

Designing A Ministry Survey

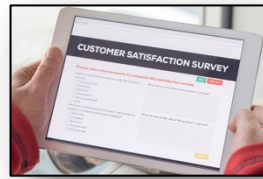
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To survey people regarding a ministry is a good way to balance or supplement your own personal views about a ministry. You have a calling and a vision, but the actual “playing out” of that calling or vision is something that is affected by the community and people around you.

The Apostle Paul had one calling and one specific “vision” for his ministry, but as he traveled to various cities and regions, he adjusted his approaches and techniques to suit the people and “culture” around him. This is what we do in ministry as well. We don’t ever change the “message” of the ministry, but we should be ready to adapt the “method” of how we carry out the ministry based on the changing “culture” around us.

A great way to make sure your ministry is “fresh” and effective is to conduct periodic surveys of those people involved in the ministry or affected by the ministry. There are really only two reasons to conduct a ministry survey:

1. When beginning a new ministry or program.
2. When evaluating a current program.



Principles of Designing A Survey

1. A survey should be as focused as possible. Limit your questions to a specific program or event if possible. The broader the survey, the less usable the information.
2. A survey should seek to understand the feelings, opinions, needs, and hopes of those surveyed.
3. A survey should be designed to communicate a positive message in spite of new changes being considered. “Between the lines” implications must be considered.
4. A survey should be conducted on site, “live,” instead of mailed or emailed, to increase the number of surveys submitted. (Today’s surveys using smartphones or tablets are excellent ways to conduct surveys with “instant” results.)
5. If surveys are mailed or emailed, a clear deadline for survey submissions should be set.
6. The senior pastor, or other direct supervisors, must be involved in the creation, editing, and executing of the survey.
7. A survey should take less than 8 minutes to complete. Smartphone or tablet surveys should take less than 5 minutes.
8. A survey’s questions should be short and composed of multiple-choice answer options. Space for “comments” or short answers may be provided.
9. “Short” answers or comments tend to reflect the extreme positive or extreme negative opinions.
10. The results of the survey should be shared with the senior pastor or direct supervisor within two or three days from the end of the survey deadline.
11. The results of the survey should be shared, on a limited basis, with those who participated in the survey. Caution should be taken in the sharing of the results if the results tend to be negative.



- Plans for improvement or the implications for new ideas, based on the survey results, should be shared with the senior pastor, direct supervisors, and the rest of the church, within a week or two after the survey deadline.

Designing The Ministry Survey

- Determine your foundational question. This question is one that you might ask to one person. The foundational question is the question upon which your other questions will be based. Example: “What do families want from the Sunday morning children’s ministry program?” or “What should a summer VBS program include?”

- Identify the significant factors involved in the decisions you will make as a result of the survey. Here are some possibilities:

- The needs of single parents
- The needs of multiple-child families
- The needs of dual-income homes
- The differences between the days of the week for a mid-week program
- Transportation needs
- The financial needs for poorest families of your church
- The factors that may limit the number of volunteers for the program
- Connections to other children’s ministry programs
- Connections to other church programs
- The spiritual needs of the families or children
- The schedules of children’s ministry programs
- The effects on training, budgets, or policies
- Outreach possibilities to the community



- Isolate what you want to know. Don’t ask questions about things that either don’t relate to your “basic question,” or things that relate to other programs or needs. You should make a list of less than 10 specific things you want to know. Some examples might be:
 - What would attract parents and children to this program?
 - What are the “hot topics” to address in the program?
 - What is a good time to hold the program (dates and times of day)?
 - How can we involve the whole family in the program?

- Using the questions that you listed in #3 above, make general categories for the survey questions. There should be around 3-5 categories. The categories could include:

- Needs/interests of families
- Schedules
- Topics
- Family involvement
- Activities




- For each category, list specific things you want to know. These specific things will become the actual questions of the survey. Be careful not to have overlapping questions. You may see questions that relate to each other, and whose focus is similar, but the questions address the issue from a different perspective. That’s ok, but if the people taking the survey get a sense that you have asked this question before, that may affect their answers.



6. Write the questions. Writing survey questions is a “dangerous” step, because you could write a question that implies something that you don’t mean to imply. For instance, if you ask a question about a new program as it compares to a current or old program, you may imply that the current or old program is “bad.” Here’s a “bad” example: “How can we make this new program better than the current program?” This comparison implies that there is something wrong with the current program. A better way to say it would be, “What could the new program include?” There is no comparison, just an open door for ideas. As you write the questions, decide whether they will be multiple-choice/fill-in-the-bubble questions, or short answer questions. Surveys with fill-in-the-bubble options are more “pleasant” to take. The short answers take longer to write, and you may not get as many surveys back because of the time they take to complete. A combination of the two types of questions is better, or space at the bottom of the survey to write short answers or comments is good too. Remember to let your questions be positive and always focused on **improving, growing, and advancing** rather than “fixing.”

Conducting The Ministry Survey

1. Decide how to conduct the survey. If the surveys are given to people to complete at home and then to bring back later, you probably won’t get many back. It is always better to conduct the survey while people are in a room or on the church campus anyway. You may devote time in the adult service or during another program to complete the survey. Consider surveys that can be conducted and tabulated using tablets or smartphones such as “QuickTapSurvey (quicktapsurvey.com). This is the survey software process that Disney uses outside their parks.
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2. Compile the results of the survey and “publish” the information within a couple of weeks. Those who took the survey will be interested in the results. The longer you wait to publicize the results, the less value they will be. The sooner you publish the results, the more you will create a momentum toward the new program or change. Make sure you share the results of the survey with the senior pastor or supervisor as soon as possible (before others in the church know).