



## **Survey of Delegates Attending Finishers Forum '98**

### **THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

Six months after Finishers Forum '98, the first pilot Urbana-like conference for boomers, a survey was sent to the 475 delegates. Mission agency observers, that were not official designated representatives, but attended as delegates were not included in the tabulated results.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to discern how the conference product was perceived by the customer base. What worked, what was not important. Other purposes were to inquire about the next life step and gauge the financial profile of the conference attendee. Yet another was to gain insight as how sending agencies were perceived. The intent is to better tune the movement to actually see people move into missions as a second career. The questionnaire was drafted by Finishers Project Marketing Director Lloyd Reeb, reviewed by the Leadership Team and improved by Partner Organizations.

To obtain statistically reliable results, a response was needed from at least 50% of the qualified audience. About half that responded replied on the first mailing. After a second mailing and follow up phone calls, the final response rate after 3 months was 69 percent.

### **WAS THE TARGET AUDIENCE ATTRACTED TO FINISHERS FORUM '98?**

The Finishers Project intentionally targets the segment of the Christian population between age 42 and 57 that is mature in Christ. This segment is defined as "... deeply involved in the North American church structure having leadership that supports missions. They are considering how they can invest the second half of their lives in something that will last for His greater glory."

This survey confirms this precise segment of the evangelical population was reached. As to demographics, seven of eight (87%) were married and 9 of 10 were in the target age bracket, 40-60. Six in ten have no children living with them and one in three have grandchildren.

Of the responders, 50% were male and 50% female. The median age was 52 (born in 1946). One in five (20%) attended alone, 52% attended with their spouse and 28% attended with a friend or pastor. Half the attendees are from non-denominational churches. Seven of eight (87%) have an active formal role within the church. For more detail see Appendices A & B.

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## MARKETING MISSIONS

How did delegates learn about the missions event, Finisher Forum '98 (FF '98)? About one in four learned of it from a participating mission agency publication, the single leading method. Interestingly, more men noticed the event in an agency publication than women. Cumulatively, one in two heard of FF '98 by word of mouth from a friend, a mission committee person or church staff member. These are reasons ranked 2, 5 and 6 in the table below. About one in four were directed to FF '98 by a mailing sent to their church or home, reasons ranked 4 and 8. One in eight reported they learned of the event from their spouse. The table of replies to Question 1 is below. These results are charted in Appendix C for insight into marketing missions.

Below are tables of results ordered by all respondees. There were exactly 168 male and 168 female respondents. Answers by gender are indicated below. Only responses by gender differing by more than 4 percentage points are statically significant.

1. How did you learn about Finisher Forum '98 (FF '98)? (Check all that apply.) Also see Appendix C.				
Rank	All	M	F	How first aware of FF '98
1.	24	27	22	Communication or publication from a mission agency
2	23	21	25	A friend told me
3	18	15	21	Other
4	16	18	13	A mailing to my church was brought to my attention
5	14	15	13	Someone on the church staff told me
6	12	10	14	A mission committee person told me
7	11	8	15	My spouse told me
8	11	12	9	The brochure to my home
	8	9	7	Church bulletin
	5	4	5	Announced at church
	2	2	1	Radio
	1	1	1	Adult Bible class or small group

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Question 2 was, "After you heard about Finishers Forum '98, did you get more information on the Forum at <[www.finishers.org](http://www.finishers.org)>?" Three in ten (29%) answered YES. (Male 32%; Female 26%)

Men seem more likely to use the web than women and use it more frequently. About 3 in 10 reviewed the Finishers Project web site to glean more information about the movement. It can be expected the percent will only rise for Finishers Forum 2000, as more people in the boomer generation have become computer savvy in the last year. From Questions 2 and 3 it is clear the web is an important tool for mobilization of people to serve in the Lord's harvest fields.

3. Do you regularly access the web for information on other things? (Check only one)				
	All	M	F	Web Frequency
a.	32	43	20	Several times per week
b.	19	16	22	A few times per month
c.	22	21	24	Seldom, or only to look for something specific
d.	10	7	13	Never, but I have access to the World Wide Web
e.	17	13	21	I do not have access to the web

### WHY DID THEY COME?

Regarding motivation to attend FF '98 13 choices were listed. Also space was given to add their own. One in five wrote in additional motivations, but most were a restate ment of one of the suggested motivators. For the options listed, respondees were asked to rate each as a high motivation, somewhat of a motivator, or not a motivation at all. The "high motivation" was assigned a point value of 10, "some what of a motivator" a point value of 5, and "not a motivator" was assigned zero.

It is clear people attended to discern what the Lord might be prompting them to do with the second-half of their adult lives. These motivations rated 1 and 2. A strong second motivator was related to learning more about mission opportunities. These ranked 3, 4 and 5. Learning specifics of missions opportunities by connecting with sending organizations ranked next.

Significant are findings about what did NOT motivate them. The speaker, trust in the conference sponsors, or interest in connecting with mission agencies were measurable motivators but less important. It is likely they are important only for establishing credibility and competency for the event, but not as primary reasons to spend the time and money.

The answers indicate they clearly understood in their own mind what prompted them and where they are in this process of investigating missions. This signals the approach of providing a variety of tools for various stages of the process is likely to be well received.

When asked why they came to the Forum the overwhelming response was NOT to better understand the importance of missions -- they understand the strategic role of missions. These are not Christian coasters, but people willing to abandon conventional retirement thinking

4. What motivated you to attend FF '98? This table is charted in Appendix D.				
Rank	All	M	F	Motivation to Attend FF '98
1	7.0	6.9	7.1	I am deliberately trying to find an assignment for my second half
2.	6.8	7.0	6.6	Looking for a significant second career
3.	5.8	5.8	5.8	I was curious to learn more about missions
4.	5.3	5.2	5.4	I have taken short term mission trip(s) and wish to explore opportunities in missions
5	5.2	4.8	5.6	I have felt called to missions in the past and now want to explore options.
6.	5.2	5.2	5.2	I am part way through the process of finding a place to serve in missions, and this Forum seemed to offer information/ ideas/ contacts
7.	5.0	4.8	5.1	I specifically wanted to meet one or more participating mission agencies
8.	4.9	5.2	4.6	I'm involved in missions at church and should be aware of what the FP is about.
9	3.2	2.7	3.6	I trusted The Navigators to host a quality event
10	2.6	2.1	3.1	I attended to hear John Piper
-	0.8	0.3	1.3	- My spouse is interested in missions. I am not so sure
-	1.5	1.2	1.8	- A friend/pastor convinced me I would benefit if I go
-	1.0	0.9	0.9	- I have a son or daughter in missions

Approximately 15% of the respondees added comments regarding their reasons to attend FF '98. Of these, half commented they attended to assist in mobilizing others. They used the phrases like to help, to enable, to recruit, to encourage, lead by example, mobilize and to know what to offer them. The fraction of mobilizers amounted to one in twelve attendees.

#### HOW DID FINISHERS FORUM '98 CHANGE THE DELEGATES?

A stated objective of the Finishers Project is to provide information and challenge for people to enter missions as a second career. When asked what factors were the most helpful at the conference, matters of encouragement, reflection and challenge were more important than information as can be seen from the answers in the next question. Importantly, part of the challenge came from agency representatives, not only the preaching. Thus it is key to maintain a discipling attitude when encouraging people to switch to a career in missions.

Notice in the table below, summarizing Question 7 about how FF '98 helped, women were more introspective. A far higher percentage of men than women, saw the conference as a way to assist others to consider missions. We will have to leave it to the sociologists to explain this.

While the challenge factor was the most important, the networking and discovery process was still a significant element. (For this question, delegates were instructed to check only one. In retrospect it would have been better to evaluate each issue.)

7. What was the most significant way FF '98 genuinely helped you? (Check only one.) Also see these results charted in Appendix E.				
Rank	All	M	F	How FF '98 Helped
1	27	28	26	It encouraged me to continue investigating missions
2	18	13	23	Helped me take time to reflect, ask and listen
3	12	10	15	It challenged me to personally consider moving into missions
4	10	15	6	Helped me challenge to others in my role as a missions leader in my church
5	9	8	9	It was easy for me to make contacts in mission agencies
6	7	6	8	Other
7	7	7	6	I was able to network with others on the same journey
8	6	5	7	I discover real ministry opportunities that might suit me
9	5	5	4	It challenged me to personally consider moving into some type of ministry
10	3	3	4	Helped me understand the basis for becoming personally involved in missions
11	3	5	2	I gained a perspective of the need in missions today

### HOW CAN WE BE OF SERVICE TO SECOND-CAREER CANDIDATES?

Delegates were asked the open-ended question, What areas did the Forum not help you with — an area that you would like assistance? Or what do you need the most help with now? Overall 42% made comments, 40% male & 44% female. Comment categories are summarized in Appendix F. Quotes are listed on 5 pages of Appendix N. These are offered to allow you to glean maximum insight from the boomer class of candidates.

[When asked how mission agencies could improve, delegates were more verbal as over half (55%) made comments.. See responses for Question 12 Appendix J and Appendix P ]

## HOW DID THE DELEGATES PERCEIVE MISSION AGENCY'S SERVICE?

Questions were posed related to connections with agencies following the conference. With a generation expecting service organizations to cater to them, it is not likely people will consider moving into missions without building a relationship with a sending organization as in conventional commercial give-and-take characteristic of our culture. So how did we do as an industry? Responses related to follow up are summarized below:

Have you received communications from missions agencies following FF '98?		
<input type="radio"/>	69%	Yes
<input type="radio"/>	4%	No, but I expected to
<input type="radio"/>	24%	No, but I did not initiate any connections at Finishers Forum '98
<input type="radio"/>	3%	Do not recall
If yes above, how many contacted you		
by mail?	<u>48%</u>	
by email?	<u>18%</u>	
by phone?	<u>26%</u>	
in person?	<u>8%</u>	

About 7 in 10 (69%) expected the mission agency to make contact following the conference. Overall it appears there was about a 95% follow up rate. However, there is no way to know if each received all the follow up expected. Follow-up complaints was the most mentioned in write-in comments. (See Appendix P.) Of those expecting contact only about one in three received personal contact either by phone or in person.

Question 9 inquired whether the delegate initiated contact with agencies since the conference?

One in two (50%) indicated they initiated contact after the event with an average of 2.3 agencies following FF '98. The suggestion to take charge of the second-half assignment was well heeded. The communication happened two ways.

Attendees were also asked questions relating to their impressions about mission agency representation. The responders were instructed to indicate no more than three positive and three improvement areas. A list of 12 attributes was offered for opinions as to what the agencies did well and what they could improve on. The results of this inquiry are tabulated below and appear in chart form on Appendix G. For each characteristic, the numerical value shown is the percent of respondees that circled this choice.

There was a greater number of positive responses. This is why the percentages in are higher in comparison to the characteristics that might be improved. For many, factors regarding areas of improve ment was not completely filled in simply left blank. These results appear in the table on Page 8 and in chart form on Appendix H.

11. Circle three attributes below that describe areas where missions organizations have serviced you surprisingly well. Also see the chart of Appendix G				
Rank	All	M	F	What Missions Organizations Did Well at FF '98
1	38	42	34	servicing attitude
2	34	30	37	enthusiasm
3	26	27	24	well informed
4	22	21	23	attentive
5	20	23	18	listened
6	17	17	18	counseled me
7	17	15	18	optimistic
8	15	16	13	organized
9	8	10	7	flexibility
10	8	9	7	unintrusive
11	7	7	5	responsive
12	5	4	6	creativity

Not surprisingly comparing responses for Question 11, areas receiving high commendation, were those not needing improvement, in the opinion of the responders. Alternately, areas not indicated as being strong points in Question 11 were signaled as needing improvement in Question 12. However, the improvement recommendations were not as widely shared. The suggestions to better the way recruits are gathered are offered as a word to the wise.

Agencies were given high marks for coming with a servant attitude, joy, and product knowledge. Some commented they were surprised agency representatives were so knowledgeable. However, some remarked they could not get questions answered on the spot or after the event.

Areas that boomers in business and industry have excelled in, such as flexibility, creativity, focus, and organization were those suggested agency representatives could improve. While respondents were invited to circle three, an average of 1.5 were marked by less than half (44%). Over half did not see these as flaws. Contrast this to 78% indicating excellence in Question 11, marking 2.8 out of 3 areas.

In an open-ended question, respondents were asked to articulate at least one specific as to how agencies might improve their service. Delegates were more verbal than multiple choice here as over half (55%) of the respondents volunteered write-in suggestions — 55% male & 55% female. Responses are categorized in Appendix J. The most useful and articulate comments are quoted on four pages in Appendix P.

12. To be more helpful, in my opinion, agencies need to improve in the following areas (circle no more than three): Also see the chart on Appendix H.				
Rank	All	M	F	Areas Missions Organizations Could Improve
1	24	23	24	flexibility
2	23	27	19	creativity
3	22	23	20	clarity of vision
4	21	21	21	more organized
5	15	10	20	response time
6	14	20	9	being informed
7	8	9	8	listening
8	6	4	8	less pushy
9	6	4	8	attentive
10	3	3	3	enthusiasm, optimism, serving attitude (% same for each)

### WHAT WILL THEY DO NEXT?

To gain insight into how the Finishers Project movement might mobilize boomers, a question was posed regarding what is self-perceived as the next step that must be taken to further the journey into missions as a second career.

This inquiry was responded to by 97% of those that answered the survey. There is a genuine sense of accountability before the Lord to move forward, even six to eight months after the conference event. Here the write-in category was the highest response. Even though most of the write-ins can be categorized in the list below, boomers have a keen need to be dealt with as individuals. They defy generalization as a class of candidate.

Of the suggested next steps listed, no one step dominated. The highest next activity was to *take a short-term trip* - a low cost probe. This was signaled by one in six. Deciding *what they want to do* and *making contact with an agency* was indicated as next steps by one in eight. More concrete actions like *ending the first career* and *doing a gifts inventory* were indicated by about one in ten. About one in twenty thought the next life-step is to *get more training*. The utility of more formal training was sensed by males over females by a ratio of three to one.

With the highly individual nature of the next step, the need for listening to the individual customer will be key to assisting each in finding useful kingdom assignments. Be prepared to customize. Generalizations by representatives and executives will not serve sending organizations well.

13. Which of the items below best describes what you feel is the next step in the process for you, as you decide if you want to be involved in missions as a second career. (Check just one next step.) See results charted on Appendix K.				
Rank	All	M	F	Self- Perceived Next Step
1	18	16	19	Other
2	17	15	18	Take a short-term trip
3	13	11	14	Make contact with an agency
4	13	13	13	Decide, Do I want to?
5	11	16	6	End career
6	10	10	10	Assess gifts
7	9	6	11	Process further
8	4	6	2	Training
9	3	3	2	Select agency
10	2	2	3	Get out of debt
11	1	1	1	Seek counsel

#### HOW WILL THEIR SERVICE IN MISSIONS BE FUNDED?

Delegates were asked to indicate how they viewed their funding a second-career in missions. Here no financial information was sought. Instead they were asked to judge the level of support they might need. Results are summarized in the table on page 10 and on Appendix L.

One in four (24%) judged they would be self-supporting including providing ministry funds for travel and overhead. One in three judged they could support living expenses but needed support to fund travel and other ministry expenses.

Another one in five judged they needed full support, but would not have to fund conventional retirement as they became too old to continue in missions productively. Only one in eight attending the conference thought they needed full support AND a retirement package. One in ten either indicated they would only consider paid positions or they needed to ditch their debt first. The above indicates that a great deal of flexibility is needed in dealing with second-career candidates regarding finances and fund raising.

14. Funding a missions assignment, in your opinion: (check only one). Also see Appendix L.				
Rank	All	M	F	Financial Position on Funding a Second-Career
2	24	22	25	I/we would likely be fully self-supported;
1	33	36	29	I/we could support ourselves, but would need travel and overhead funds;
3	21	21	21	I/we would need to be fully funded, but retirement is funded;
4	13	11	16	I/we would need to be fully funded, plus provide for eventual retirement;
-	4	4	4	I/we would only consider paid positions, leaving the fund raising to others;
-	5	6	5	I/we need to get out of debt first.

The above findings do not square with the national survey taken where only 20% indicated they could support themselves in missions to any extent. Thus those taking time and expense to travel to Finishers Forum '98, pay the conference fee and hotel, are more likely to be the ones in a position to be self-supporting to a large extent. Again, this can not be over generalized. Nearly three in eight delegates attending (38%) still need conventional full missionary support funding.

#### **WHAT OTHER SERVICES WOULD THEY CONSIDER VALUABLE?**

Finishers Project is basically a marketing movement — marketing connections to sending organizations as part of what God is doing to fill His house and disciple the nations. Therefore, it is useful to continually improve the understanding of how to best communicate with the target audience.

A question was posed regarding other products and services the Finishers Project might provide this class of candidate. (This is also good insight for mission agencies or churches.) Eight services that have been bantered about were proposed. For the options listed, respondees were asked to rate each as either 1) very valuable, 2) likely to be useful, 3) somewhat useful, or 4) not valuable at all. These were assigned point values of 10, 6.7, 3.3 and 0 respectively.

The top three products or services received an overall rating of “likely to be useful.” These included the web tools, a finishers handbook and a magazine. The video series and a “how to” book were judged somewhere between likely and somewhat useful. This is consistent with comments that delegates needed help in processing specific next steps. A ranking of products or services below a rating of 5 were judged as only somewhat useful and would probably offer less results for an investment - at least for this target generation.

15. Below is a list of ideas for other services Finishers Project could provide to Christians in your age group. Please indicate how valuable you feel that particular tool would be. (Circle one answer in each line.) Also see these results charted on Appendix M.

Rank	All	M	F	Useful Products and Services
1	7.5	7.5	7.4	Web tools
2	7.4	7.6	7.2	Handbook
3	6.9	6.6	7.2	Finishers Magazine
4	6.3	6.1	6.5	Video Series
5	6.3	6.2	6.3	"How to" book
6	5.0	4.6	5.5	Taped testimonials
7	4.8	5.1	4.8	Email book reviews
8	4.6	4.3	4.5	Web chat room

### Closing Comments

There is a tremendous amount of insight in how to mobilize the boomer generation in the foregoing report. Much of the indicated response will apply to any generation in any Western country. Improvement in any product or service results when we listen to the voice of the customer. The customer speaks in this report openly and honestly, without prejudice. Careful attention to details and responsiveness to boomer candidates will reap substantial benefits.

Bottom line to move more laborers into the Lord's harvest fields, more attention to communicating on the channels this candidate pool will respond to is necessary. For boomers, at least, this means a greater amount of personal high-touch follow up is needed. In most cases this means some change in your organizational structure. Many finishers themselves would come along side and assist in this aspect of your ministries. In order for any enterprise to be effective it is necessary to do everything well. Indeed pathways can be provided for people to serve cross-culturally, if those in a position to do so will act with quality and abandon, as unto the Lord. A few hints along the way like this study will, hopefully, be a help in recruiting others to join the assignment the Lord has given to your organization.

<b>List of Appendices</b>	
<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>Demographic Information</b>
<b>Appendix B</b>	<b>Graph of FF '98 delegate age distribution</b>
<b>Appendix C</b>	<b>Chart of how the attendee became aware of FF '98</b>
<b>Appendix D</b>	<b>Chart of motivations to attend FF '98</b>
<b>Appendix E</b>	<b>Chart of how people were helped by FF '98</b>
<b>Appendix F</b>	<b>Areas for further assistance</b>
<b>Appendix G</b>	<b>Chart of what agencies did well at FF '98</b>
<b>Appendix H</b>	<b>Chart of areas mission agencies could improve</b>
<b>Appendix J</b>	<b>Areas for improvements</b>
<b>Appendix K</b>	<b>Chart of next steps for delegates</b>
<b>Appendix L</b>	<b>Chart of financial position funding a second career</b>
<b>Appendix M</b>	<b>Chart of opinions on useful products and services</b>
<b>Appendix N</b>	<b>Comments - Areas for further assistance</b>
<b>Appendix P</b>	<b>Comments - Areas for improvements</b>

**Appendices available on request**

## Appendix A

### Personal information gathered for purposes of tabulation

a. Gender: 50% Male 50% Female      b. Year of birth    1/3 (50-55); 7/10 (45-60)

c. Marital status	
<b>87% Currently married</b>	<b>13% Single (check one below)</b>
<b>9% I have been divorced</b>	<b>66% never married</b>
	<b>22% widowed</b>
	<b>12% divorced</b>

- d.      Number of children at home                      **39% with an average of 2 children**
- e.      Number of grandchildren                              **32% with an average of 4 grandchildren**
- f.      Primary care-giver for an elderly person                      **4%**
- g.      **49%**      I attend a non-denominational church
- h.      **51%**      I attend a \_\_\_\_\_ church (give denomination)

j. When most made mention of a denomination they simply wrote Baptist or Presbyterian, without parsing a distinction. Thus the list of those making a distinction will be inaccurate. This is typical of the generation — more interested in connecting with the cause than the organization. The breakdown of the 51% indicating their current denomination is as follows:

Baptist 28%

Evangelical Free 20%

Presbyterian 18%

Lutheran 4%

18 other denominations with less than 4% attending                      30%

k. At church I serve as: (Check all that apply)

- 37%      Other(s) \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
- 27%      On the mission committee
- 23%      Small group leader
- 18%      Adult Bible study leader
- 15%      I am already affiliated with a mission/ministry organization
- 13%      No formal role
- 13%      Mission committee chairperson
- 13%      On church board
- 8%      Staff or pastor
- 2%      I am a Christian college educator