



AGENCY TRAINING MANUAL

A Generation Ready to Be Mobilized

Guidelines for helping boomers consider missions as a second career

The Finishers Project is a unique partnership, springing up out of a local church in Connecticut, and incorporating more than 50 leading mission agencies to target a specific group that the Lord is raising up - baby boomers in their 40's and 50's. The Finishers Project has done extensive research on the needs, interests and perspectives of this particular audience. As you represent your mission agency at a Finishers Project event, we ask that you please take these important issues to heart.

I. Donning a towel

As you represent your mission agency at the upcoming Finishers Forum, our commitment to those who attend is to serve them in their process of investigating missions as a possible second career. Serving them means setting aside our own personal agendas, and focusing on understanding their needs and expectations.

II. Who is the target audience?

The target audience is healthy Christians in their 40's and 50's, who are actively involved in their local churches and support the missions enterprise. We are focusing on people that are now considering how they can invest the second half of their lives in something with eternal significance.

III. What are the big issues they need addressed in order for them to consider missions as a possible second career?

According to comprehensive market research that Finishers Project sponsored on this audience, the three big issues are:

1. How can I really make an eternal impact for God in missions?
2. I need help in gaining a better understanding of my gifts and passions, and how they influence my role of service.
3. Is this God's call on the rest of my life?

Interestingly, the surveyed audience is far less concerned about a drop in their standard of living or other lifestyle issues. They are concerned about how serving overseas will affect their relationships, such as grandchildren. Therefore, it is helpful to creatively address those issues.

IV. What is the Finishers Project goal for the citywide forums?

Finishers overarching mission statement is to challenge boomers to make an informed decision about a career in missions, and to facilitate their involvement in missions.

The citywide forums are specifically designed to contribute to this goal. This is just one of the tools that Finishers is developing to engage this target audience. For many, this conference is an entry point into missions.

The specific goal of the citywide forums is to help each person identify a single next step toward involvement in world evangelization, and commit to take that step.

V. Our Top Ten Hints to help them take a next step.

1. Don't sell your organization ... offer them a service.

This audience views us as a service provider, helping them to find a ministry in which they can make an eternal impact for God, rather than a ministry that they somehow feel obliged to help out.

Once they decide to seriously investigate missions, they want a simple way to uncover opportunities, compare mission philosophies and sending organization cultures. Your "service" might provide an unbiased overview of agencies or easy access to that information.

2. Focus on the relationship, not a transaction.

To be able to build these relationships, take time to understand them and what motivates them. Each is different. It is not useful to make

generalizations about mission representatives or finishers. That is one reason the Finishers Project invested significant time and money up front to understand this audience's feelings about missions and their second career.

Your organization will have a better response from any one individual or couple the more it is able to provide personal counseling in the process, versus standard response letters. You will need to carefully understand their career skills and how they could be put into play with your agency. In particular, it will serve them if you can connect them with others in your organization that have made this mid-life transition. They want to know that others have effectively made this transition, and are now making an impact. These relationships will be the most effective way of drawing them into missions.

3. Cast a vision of all the possibilities of the impact they could have.

A vision of how their lives could make an eternal impact overseas is much more compelling to them than strong presentation of the needs your organization may have.

They already believe in the importance of missions. They want to see if they can really make a difference with their skills. The research shows that they are very interested in finding out where they can plug in to use their already developed skills for the kingdom and more than 75% say that they would gladly learn a new skill, if that is what it takes to be effective.

4. Spell out the process of becoming a part of your organization.

How does your agency go about self-assessment, ministry assessment, planning, selection, etc.? This audience is concerned about not only whether or not this is God's will and call, but whether or not they can really make an impact and what will happen if this doesn't work out? They have to face the possibility of being jobless at 55 if they do not succeed in missions.

They feel more comfortable when we talk in terms of a process, rather than a decision. Relationship rather than a transaction. How can we articulate that it is okay to be in process, and what those steps might be? They want to do research, and they are planners.

Enable them to easily access greater depths of information as their interest rises. Making the information available on the web is important, too, as over 50% of finishers actively seek out information on the web, and say they are interested in retrieving missions information from the web.

5. Address fundraising from their perspective.

Raise the issues that will be hard for them to talk about, and provide a range of examples and viewpoints.

- Asking for money when they have significant assets.
- How much of a nest egg do they really need?
- Clearly define the “ministry” part of the funds they need.
- Sensitive about asking because of age and deep relational dues.

6. Treat their past positively.

One of the problems with using the expression “from success to significance” is that it suggests that their first half, spent doing something other than missions, was somehow less significant. While the expression conveys a message they are interested in, they do not want to think that their first half was less important than what they may be called to do for the second half. Rather, they prefer to think of their first half activity as preparation for what the Lord has in store for the rest of their lives.

7. Address their issue of family separation.

Highlight the option of serving part of the year, with a multi-year commitment. 42% want to do something part-time. This is a great starting point.

8. Offer and promote “easy to use” spiritual gifts and passions assessment tools.

The citywide Finishers Forums will take each participant through a survey of their gifting and passions. However, it is not an in-depth look into their spiritual gifts. There are a number of excellent tools that will help them assess their spiritual gifts in greater detail. We recommend that you offer to help them through this process and provide the material for them as part of your service.

9. Help them gain confirmation of God’s calling, and their potential impact through well-planned exploratory trips.

Many mission agencies offer creative vision trips or short-term trips, to serve as a low cost probe. Plan a trip that will allow intentional self-assessment and discovery of how they might fit into a particular ministry. Address concerns about medical issues, how to stay connected with kids and grandkids while overseas, etc. Be sensitive to the less interested spouse in order to help them catch the vision as well. Provide ways for them to have the same vision for missions.

10. Take risks to get them started.

Design creative entry points to meet their individual interests, even if your field staff does not think they are the highest priority. Remember these people are looking for lasting impact. Once they have started their ministry

with you, they will periodically assess their role and be willing to flex it if they can see how they could be more effective.

VI. What do you need to effectively service finishers?

1. You need to know the process each finisher must go through in order to effectively plug into your organization.
2. You need to be able to give six clear examples of finishers in your organization. Try to know of examples of those serving part-time, full-time and part of the year, both domestically and internationally.
3. Communicate the requirements for joining your organization, including education, specific training, doctrine, policies, divorce, etc.

VII. A common understanding.

This is what Finishers Project expects of you as you represent your mission at the Forum:

1. I have read the material in this kit and understand the Finishers Project goals for this conference. I feel I have a good idea of the target audience's preferences, and what they consider valuable.
2. I have the needed ministry and procedural knowledge described in this kit to adequately service a finishers.
3. I have familiarized myself with opportunities for finishers in my organization. I am familiar with and/or have access to examples of the six types of finishers who are currently ministering with our organization.
4. I am committed to help each finisher that I interact with to discover the most appropriate next step in their investigation of missions as a second career, and I will encourage them to take that step, regardless of whether that includes my mission agency or not. While I will freely communicate as much as the finisher wishes about specific opportunities with our agency, I will not communicate with them in such a way that it might be considered a "Sales pitch" for my agency.

Agency Representative Signature

Agency

Date