

A Starting Point

International Internet Evangelism Performance Measurement Report

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Introduction

During February and March of 2007 the Internet Evangelism Coalition (IEC), and Brown Governance Inc. (BGI), conducted the first international internet evangelism survey for church and para-church ministries. This was the first time Christian organizations came together to report and track the effects and results of internet evangelism. Through this survey, Christian organizations shared important data that:

- provides a means of measuring the effectiveness of internet evangelism based efforts vis-à-vis other organizations and peers;
- establishes how various organizations measure their online “success”;
- allows groups to compare their performance measurement practices with organizations and churches of like size and scope;
- introduces performance measurement statistics and practices that may not have been considered or implemented before; and
- helps all of us compare results and learn from ministries in countries around the globe.

This survey is not intended to be a comprehensive and definitive report on internet evangelism measurement. It is intended as a starting point – a beginning – of a journey together for ministries to understand and improve upon the performance measures of our internet evangelism efforts. The report provides an initial benchmark. The survey will be conducted periodically (every one to two years) in order to measure our progress in this journey.

This survey also allows Christian organizations to benchmark their own performance measurement “success” and practices to demonstrate how effective online evangelism efforts have been and if – or how - they must be adapted in order to increase the impact.

All survey data is reported in aggregate with individual responses being kept confidential.

The survey results represent current practices, not policies or intentions.

By way of background, the IEC (www.webevangelism.com) exists to stimulate and accelerate Web-evangelism within the worldwide Body of Christ. We focus on encouraging collaborative efforts, connecting partners and resources for Internet Evangelism and inspiring strategic thinking and resource development to empower the church for Internet Evangelism and initial follow up. Brown Governance Inc, (www.browngovernance.com), who is facilitated this survey, is a member of the IEC and an internationally recognized consulting firm which provides governance expertise to organizations in all sectors, including the faith-based sector.

Profile of Survey Respondents

There were a total of 59 ministry organizations from 17 different countries that completed the survey. Respondent organizations were from a number of ministry sectors: churches, mission agencies, para-church ministries, internet based ministries and others. It should be noted that there is a significant range in size of organization – from very large global ministries to one-person internet ministries. For this first survey, the sample size is not large enough to meaningfully cut the data into groupings by ministry size. It is also of significance to note that not all respondents answered all of the questions in the survey. And yet, aggregated, we can find meaningful data from which to benchmark our internet evangelism efforts.

Chart One: Respondents by Country

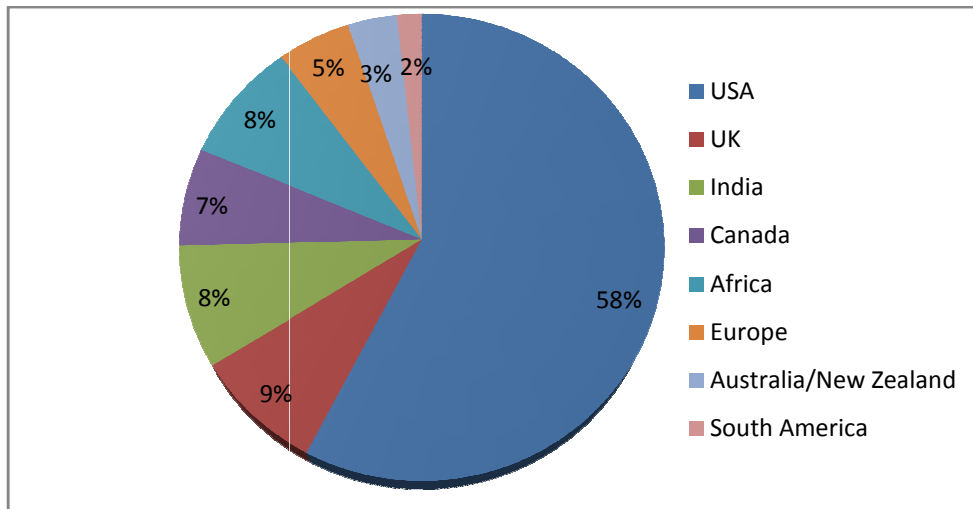
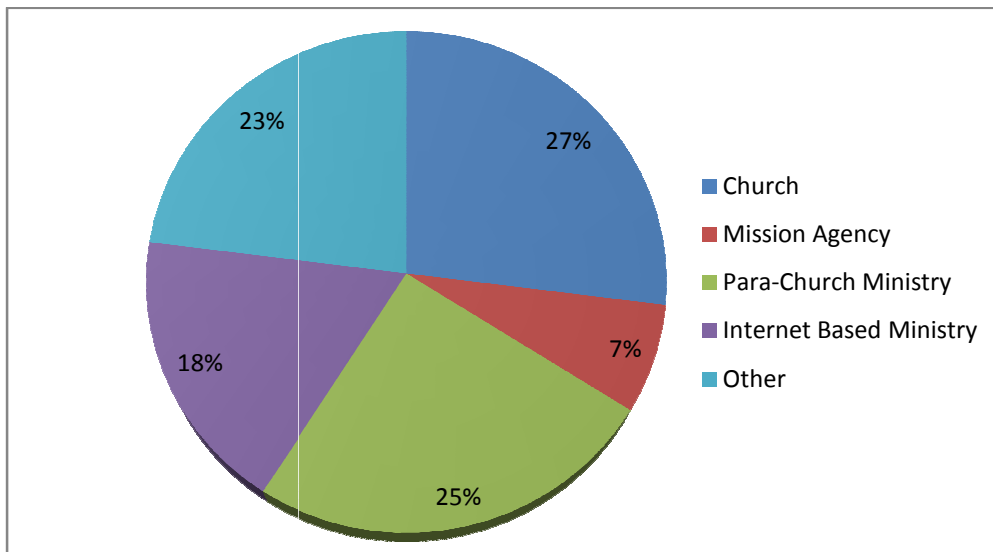


Chart Two: Respondents by Ministry Sector



The average total membership of the 17 churches that responded to the survey was 1447. However, the median membership was 120 reflecting a range of 2 to 20,000 members.

Of the forty four organizations that reported employment numbers, the average number of people employed by respondents overall was 919 (full time equivalents). The median was 7, reflecting a very wide range (1-25,600). The average number of people at respondent organizations that work exclusively on internet evangelism efforts (full time equivalents) was 3.6 with a median of 1 in a range of 0-52.

Table One: Average Number of Employees by Ministry Sector

	Ministry Sector	Average # of Employees	Average # Internet Employees
Church	27%	8	1.4
Mission Agency	7%	140	13.75
Para-Church Ministry	25%	1792	5.5
Internet Based Ministry	18%	4	1.2

The Use of the Internet for Evangelism

Respondents were asked if they **explicitly** use the internet as tool. Sixty five percent (65%) of respondents answered yes while thirty two percent (32%) reported that they did not. This implies that approximately one third (1/3) of the respondents, while Christian ministries; do not **explicitly** use their websites for evangelism.

Explicitly Measuring Internet Evangelism Strategy

Additionally, the responding organizations were asked about their explicit approaches to measuring and reporting on their internet evangelism strategies. Forty five percent (45%) set objectives for measuring strategy, forty eight per cent (48%) measure the success of their strategy, forty three per cent (43%) assess their success rate, and fifty per cent (50%) use those results as inputs for future internet evangelism strategy.

When it comes to reporting on their successes, fifty per cent (50%) of ministries report these measures to their board of directors and forty three percent (43%) go beyond the board and report this information to their membership and their other external stakeholders. (See Chart Three and Table Two.)

For the most part, this means that one-half or less of Christian ministries are explicitly measuring and reporting on the success of their internet strategy and accomplishment.

This response, and associated comments in the survey, indicates that there is some debate as to the importance of measuring the success of our efforts as a “church” broadly speaking. For example, two (2) respondents articulated that measurement should be “left to God.” While God will no doubt take the final and ultimate measures of the efforts of individual Christians and Christian organizations, should

this keep us from creating, implementing, measuring, adjusting and reporting on our strategies and efforts? We believe that Christian organizations should not feel threatened by an expectation of results. Results are important to God – if they weren't, He would not have given us a mission to begin with. We believe that the church needs to be reproducing and it should therefore engage in measurement to ensure that it is.

Chart Three: Responsibilities Explicitly Undertaken by Respondents

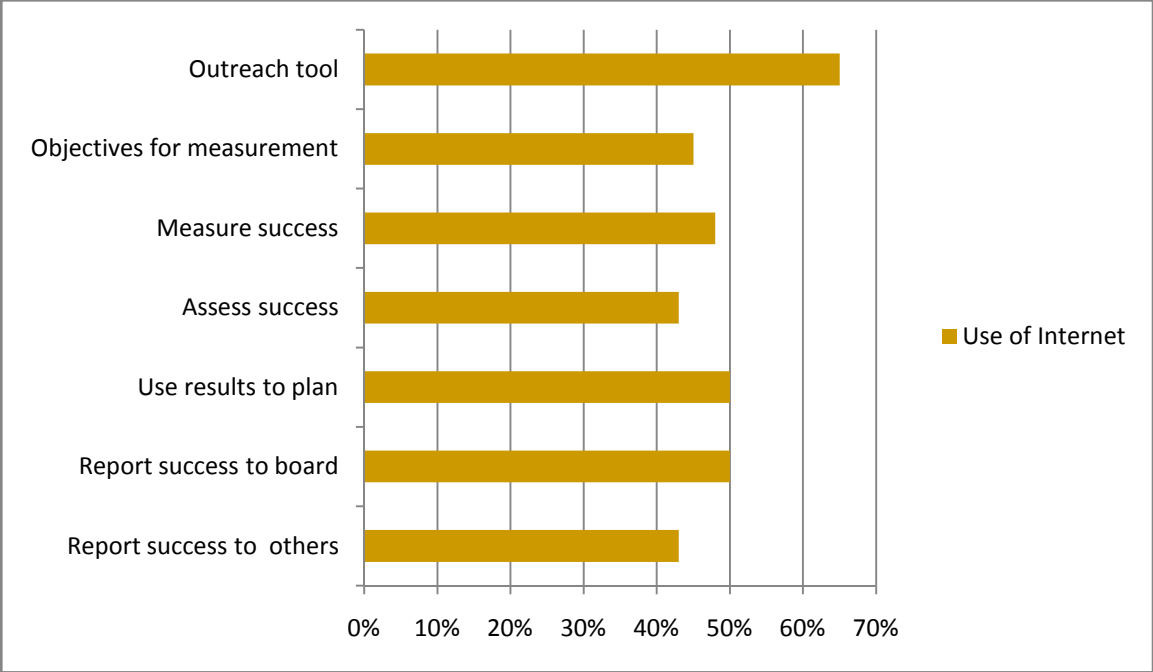
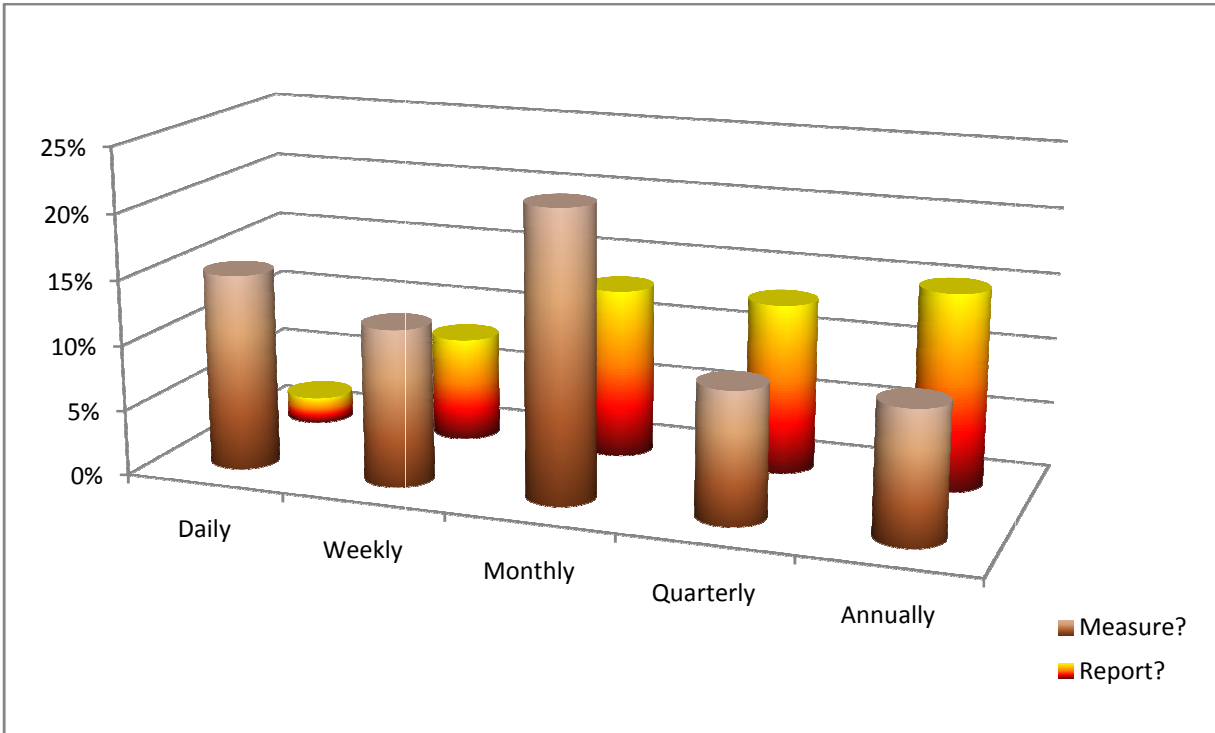


Table Two: Responsibilities Explicitly Undertaken by Respondents

	Yes	No	No Response
Use the internet as an outreach tool	65%	32%	3%
Set objectives for the measurement of internet evangelism strategies	45%	47%	8%
Measure the success of its internet evangelism strategy	48%	43%	9%
Assess the success of its internet evangelism strategy in meeting objectives	43%	45%	12%
Use the objective measurement results for planning future Internet Evangelism strategies	50%	42%	8%
Report the “success” of internet evangelism strategies to its board	50%	42%	8%
Report the success of internet evangelism strategies to its membership and other stakeholders	43%	47%	10%

The frequency with which respondents measure and report on internet evangelism statistics varies from daily to annually. In future surveys, it will be useful to track what types of information are tracked and reported daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annually. Chart Four below illustrates the above.

Chart Four: Frequency of Measuring and Reporting



The Effectiveness of Measurement Types

Survey respondents were asked to rate a variety of potential measurement areas in assessing the effectiveness of their organization’s internet evangelism efforts. The following is the scale they used to guide their answers:

- 1 = not at all important
- 2 = not very important
- 3 = of moderate importance
- 4 = quite important
- 5 = extremely important

Table Three highlights the responses. In addition to the degree of effectiveness of each measures, the table indicates how many of the respondents found each of these measures the most effective.

Table Three: Effectiveness of Internet Evangelism Measures

Type of Measure	How Effective in Assessing Internet Evangelism? (1-5 scale)	Which have you found the most effective? (% who found effective)
# of first-time decisions for Christ	3.43	42%
# of people requesting spiritual (helps) materials	3.25	42%
# of e-mails submitted through this site	2.93	43%
# of recommitments to Christ	2.93	28%
# of unique visitors to first page	2.81	37%
# of people referred to a local church through this site	2.73	25%
# of “clicks” of people who prayed salvation prayer of indicated a decision for Christ	2.60	23%
# of people trained to do online evangelism	2.23	22%
# of countries represented by people visiting site	2.12	18%
# of people trained to do online counselling	2.07	18%
% of unique visitors from each country	1.83	15%
Other: #1 is # of feedback e-mails / questions asked	n/a	13%

Recording Decisions for Christ

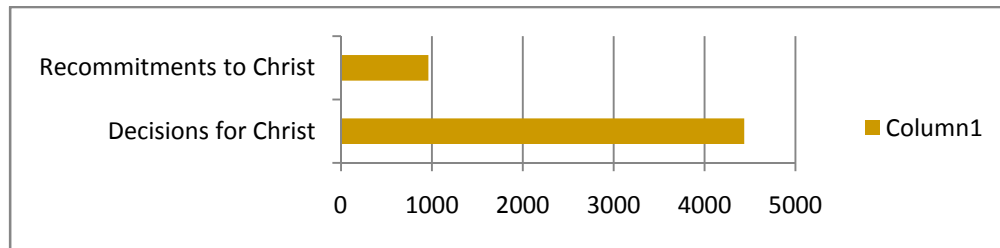
Only 15 of the 59 respondents reported to us the number of recorded decisions for Christ. Those 15 organizations report a total of 732,469 decisions made in the last twelve months as a direct result of their internet evangelism efforts! Amen!

It is important to note that two of the respondents were large organizations whose numbers significantly skew this data point. When those two organizations are removed the number drops to 4438, or an average of 341 decisions per respondent.

Ten respondents reported that a total of 963 recommitments to Christ were made as a direct result of their internet evangelism efforts over the same period. (See Chart Five)

Recording “decisions for Christ” seems to be the concept most problematic for organizations. Not only do some indicate being uncomfortable measuring a decision of the heart, but some express that it is difficult to know with any certainty that a “decision” has in fact been made. And, having made that decision, how does an organization then ensure appropriate follow-up with the individual and as well refer them to a local church? These are all important questions. The intent of this report is not to answer these, but to provide some objective statistics on what others are measuring that organizations can then use to benchmark against.

Chart Five: Decisions and Recommitments in Last Twelve Months



Other Important Measures of Success

Twenty three of the 59 respondents tell us that all told they have welcomed 9,242,931 unique visitors to their evangelistic websites. The average of 401,866 is encouraging.

Seekers from 158 countries visited the evangelistic websites of the 17 respondents who answered this question. Each site welcomed, on average, visitors from 31 different countries. The top ten countries reported, in order of ranking were the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Germany, France, India, Japan, Singapore and Sweden. (See Table Four)

On average, respondents report it takes 2 “clicks” on their evangelistic websites for people to have the opportunity to either pray the prayer of salvation, indicate a decision for Christ, or make a recommitment to Christ. Only 8 of the 59 respondents chose to answer this question. The range of response was from a low of 1 to a high of 5 “clicks.”

Twenty one of the 59 respondents answered the question, “How many emails did your church or ministry receive as a direct result of internet evangelism efforts?” Together they reported receiving 228,917 emails as a direct result of their internet evangelism efforts.

Further, a total of 997 individuals were referred to a local church for follow up as a direct result of respondents’ internet evangelism efforts, according to the 12 organizations that provided us with information in this area.

Table Four: Top 10 Countries of Visitors to Evangelistic Website

Place	Country	% Reporting as #1 Country
1	USA	61%
2	UK	9%
3	Canada	4%
4	Australia	-
5	Germany	-
6	France	-
7	India	-
8	Japan	-
9	Singapore	4%
10	Sweden	-

How Should Success be Measured?

Survey respondents were asked to answer the question “how do you believe churches and para-church ministries should collectively measure the “success” of internet evangelism efforts?” The top answer was that “unique visitors” would be the best collective measure, followed by the number of confirmations of a decision based on e-communications, the number of indicated decisions and the number of internet converts transitioning to a local church. A number of other measures were suggested. (See Table Seven)

Table Seven: How the Church Should Measure “Success” of Internet Evangelism Efforts

	# of Respondents
Unique visitors	13
Confirmation of decision based on e-communications	8
# of decisions indicated	6
# in internet converts transitioning to a local church	4
Only God can measure the success	2
# of people trained to do internet evangelism	1
# of people trained to do online counseling	1
# of recommitments indicated	1
Church growth	1
Converts are sharing their faith	1
Testimony submissions	1

Communications

There are a number of purposes for measuring performance and results, one of which is to communicate the success strategies and their results to a variety of audiences. Chart Six and Table Five highlight the percentage of respondents that have an organization-wide internet evangelism communications policy in place, the audiences they communicate their results to, and where they communicate those results.

Chart Six: Communicating Internet Evangelism Success

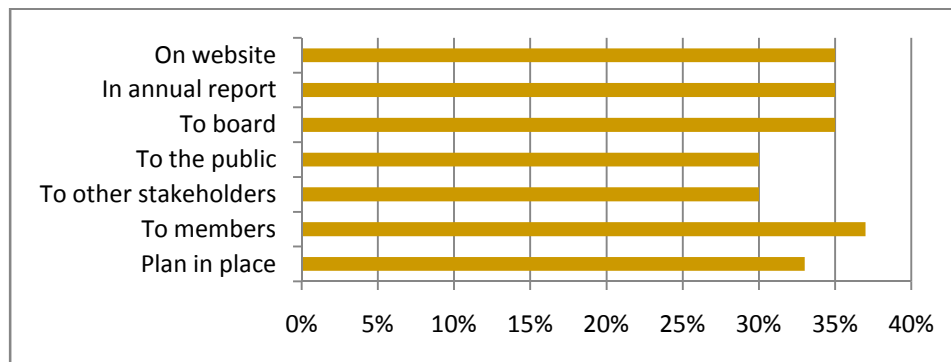


Table Five: Communicating Internet Evangelism Success

	Yes	No	No Response
Ensuring there is an organization-wide internet evangelism communication plan/policy in place	33%	38%	29%
Ensuring effective communication on internet evangelism:	37%	37%	26%
a. To members			
b. To other stakeholders	30%	37%	33%
c. To the public in general	30%	43%	27%
d. To its board	35%	37%	28%
e. In an annual report	35%	38%	27%
f. On the organization's main website	35%	37%	28%

2007 – 2008 Priorities

Much of this report has focused on what ministries are currently doing with respect to measuring their internet evangelism efforts. Table Six is a compilation of the various efforts respondents report they will be focusing on for the rest of 2007 and 2008. The number one answer was to create more effective websites. This was followed by training and recruiting internet evangelists. The third of the top three answers was to find ways to increase commitments to Christ online.

Table Six: Internet Evangelism Priorities for 2007-2008

	# of Respondents
Create more effective websites	13
Increased/improved recruiting and training in web evangelism	11
Increase commitments	6
Create an online/social networking community	3
Evangelizing Arabs/Muslims and Hindus	3
Improve tracking systems	3
Keep content fresh	3
Link people to the local church	3
Clarify the gospel message	2
Create an income stream from the sites	2
Disciple people online	2
Increase visitors to the site	2
Integrate video	2
Board governance	1
Build partnerships with others	1
Determine cost effective marketing strategies	1
Have more people come to our church	1
Increase number of languages	1
Launch a more effective chat service	1
Recruit and train prayer warriors	1

Suggestions for Others from Respondents

A significant benefit of entering into joint and collaborative efforts – like this survey – is that it provides an opportunity for ministries to learn from each other. Table Eight is a compilation of the answers to the question “what suggestions would you offer to other churches or ministries to improve the effectiveness of internet evangelism in general?” In some cases, suggestions have been paraphrased in order to clarify them. Where a particular suggestion was similar to another or was made more than once it has been combined with the others.

Table Eight: Suggestions for Others

Engage in more prayer
Spend more time casting vision with your congregation and training them, clergy and board members
Design websites with the end-user in mind
Build a natural connection from the evangelism site to an initial follow up site
Establish a link for those making a decision with an eCoach and train those spiritual counselors well
Keep it interesting and relevant - and use relevant resources
Don't give up
Make good use of testimonies
Review carefully and implement counsel given in WEB and IEC newsletters
Make sure church websites have a gospel message in them
Connect to large internet projects to have one single point of bringing new people to churches located in different areas of the "physical world"
Find ways to build community through the decisions received
Partner/collaborate with others
Prepare sites to attend to people’s felt needs
Prepare sites attractive to non Christians and the general public
Use less "Christianese" language.
Try and gather as much information as possible from organizations that are having success with their respective websites
Offer useful information for the emotional issues concerning the visitor (anger, fear, depression and/or guilt etc.) providing answers in addition to an offer of prayer
Start talking to non-Christians and really engaging them
Get non-Christians to be brutally honest in evaluating your site
Get elders young enough who don't think the Internet is a tool of the devil
Keep up with the technology and invest both time and money into it
Make sure to use capable people or have someone trained - don't just do half of the job
Use photos, audio clips, video clips, simple websites, chat rooms, IM sessions, and personal experiences, etc.
Report statistics in the annual report relative to return on investment (ROI)
Form lay communities of online volunteers
Promote the knowledge of the gospel more than advertising your own ministry or services

Envisioning the Future

Technology changes rapidly. The internet of last year is not the internet of today – nor is it the internet of tomorrow. We asked respondents to envision the future of internet and other technology-based evangelism efforts. Table nine is a compilation of the responses to that question.

Table Nine: Envisioning the Future

Hopefully people will realize that the Internet is not a magic wand and that the process of evangelism which is by nature "people intensive" is not that simple. It still has vast potential to reach people, but we have to work at it.
It will be a staple part of ministry, as normal as a men's breakfast bible study. But, it will be one voice amongst millions. Its real value is as a hook to bring folks into a local church.
With the "always on" generation growing, we will see the lines of communication brought to a minimum. With effective, honest, and genuine communication comes relationship - which is our church's belief of the key to evangelism.
Expanding and increasingly growing in presence and use, effective 24/7.
The internet is increasingly the only way to communicate the teaching of Jesus to large proportions of the world population. There will be no change here. I guess some denominations and churches will realize the "benefits" before others.
I-Phones are cool, but the Internet will be key for years.
Many will come to Christ through this method.
Unless there is a radical departure from current practice, the future of evangelism (internet or otherwise) is very bleak.
I predict we will be more successful (i.e. producing lasting fruit) if we work together, sharing technology, expertise, innovative media ideas, etc. and not settle for reporting clicks and first-time decisions that evaporate into cyberspace.
Heading more toward relationship building through social sites as opposed to using a Web site.
It will become more and more effective.
It has tremendous potential but the competition has become fierce and is accelerating all the time. It is imperative that we reach people at their point of felt need: otherwise we won't have a chance of keeping up with the ever advancing technology
It will connect people in need with real people that have the love and truth of Jesus Christ.
Web video blogs. Podcast, Mobile devices. Web commercials. More personalized communication. Social networking sites.
Many more people will search the internet for religious information - they will cling to sites with good content and usability. People want to belong to communities. They need to be attended to on a one-to-one basis.
More churches will search for online evangelism resources and opportunities.
Ways and means must be devised to gain a hearing amongst the millions of websites.
It is the new leading edge of ministry and more and more are relying on the website for their everyday needs. So I see it as the newest area for evangelism to explode.
We have to be able to adequately compete with pornography, terrorism and profit-making.
Once large donors learn the ROI of Internet evangelism efforts, there will be major changes in giving towards strategies which effectively use these technologies.

Some Final Thoughts

We end this report with some final thoughts and suggestions from those who took the time to complete our first international internet evangelism performance measurement report. We hope that in them you each find something of value that will help you in your own internet evangelism efforts.

The author and sponsors of this report would like to thank the 59 ministries that took part in this important research study. We applaud all that you do and pray God’s richest blessings on your ministry. We believe that measuring the efforts of our labour for the purpose of improvement, transfer of learning, communication and celebration are of strategic importance to the future of the “church.” And, as together we measure our efforts, our hope and prayer is that those efforts touch the hearts and lives of millions with the love and saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Table Ten: Additional Comments and Suggestions from Respondents

I wish I had more training so I could lead this in our Church.
The IEC should have continental offices to be more effective. We are willing to help start one in Africa.
Let's ensure the ideas, resources, etc. get outside of North America in a way that can be adapted and utilized by other countries where the internet is widely used.
Thanks for doing this! I think it is a step in the right direction.
Let the body of Christ share the best of their ideas and technology - lets run!
Please consider individuals like myself who are online creating websites to evangelize and spread the gospel. I'm not with a church but want to witness!
I believe God has given our generation the greatest resources ever, including the greatest means of communication, in order to reach people around the world with the gospel in preparation for Christ's return.
Communicate much, learn from each other. Learn from social strategies and trends of secular internet projects.
Congratulations on the survey. Very gospel commission centered.
Encourage churches to be more "worldly friendly" in their introductory pages.
Very good survey.
It would be nice to have more places to get the information needed to learn better ideas for internet evangelism.
Internet evangelism must be service oriented with observable, measurable, attainable objectives.
Moving beyond counting clicks as a measure of success is hard to do for most people. Christians want to go for the easy fruit and are sometimes very blind to the realities of really reaching the unreached through the internet with the challenges that this brings.
Won't happen by a church unless the efforts are led from the top. Para-church has a better chance because of their focused activities.
Thank you for doing this survey.
Most traditional ministries will not aggressively adopt online evangelism strategies, though God will raise up new groups who will take advantage of the opportunities.
I feel after 15 years I am still a beginner.
Although asked to build a new website for our church the elders refused to allow any evangelistic material on it. In the end they declined to proceed with the site rather than carry any evangelistic

material.

Thank you for the work you do for Jesus Christ through internet evangelism. There are so many people to reach here in Africa. We need the IEC conference which is there every year to come to Africa for us who do not have the possibility to come there.

We need more sites like persecution.com.

I am in a Muslim state and I need materials on friendship evangelism and to be trained in how to evangelize Muslims.