

Boston LDS Education Conference
Innovative Ideas for Improving Member Missionary Work
October 31, 2009

Background

Nearly 650 young- to mid-single adults from across the east coast came together for a biennial education conference held in Boston, Massachusetts. After learning from Clayton M. Christensen and David Neeleman about how innovation works within organizations, principles for good member missionary work and innovative missionary ideas, participants were assigned into small groups and commissioned to generate fresh ideas to improve missionary work Church-wide, as well as on a ward level and a personal level. Each group put its plan into a presentation form for an ideas-fair competition and the best ideas were collected and are listed below.

Community Service Website

Intent: Position the LDS Church as the local authority on volunteer or service opportunities

Method: Create a craigslist-style website with two entry points — “Want to Serve?” and “Have a Need?” Like craigslist, users would list services needed, contact each other to volunteer, and report abuses, so it would need relatively little monitoring or maintenance.

Domain name suggestions: loveyourneighbor.org, mormonserve.org, LDServe.org/wardname

Sacrament Meeting Announcement

Intent: Encourage ward members to extend invitations to sacrament meeting

Method: Bishoprics plan sacrament meeting two months in advance and publish the programs/topics on the ward website and/or on a marquee outside the church. Possible details to include are speaker topics, speaker names, musical numbers, special programs, times, and an inviting message.

Virtual Lecture Series — Podcasts featuring Converts to the Church

Intent: Provide an online source for investigators to hear testimonies from LDS converts

Method: Assign members to interview local converts about their conversion experiences. Podcasts and/or videos would be posted to a central website that would allow users (investigators) to search by demographic (age, single/married, children, race, etc.) to find others like themselves and see/hear why they joined the LDS Church.

Free Tabernacle Choir Music Downloads

Intent: Bring non-LDS traffic to Church websites (lds.org, mormon.org), spread the Spirit through uplifting music, and give people a positive association with the Church

Method: Put free Tabernacle Choir music downloads at mormon.org/lds.org and allow the Church to

become known as the repository for the best spiritual music worldwide.

Virtual Temple and Chapel Tour

Intent: Provide investigators with guided tours of temples and chapels to dispel myths and make it less-intimidating to worship with us

Method: Either in accordance with a temple open house or on a permanent basis, create a virtual, guided tour of an LDS temple. The tour would dispel myths and provide investigators with an understanding of what goes on inside the temple. Chapel tours would allow investigators to view our chapel before attending, meetings.

Why I Believe — Personalized Testimony Websites

Intent: Share testimonies of Christ online so members and non-members alike can find out why others believe

Method: Design a website to allow members to create their own personalized pages to share their testimonies of Jesus Christ online. Each individual page would include the Church member's name, written testimony, photo, and preferred links and videos. The written testimony and photo would be uploaded and/or entered by the member, while the links and videos would either be selected from preloaded menus or entered separately. Members would be guided through the set-up process by a simple, user-friendly template. Users who access the site would be able to search and view testimonies by name or topic, and could leave comments responding to testimonies they read. Members could promote the site and share their individual pages by posting a member-specific URL on blogs and social networking sites, or by distributing their URL on customized pass-along cards.

Domain name suggestions: whyibelieve.net (the site could be accessible via mormon.org, whyibelieve.net, and member-specific URLs)

Customized Pass-along Cards

Intent: Personalize pass-along cards to fit members' missionary needs

Method: Create a website where members can order pass-along cards with customizable sizes (business card or traditional size), Church-approved images, free media offers, and uplifting scriptures/messages to create a unique card. Printed customized cards could be ordered for a small fee. Or, an electronic version could be e-mailed or placed on a web page as a link to lds.org.

Easy Access to Stake/Ward Information on LDS.org

Intent: Make it easier for Church members to access information about the ward/stake (such as calendars) on LDS.org, since many members don't have easy access to their membership number

Church Locator App for Smart Phones

Intent: Make it easier for people to find locations of LDS Church buildings

“Yes, I’m Mormon!” Facebook Application

Intent: Share testimonies and answer questions from non-LDS friends

Method: Facebook users would add this application and enter a brief testimony, select a relevant picture (Christ, temple, Biblical scene), and post it to their Facebook profile. The application would have an “Ask me a question” button to allow friends to pose questions about Mormons in a non-threatening way. Questions would be sent as personal messages, and would not be posted publicly for all Facebook users to see. The application could also provide space to list questions and answers that others have asked. Links to favorite videos on YouTube or LDS.org would also be present. When information is updated on the application it would be posted as a news update so Facebook friends would see information about why someone believes.

Community Outreach Representative

Intent: Strengthen relationships between Church and community by assigning a designated liaison from the ward or stake

Method: Assign a community outreach representative in each ward (and an attached committee, if needed). The representative would be called to attend/research the events in the surrounding community in order to organize/advocate Church involvement locally. The representative could organize community service projects/activities; plan neighborhood activities advertised for involvement from Church members and non-members alike; attend city council/school board/open meetings; and work with the ward mission leader to integrate the ward with the community and foster fellowships with other faiths.

Member Missionary Training Program

Intent: Teach Church members how to share their testimonies and invite people to learn of the gospel

Method: Create a Church-wide member missionary training class of about three weeks in duration to be taught during Sunday School hour, to groups of about ten people, on a rotating basis so that in the course of a year all adult and teen-aged members can attend. The curriculum would be built around Ensign articles such as “Seven Lessons on Sharing the Gospel,” (Feb. 2005), and those portions of Preach My Gospel that relate to member-missionary work. It would involve role-playing, making commitments to speak with others about the church, and returning and reporting to other class members.