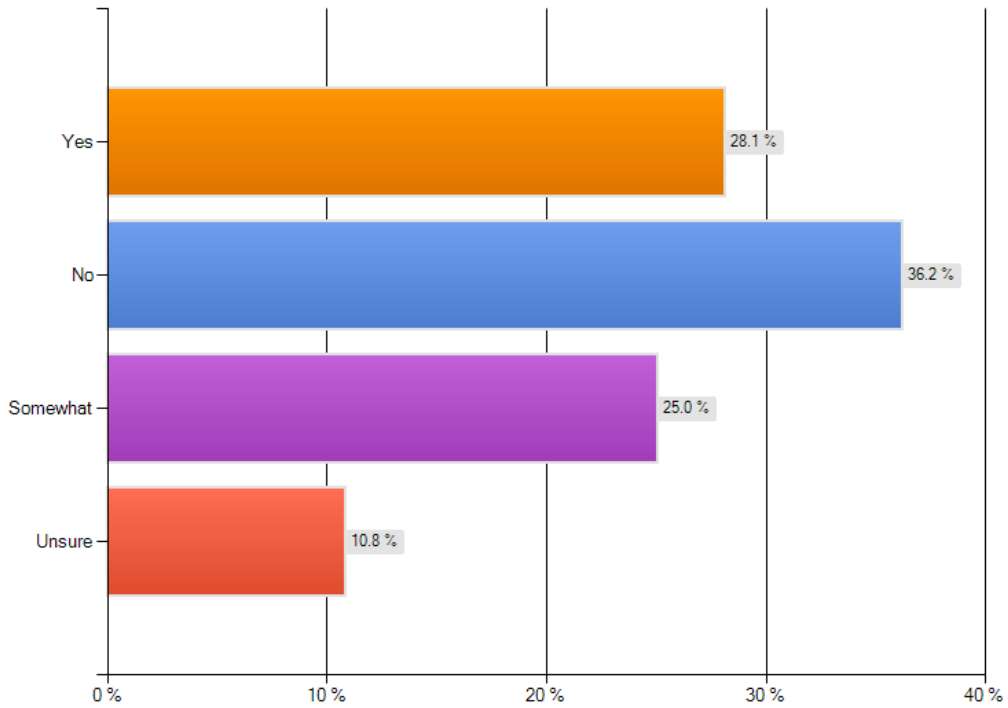
Do you think you'll be doing more consulting or less consulting three years from now?



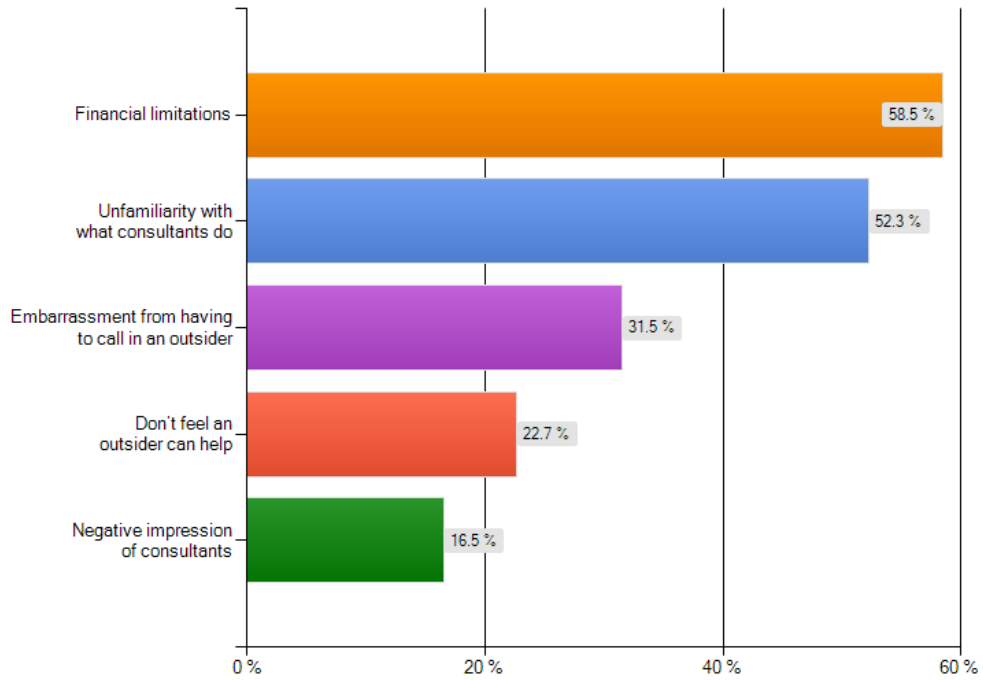
Are you doing more or less consulting now than you were three years ago?



Do you experience difficulty trying to find new church clients?



What are the top two reasons many pastors and lay leaders hesitate to call outside consultants?





Preparing for the coming revival

by Alan Chandler

The trend in consulting over the next five years will, I believe, be toward helping churches prepare for the coming revival. Granted, that assertion may say more about our apostolic responsibility than any approaching trend, yet I believe it is significant. I see several key points in consulting:

Move from institutional to relational. The coming revival will be framed by relationships. That's directly opposite from the current institutional model, but I believe the future of church consulting lies in helping church leaders and members process a new ethos that prioritizes relationships over programming, administrative issues, building funds and the like.

Church government. The coming revival will reshape how decisions are made in the church and challenge the status quo of current church governance. Churches will soon either change governmental structure, becoming flat organizations, or collapse under the weight of their own hierarchal machinery. Leadership decisions will be influenced through relationships instead of titles or positions, with church governance operating in the context of low control and high accountability. This is a sea change, and over the next five years, consultants will help churches rethink and realign their form of governance.

Higher accountability. Again, it is about relationships. The coming revival will be characterized by high spiritual accountability concerning everyday living. Through the context of personal relationships, church leaders and members will hold each other accountable in three areas:

- Their relationship with God;
- Their relationship with other Christians;
- Their relationship with the unchurched.

With regard to consulting, we will influence accountability through ongoing relationships with client churches, more through increased coaching of church leaders than consulting churches.

Spiritual formation. Spiritual formation is, and always has been, important and will be an integral part of the coming revival. It is not so much a question of whether it will happen but how it will be accomplished. To be effective, churches will need to change.

Spiritual formation in the coming revival will be accomplished through the context of relationships. It will happen one-on-one and in small accountability groups. It will take place in coffee shops, diners and other locations where people gather socially. It will be done day in and day out rather than a few hours a week on Sunday and Wednesday.

Consultants will help churches transition from an institutionally driven spiritual formation model to a relationally driven discipleship model, and we will also be called on to help churches return to implementing spiritual disciplines. As one of my colleagues said, "We may be called upon to help churches understand what raw Christianity is, and help church members return to spiritual disciplines practices."

Summary. It is all about relationships. Preparing churches for the coming revival is our primary responsibility over the next five years. We will place a more passionate focus on changing the culture within our client churches, in the context of relational influence. This is not new, of course, but to move forward, it is essential to revisit once-important, tried-and-true tenets.

Alan Chandler is a Consultant Partner with Church Doctor Ministries, a full-service church consultation ministry dedicated to helping Christians and churches become more effective for the Great Commission, to make disciples of all people.



Ensuring the future of church consulting

by Barry Winders

The future of church consulting is not in danger, although the nomenclature may be. We may stop calling certain church growth tactics “consulting,” but the interventions, the ability to change momentum, the fervor that demographics can tap — all of these elements still work wonders for consultants.

Eventually, consulting must think seriously about minimizing church growth concepts and their imprint. Far better to focus on the imaginative things we can change through collaborative learning conversations, a process that leads to collective commitment and efficacy and local congregational development.

The 21st century is shaping as an age of faster change, which eliminates some of the risks in traditional change methods. Many who work in church consulting have watched as dollars are taken from church budgets and used in other ways. Newer strategies, such as yearlong missional coaching and accountability, along with other experiential methods blending technology with live community-service events, have begun to eclipse traditional growth strategies.

Part of this decline is pure economics. But the other truth is that the rising cadre of socially networked transformers view traditional consulting as old-school. As such, consulting is repackaged as “coaching” or some other terminology, though it achieves the same goals.

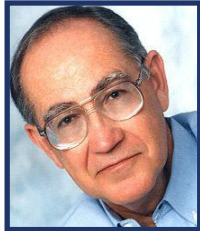
As consultants, we have become inured to our own irrelevance and inability to take on challenges beyond church health surveys and PowerPoint presentations. How will a consulting business survive and thrive? Here are three suggestions I believe every scrappy consultant should consider:

Stay everlasting. I have had my own small consulting business for 10 years. This year, I have received calls from groups that consistently declined my services in previous years. Even after four or five rejections, I keep potential clients on the list. Never underestimate the interest of the laity in small- and mid-size churches. This has been my most productive year.

Stay focused on client needs. I don’t bring PowerPoint pitches to meetings. Instead, I take a notebook, and I ask the same question in various ways: “How does this need to work for you?”

Practice creative control. Keep drilling down on the “takeaways” that your clients expect. Look for any MGS — “momentum-gathering storms” — to chase. Always practice and replicate “backwards planning,” particularly when you develop and mentor younger people. Better yet, prepare to compete with a whole new generation of geniuses, the consultants of tomorrow.

Barry Winders of Jackson, Mo., is the author of “Finding the Missional Path” (www.findingthemissionalpath.com). Contact him at barryw@ministryindicators.com.



The future of church consulting

by Bill Easum

I formed 21st Century Strategies to consult with churches in 1987, initially working part time before going full time in 1990. That's 22 years, more than enough time to have observed many changes in the field, some good and some not.

The biggest involves training: Parachurch groups have traditionally hosted conferences, but they're now more likely to be hosted by a megachurch. That rarely happened when I started, but a study I saw a couple years ago said megachurches had conducted the majority of the more than 360 national training events during the previous year.

Another change: the number of church consultants. In 1990, the list of nationally known church consultants, particularly within the mainline tradition, was small. People could name Herb Miller, Lyle Schaller and Kennon Callahan, and that was about it. They'd risen through the ranks by growing churches or working on staff at a growing church. Today, mainline church consultants are a dime a dozen, and most have never grown a church, which should set off alarm bells.

I've also observed consultants make a clear shift from working primarily with mainline churches to working with non-mainline churches. In 1987, all of my clients were mainline. Today, that number is less than 50 percent, which I attribute to their rapidly declining numbers.

Another change: the rise of coaching and church planting. In 1990, coaching was not even on my radar. It probably wasn't on anyone else's either. Today, the list of people I'm coaching is growing faster than on-site consultations. In 1990, only a handful of church-planting groups existed in the United States, but now the number seems to grow each year; some of the largest training events in any given year will be for church planters.

Finally, I have seen a rise in electronic coaching and consulting, which now accounts for about one-fifth of our clientele. With the economic downturn and the current climate, I expect that number to grow.

So, what is the future of church consulting?

It may come down to flexibility. Those groups that can't adjust on the fly will face a nightmare, but those that can fly by the seat of their pants and spin on a dime should see a bright future.

So ... what's new?

Bill Easum has been a pioneer in the church growth movement, with 35 years of pastoral ministry in four churches and two denominations. He has authored or co-authored 15 books on church growth and leadership.



Trends in church consulting

by Chuck Lawless

Church consulting is ever-changing, just as the church is continually changing at some level. The norm five years ago may not be the norm today, and the next five years are likely to bring other changes or trends.

More churches will need outside expertise. Let's face it: most churches are unhealthy. More than 3,700 U.S. churches close their doors annually, and thousands more probably should. Leadership lacks, laity are unequipped, and few churches make a kingdom difference in the darkness of society, a trend that may worsen as another undisciplined generation takes its leadership position.

More churches will consider using outside consultants. Church consulting has grown as consulting in general has grown, and more churches have members who work in business or educational consulting. They may naturally consider outside help when their churches struggle. Pulling the trigger to hire an outsider, though, will depend as much on the economy as congregational need. Churches with increasing bills and decreasing offerings are less likely to add consultant fees to their stack of bills.

Consultant specialists will increase. If budgetary issues force churches to think hard about outside help, they may opt for specialists to address one or two areas of church health. Specializations will likely include things such as budgeting/finances, small groups, facilities, staffing, women's ministries, family ministries and leadership development. Here, consultants with business backgrounds may find opportunities, particularly if they have theological training and ministry (even lay ministry) experience.

More consultants will be former church leaders. Church ministry is difficult and not getting easier. By some estimates, more than 1,300 pastors are terminated each year. Many of these leaders are

hurting and not ready to serve a church again but still feel called to ministry. Some ministers tire of the daily grind, often without adequate compensation and with too little congregational support. At any rate, I question whether wounded ministers should be church consultants, but I suspect more will turn to it as a means of support.

Consultants need to be aware of changing models for "church." More churches are now considering multi-site approaches, and others are increasingly hiring staff from within the congregation. The growth of house churches around the world has started to influence ecclesiology in North America. While it will likely morph considerably, the emerging church movement will leave its mark on some churches. Further, property costs are forcing urban churches to rethink facilities. Prepared consultants should know about all of these, and other, changing approaches to doing church.

More consultants will consider spiritual factors in church growth. For years, consultants have focused on contextual and institutional factors, partly because of the difficult nature of evaluating a church's devotion, holiness or prayer. More consultants have recognized, however, that previous approaches have failed to produce long-term results, and they're now more pointedly challenging churches to address such concerns as prayerlessness in the congregation.

Few consultants will be full time. This is no change, of course, as most consultants are now only part time. Despite the increased need for consultants, there's little to suggest full-time positions will grow in the near future. The bottom line is still good news, however: The church is still God's church, and on that truth, we can base our consulting ministries.

Chuck Lawless, Ph.D., is dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth at Southern Seminary.



Five trends in church consulting

by Dillard Wilbanks

Practitioners preferred. Here in Texas, I have seen no evidence of growing demand for church consultants among small and medium-sized churches, with the exception of larger Southern Baptist churches that continue contracting with established high-profile consultants. Aside from these established consultants, pastors will look beyond a prospective consultant's training for a proven track record. A pastor may have a vision, but it cannot be spoken into existence. Therefore, it is important to seek a certified consultant who has developed a strategy and structure through which a pastor's vision has already become reality.

Limited financial resources. The economic crisis may motivate pastors of plateaued and declining churches to seek a consultation, but the limited resources inherent in these churches may well prevent them from doing so. Financial resources typically grow with numerical growth, which means budgeted line items will require reallocation to fund a consultant. This may prove insurmountable in most churches that fit the plateaued/declining profile, even though their "iceberg is melting." As Lyle Schaller says, "Never underestimate the satisfaction with the status quo."

A network required. Consulting opportunities will come initially through an existing network of personal contacts and references from well-known Christian leaders in the consultants' PMA (Primary Ministry Area). Building a successful consulting ministry depends on building a track record within this network and continuing to expand the network. I've been certified for five years, and nearly all of my opportunities have come through a longstanding and well-established network. I have received no serious inquiries through my Web site (now getting an upgrade) or through the Society of Church Consulting's listing of certified consultants.

Continuing education. The five levels of training required to receive certification provide a solid foundation for a consulting ministry, but practical experience on a church staff — volunteer, bi-vocational or full time — will be crucial to developing a successful consulting ministry. Ongoing, self-paced continuing education is also essential — mastering the principles found in the writings of figures such as Aubrey Malphurs, Gary McIntosh and Thom Rainer.

Limited income potential. Well-established consultants will continue seeing income that adequately and, in some instances, abundantly provides for their livelihood. However, few who are now entering the field will find this true, and most newcomers will need a supplemental source of income to support themselves and their families within a modest lifestyle. But these need not be discouraged. The apostle Paul, a tentmaker, made the greatest contribution to establishing and edifying churches in history.

Dillard Wilbanks has served for more than 35 years in the local church. He is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; a certified church consultant; and member of the Society for Church Consulting. He was recipient of the 2006 Distinguished Service Award from the faculty of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.



Digital missions: A hot trend in church consulting

by Gordon Marcy

One of the most prominent trends in church consulting is “digital missions,” a term that refers to the leveraging of technology to spread the gospel. Over the next five years, thousands of churches will consider developing innovative technology initiatives, and a significant part of this trend is the emergence of specialists who help align media and technology with everything the church does.

For insights, I consulted three experts on using information and communication technologies and consultants in the church: David Drinnon, pastor and director of information technology and Web sites at Second Baptist Church in Houston; Daryl Hunter, senior IT architect for the LifeChurch.tv central office in Edmond, Okla.; and Anthony Coppedge, director of communications and church consultant for Fellowship Technologies in Irving, Texas.

From my observations, it seems churches are essentially divided into two basic groups: The first consists of churches with a technology strategy; they’ve developed the people, processes and resources necessary to create, manage and implement technology initiatives. The other group primarily uses technology to accomplish tasks.

Coppedge framed it this way: “Churches that have an IT guy, an audio/visual guy and graphics person are not using a methodology. Those are activities, people doing tasks. There’s no vision there.”

There are six distinctive elements common to churches that have developed a strategy for integrating technology with missions. Digital missions is used here to cover all technologies a church might deploy for ministry purposes.

Digital missions is viewed as a distinct ministry. Every church wants to reach out and touch as many people with the gospel as possible; numerous ministries

are maintained to achieve that aim. Digital mission churches see technology as a means to launching new and cost-effective methods of ministry, which enables them to reach more people.

Digital missions is developed for a specific purpose.

For these churches, said Coppedge, “technology is not an afterthought, it’s a forethought.” Digital missions fits into and supports the church’s vision. Here’s how three churches have expressed the mission of their technology platforms:

- **Flamingo Road Church Internet Campus** — Partnering with people to reach their God potential
- **LifeChurch.tv Digital Missions** — New avenues to spread God’s truth and love across the planet
- **NewSpring Church** also has a digital missions outlook, which is articulated through its “vision to continue growing, impacting lives and using technology and the arts to strategically communicate the good news of Jesus Christ.”

Digital missions is considered ministry work. People involved with technology in the church “see it as a calling; it’s not just a job,” said Hunter. Staff, lay leaders and volunteers are coming forward to serve, including innovators, content developers, IT professionals, audio/video producers, engineers, graphic designers, data managers and analysts.

Digital missions includes exploration of all technologies. These churches do live streams or webcasts of worship services and archive sermons or worship experiences online for on-demand access. They have Facebook pages for information, upload sermon videos to YouTube or GodTube, post articles to blogs and upload pictures from mission trips to photo-sharing sites such as Flickr. And at last count, more than 40 churches have started an Internet campus.

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Digital missions is an opportunity for collaboration.

The Nehemiah principle is embraced. Churches recognize the strength of working with other churches, service providers and vendors. Drinnon talked about partnering with an outsource provider who delivered “best possible pricing that the church could not achieve on its own, saving the church tens of thousands of dollars.” Hunter sees it as an opportunity for all sides to put more of a “focus on community and collaboration, not the sale.”

Digital missions recognizes the values of consultants.

Technology is seen as an enabler to all ministry activities. As Coppedge noted, “Technology touches everything.” Digital mission churches, Hunter said, “engage with ‘church-friendly’ technology experts that understand stewardship and take the time to learn about the church’s cultural DNA.” Further, Coppedge identified Cynthia Ware, Terry Storch, Tony Steward and Kent Shaffer as “some of the new experts coming on the scene and speaking very clearly into the holistic nature of media and technology today.”

The future of technology and church consulting

More churches will incorporate media and technology into everything they do, and it will come to be seen as simply how church is done, which Coppedge described as “a shift from where the church has been in America.”

In the future, Drinnon said, churches will “need lots of consultation regarding worship technologies, organizational best practices for multi-site (staffing, departmental structuring and so on), measuring return on investment/ministry, opportunity costs” and more. Coppedge added that there will be a “huge need for someone to come in and help churches think differently” from what they’ve been able to do on their own. Hunter also sees an ongoing need for outside help, and Drinnon noted that consultants are increasingly viewed as a member of the team — “(more) like a marriage than a business contract.”

The Society for Church Consulting will release a report in early 2010 analyzing the challenges, opportunities and trends facing all areas of church consulting.

Gordon Marcy is a media and communications executive with two decades of experience building media platforms for greater Kingdom impact. He is focused on the intersection of communication technologies and church growth. He can be reached at gordon@gordonmarcy.com.



Denominations and consulting

by Jeff Johnson

Over the next five years I see several trends in consulting.

First, I don't think the most successful consultants will call themselves "consultants." For example, Will Mancini and the Auxano Group already refer to themselves as "navigators." I get much more traction with terms such as "partner" and "coach." This may be semantics, but I believe the differences are important; people want to know they are getting more than advice, which they can get from conferences and books. They want personalized solutions, and they want help walking through the inevitable change and the pain these changes can bring.

Second, I believe denominations will transition into more of a consultation model than the current seminar/event model used by many. Pastors need front-line, long-term support; there are too many books, too many models and too much information for pastors to figure out how it all applies to their particular context. Those who know various models and tools and have the ability to come alongside pastors and apply the indicated strategies to a local context will add value. I will go as far as saying denominations that don't move to this model will see a sharp decline in the next five years. Impersonal, one-size-fits-all "support" does not connect with the pastors whom I talk to.

Third, as the demand for consultants and coaches increases — this is happening in the business world, too, according to a recent Wall Street Journal story — expect a rise in the number of "consultants" hitting the market. It will become even more important to find a way of ensuring quality, especially in the church context, where we deal not just with bottom lines but also with souls. Consultants with proven track records will remain in high demand, and we will need to leverage their skills, tools and culture to make the biggest possible impact on the Kingdom.

Jeff Johnson is a coach/consultant with 15 years experience in ministry serving in large, traditional churches as well as church plants.



Skills, passions and results

by John Jackson

Health and growth. Are these really locked in mortal combat? Some church consultants would seem to think so, but I disagree. The future of church consulting will be about equipping church leaders with five essential skills, coupled with three passions, leading to two important results.

In a recent conversation with Eric Bryant, one of the key leaders of Mosaic Church and the Origins Project, he described how our emerging models for ministry make us more like NASCAR drivers with multiple sponsor patches than people wearing singular uniforms.

That seems like a keen insight. The future of church consulting lies in that truth: high performance, substantial understanding and resources, and multiple partnerships to advance the mission and vision of the ministry.

I continue to believe effective church consultants will be those who can model effective ministry themselves and understand the principles that undergird effective ministry. Yes, I am calling for a new era of player-coaches for local church ministry.

Five essential skills for future church consultants

- Faithful and consistent teaching leadership
- Creation of systems and environments to help people connect with God and each other
- Ability to equip and release men and women for meaningful ministry in alignment with their gifts
- Understanding of leadership principles and cultural analysis for contextual ministry
- Multiple partnership models to extend and enhance local ministry.

Three passions

Thriving Churches International (TCI), the organization I am privileged to lead, is working to counteract the

ongoing stampede of statistics that declare the end of the church in America. We think every church simply must create a passion for outreach (local and global), spiritual growth and developing leaders.

A passion for those three areas will require church leaders and effective consultants to ask, and answer, tough questions every year:

- How will we reach the people in our community and world this year?
- How will we grow our people in their relationship with God this year?
- How will we develop our leaders this year?

Asking those questions, which proceed from those three passions, will change many churches in America.

Two key results

Effective church consulting will involve the five skills and the three passions, and yield two key results:

- More people being reached for relationship with Jesus Christ
- More transformation, with men and women having changed worldviews, relationships and life purpose.

Church consultants and churches that are passionate and effective in seeing people come to Christ, and about changing real lives for the glory of God, will never lack for opportunity or need in communities around the world.

John Jackson is the executive director for Thriving Churches (www.thrivingchurches.com). Contact him at john@thrivingchurches.com. His blog is <http://thrivingchurches.wordpress.com/>. Follow him at <http://twitter.com/drjohnjackson>.



Trend observations

by Paul Borden

Here are my thoughts about trends. For context, I spend most of my time consulting mainline congregations and the rest consulting evangelical, charismatic and other churches traditionally not considered mainline. Most congregations I work with have between 30 and 130 members.

1. I see congregational resources going away. Years ago, congregations sold property for resources to survive, and now have neither sufficient property nor endowment to keep going. Also, I am running into more preschools, nursery schools and similar entities that fail to break even and therefore drain congregational finances.
2. As we get more data from various groups, we see that our strategy continues to produce results (50 percent turnaround for congregations that get involved). It means putting the pastors in accountable learning communities, two-part consultations (a line-in-the-sand weekend and a yearlong coaching) and lay training events.
3. I am convinced that most congregations need interventions much more than consultations as long as you also offer hope and specific things to do within short timeframes.
4. The “silent majority” in most congregations wants change, and we need to give them ways to speak without exposing them in the process.
5. The use of effective pastors as consultants and congregational coaches is really working.
6. I find there is hope when you can work with the middle judicatory people (bishops, executive presbyters, state directors or presidents, etc.) and get them on board. They can bring resources, validation and key leaders to the table and help establish systems within the judicatories.
7. The more connecfional the denomination, the harder it is to produce change, since denominational commands (not expectations) can override what needs to be done. Such systems need to be tweaked or, with permission, put into abeyance.
8. The problems are common across all 40 or more denominations (including charismatic congregations) I have worked with. Sometimes they just get fleshed out differently in different groups.
9. We must bring as many people (various coaches, mentors, protectors, etc.) around pastors as possible to help them implement change.
10. The bottom line urgency for producing any change must be the Great Commission.

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The top five trends I see developing in church consulting

by Randy McWhorter

I minister to more than 100 churches each year and lead a group of church consultants who minister to hundreds more each year. From my perspective, the greatest challenge of the 21st-century church is effective leadership.

Business consultant W. Edwards Deming identified this pressing issue: “It is not enough to do your best; you must know what to do, and then do your best.” For a church leader, knowing what to do requires a God-given vision and the ability to provide effective leadership in the development and implementation of a strategic plan.

I see positive trends developing in church consulting that can assist churches and church leaders in the discovery of what to do and the development of strategic plans that will help churches effectively fulfill their missions.

Church consulting is becoming more about helping a church discover its unique identity. When a church articulates specific values that direct its decisions, it becomes more effective at fulfilling its mission. Twenty-first-century church leaders no longer have the luxury of allowing programs to define who they are. Church consultants are not just providing SWOT analyses; they help churches identify core values.

Church consulting is becoming more future-oriented. Pastor William Arthur Ward said, “The pessimist complains about the wind, the optimist expects it to change, the realist adjusts the sails.” Church consultants are helping church leaders navigate the winds of uncertainty by focusing attention on where the church is headed, not just where it is now or where it has been. Helping a church move forward when it is slowing or stuck requires helping identify where it needs to adjust structures and practices so movement toward an articulated vision begins to emerge.

Church consulting is focusing more on leader development. John Maxwell is credited with the saying, “Everything rises and falls on leadership.” Helping church leaders identify and address gaps in critical leadership skills will enhance both a church’s potential and its effectiveness.

Church consulting is opening the door to leader coaching. Consultants realize the effectiveness of any consultation depends on the implementation process. Many consultants are transitioning to a coaching format for the purpose of helping leaders in the follow-up after a consultation.

Church consulting is becoming more about helping a church maintain health. Just as human healthcare is beginning to focus on preventive measures, consultants are being sought to ensure church problems do not arise. Consulting is no longer just about helping a church solve current problems; it is increasingly helping a healthy church stay healthy.

Most church leaders with whom I interact are doing their best, but not all of them know what to do. Church consulting will increasingly focus on helping leaders become and remain effective. Successful consultants will be those who can demonstrate that they can add value to a church by helping leaders bring clarity to the church’s vision, alignment to the church’s organization and measurable results to the church’s stated mission.

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The top five trends in church consulting

by Tim Gentry

The Lord created cycles in our days, seasons and lives. Throughout church history, we have seen various areas of theology defined and emphasized. Even in His local body, we see the diversity in the gifts the Holy Spirit gives and how the Lordship of Christ balances them.

In my personal ministry, I have seen the rise of the church growth movement, and now I see a growing interest in church health. From a parachurch viewpoint, I have seen consultations become more widely accepted, and now I see the emergence of coaching.

Here are the top five trends I see developing in church consulting:

Moving from prescriptive to facilitative. Resourceful questions are beginning to replace conventional answers. As you triage a church, you will still need to give frank and helpful answers, but the greater good will be achieved through the questions you challenge a body of believers to answer for themselves. Facilitation takes time, which leads to the next trend.

Moving from one or two weekend sessions to multiple sessions over a longer period. Time is a gift from God, and most issues take time. Change takes a lot of time. Churches do not change; people do. The longer you can relate with a congregation, the better you can help members identify issues and implement specific action plans for lasting results.

Moving from consulting with a leadership team to coaching the pastor. Pastoral leadership enrichment has been an issue in every single consultation I have done. The more that can be invested into the pastor, the greater impact the consultant/coach can impart to the church. Consulting and coaching do not have to be an either/or proposition, but can be used together for much fruitfulness.

Moving from a free denominational resource to a paid consultant/coach covenant. Two issues are at play here. First, as denominations weaken, they will have more difficulty in providing free services. Second, no church will ever place more value on what it receives for free than what it must sacrifice for.

Moving from recommendation to implementation. There's a commercial that makes a point about how consultants only make recommendations, and how amusing it is for a client to expect help in implementation. That lack of implementation is the Achilles' heel of consulting. Consultants who can address implementation issues are the ones who will always find open doors of ministry opportunity.

Tim Gentry is a church consultant for the Healthy Church Group of the California Southern Baptist Convention.



Facing the demand dilemma

by Warner Smith

Church consultation is both art and science. And while the methods may be learned traditionally, the necessary intuition is best developed in the crucible of experience. Yet the difficulties of gaining experience and earning a living as a church consultant can hinder the quality and availability of church consultation.

Generally speaking, consultants improve with practice — but few internships or mentoring relationships exist. The greatest challenge facing prospective church consultants is how to earn adequate fees while gaining necessary experience, which sadly slows the progress by which such experience may be gained. Progressing from part-time to full-time consulting is the primary method for entry into the field.

The inherent difficulty in earning a living through the independent practice of church consultation will provide a market for training courses and certifications in church consultation by denominational entities, seminaries, experienced practitioners and others. A great need will continue to exist in improving and demonstrating church consultation's quality, which will eventually lead to training and mentoring relationships between established consultants and denominational entities. As church memberships decrease, denominations will be forced to provide increased value to their member churches and will subsidize quality church consultation services as one means of doing so.

The perception among church consultants — that churches will increasingly desire consultation services — does not guarantee sufficient demand to support large numbers of church consultants. The market reality is that few church consultants today can make a living from the full-time practice of church consultation, and that impacts overall quality. There is a fundamental confusion of economic want and economic need by many church consultants. Often, churches that consider enlisting consultation services do not have the means or the will to implement recommended changes.

Church consultants believe that if correct recommendations are made, and then implemented by clients, the church will benefit as will the entire body of Christ. But this confidence is supported primarily by anecdotal evidence. The Society for Church Consultation would do a major service to the kingdom cause and its own membership if it could commission independent peer review research to measure church consultations rates of effectiveness.

Warner A. Smith, Ph.D., is with The Transformation Group in Atlanta and pastor of First Baptist Church of Emerson, Ga.



Three trends in church consulting

by Will Mancini

Almost a decade ago, I transitioned from pastoring to consulting local churches full time. It has been an amazing experience — I have felt euphoria in my kingdom service like never before — and I report these trends with the tingle of optimism and a feel of fervor. There has never been a more viable time for the role of the consultant, and the need for more of us is dire. In 1995, Lyle Schaller predicted a fivefold increase in the need of consultants over the next 25 years. This has been true in my experience and is the motivator behind my interest and role in the Society of Church Consulting. I see three trends:

From knowledge expert to learning broker. If you want to be a consultant today, stop calling yourself one. The market for knowledge experts is decreasing because we have been, as Gary Hamel puts it, “mugged by change.” If you presuppose you have an answer for a local church before you even arrive on-site, you are less likely to be helpful. Knowledge is important, but only as it transcends itself to become perspective and conviction that leads to skillfully crafted, handmade solutions. To reflect this emphasis at Auxano, we call ourselves “navigators.” I often write “consultant” on the board in front of a team to remind them how our service is different in helping discover solutions on the inside rather than importing them from the outside.

From wide and shallow to focused and deep: Over time, the advantage belongs to the specialist, not the generalist. Although consulting has existed in broad categories for a while (creating some sense of specialization), you can expect the categories to expand and diverge. A consultant will be a better

learning broker by being a one-trick-Johnny rather than a jack-of-all-trades. You want to be a church growth consultant? That might have worked as a general category in 1970, but not today. Think of the myriad ways you can help a church grow in 2010.

I am seeing new categories emerge in the capital campaign industry as ministries such as Generis expand how they help churches in the field of generosity and stewardship. Lance Witt of Replenish recently left a prominent megachurch staff to be a “soul coach” to pastors. William Vanderbloemen of FaithSearch Partners is another pastor who has taken executive staff search for churches to a new level. Other expanding categories include consultants in new forms of “ministry space,” such as Jim Tomberlin with multi-site and Rack & Roll Church with rental facilities.

The list of expanded categories ranges from specialists in marketing and communications to conflict resolution. I have carved my particular niche by focusing on vision. Every day I earn a living as a “clarity evangelist,” having created a useful divergence from strategic planning called the Vision Pathway to make clarity and vision more real for leaders. (By the way, it is common to encounter consultants offering many services. Usually, the more services, the less busy they are. The one exception may be the consultant who works within a small geographic boundary with smaller churches.)

From denominational boundaries to “tribal” networks: In the 20th century, the needs of churches could be clustered by denominational differences. Since theological identity or ethnic heritage was

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the taproot factor for a church's uniqueness, the consultant would naturally develop a client base within that domain. Today, however, the consultant is more likely to serve churches by cultivating a "tribe," to borrow a term from marketing guru Seth Godin. This tribe is a group of "followers" (clients) that is created from the value a consultant delivers and sustains through an ongoing relationship.

An effective tribe today will quickly cross denominational boundaries. Tribes are defined by three dynamics: 1) the role that geography plays in the consultant's work, 2) the degree of specialization the consultant maintains and 3) the consultant's skill in building awareness through relational networks.

What's the bottom line? Churches are navigating all kinds of change and complexity today and, as a result, they have a desperate need for qualified consultants. It remains true that profound knowledge comes from the outside. If you are teetering on the edge of a new ministry calling, or are just getting started, I don't think there could be a better time to jump in.

Will Mancini founded Auxano, a first-of-kind consulting ministry that focuses on vision clarity. As a "clarity evangelist," he has served as vision architect for hundreds of churches across the country.