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Cultural and Religious Awareness for Online Ministries

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CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS AWARENESS FOR ONLINE MINISTRIES

By
Joanne Jacene DeVoe

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Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Joanne Jacene DeVoe under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to Gardner-Webb University College of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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Dedication

This dissertation in practice is dedicated to my wonderful, loving husband, Arthur "Butch" Stewart DeVoe, Jr., without whose encouragement, love, and patience throughout this endeavor, this would not have been accomplished.

Abstract

CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS AWARENESS FOR ONLINE MINISTRIES. DeVoe, Joanne Jacene, 2023: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University.

This purpose of this project was to address the cultural and religious barriers when answering various questions concerning the Bible and daily living for online ministries. In order to be able to effectively convey the gospel message, any online ministry and its staff members need a good understanding of varying and different cultures or religions via online resources of those different religions and cultures. These resources aid in the efficiency and effectiveness of the online ministry staff by enhancing cultural and religious awareness. These resources decrease follow-up questions for further clarification of original questions as well as decrease the reassignment of questions. These resources are used in training and evaluating ministerial staff in their understanding and effectiveness. These resources increase the positive outcome to a better understanding of the salvific message that increase of professions of faith globally. An explanatory sequential design has been used as a mixed methodology. A Likert survey and multiple open ended questions were conducted with the eight (8) editors of GQM, all of whom gave their perception of what kind of resources would be available and how it can be accessed. The literature review was enlightening particularly the Peace Child demonstrating the need for understanding other cultures and religions to convey the salvific message. The findings are that any online ministry preparing to evangelize through technology, is in need of such resources, tools, and training. For online ministries, the mission field is a global stage and there are various cultures, religions, and Christian denominations worldwide.

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Chapter 1: Analytical Awareness

Introduction

I have been looking into the improvement of presenting the gospel message to others, both locally and globally, in the capacity of an online ministry from prior to the development of this action research project. Within this action research project, I will be discussing the challenges of online ministry on the global platform as well as looking to find possible resolutions in the area of cultural and religious awareness. I will be reviewing resources to equip online ministries to become more efficient and effective in answering life-changing questions in a biblical and understandable manner.

In this chapter, I will be describing, analyzing, and discussing self-awareness of who I am and my relationship with this project. I will be describing, analyzing, and discussing who I am as a leader and a project manager including in this particular project, my strengths, and areas for improvement. I will be formulating a plan to improve my leadership as it is ongoing and progressive. I will explain why I chose Got Questions Ministries (GQM) as my partner on this journey. I will be addressing any risks, assumptions, and constraints that arise. I will clarify terms that may not be clear to the audience. I will be exploring specifically the challenge of answering questions from people of other cultures and religions concerning God, Jesus Christ, and the Bible and how it affects daily living.

My Cultural and Religious Self Awareness

I describe myself as an Italian-Sicilian American Christian woman. On my mother's side, I am a third-generation Italian American; on my father's side, I am a second-generation Sicilian American. Many of my family inter-married with people of

other cultures and religions, people whose ancestors were from Syria, Armenia, Ireland, Holland, and many others, just to name a few. Over my many years, I have had schoolmates from other countries such as Russia, Thailand, and Africa. I have worked with many people from around the world such as the Philippines, Egypt, and India, of different castes, again just to name a few. My husband is Dutch and Irish, mainly. I have been well aware of my relationships with other cultures from a very young age. I have learned to respect them and embrace our differences.

My self-awareness does not stop at respecting and embracing cultural awareness. I also respect our differences religiously. I grew up in New Jersey in an Old World Style Roman Catholic household. In my family, I have an aunt-in-law who is Jewish. My godfather was Jewish and converted to Catholicism. My husband grew up in the Dutch Christian Reform Church. I have had many friends of other faiths including Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Universalism. I also have friends and relatives who embrace atheism.

I have sought after God all my life. I have been a part of many denominations of Protestantism including Baptist, Methodist, Church of God, Church of the Nazarene, African American Evangelical, and nondenominational. I have embraced my theology in the Apostolic Pentecostal denomination. My unusual awareness to seek God and embrace the teachings of the Bible has given me a unique perspective that is the driving force behind this project.

In addition to my self-awareness both culturally and religiously, I have taken courses in world religions, both as an undergraduate at the University of Mount Olive and as a graduate student at Gardner-Webb's School of Divinity. I also took a course in

cultural anthropology at the School of Divinity. These courses, again, piqued my interest in reaching people of different cultures and religions concerning salvation through Jesus Christ. I saw how missionaries and everyday people had conversations with people of other cultures and faiths and were able to plant that seed toward Jesus Christ. I learned not to judge or be forceful in my beliefs. I learned to listen and communicate my beliefs in a way in which they could relate, in the hope of sparking a light for them to research further and that the seed would blossom into their relationship with Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

I found one of many ministerial outlets in my life as a GQM volunteer staff writer. I do believe my knowledge and skills have and will continue to serve that organization, the stakeholders, and the questioners well. I do believe that with this self-awareness, I could proceed to learn and develop my leadership skills during this action research project.

Myself as a Leader

Leadership Theories

The two leadership theories I relate to are transformational and servant leadership. Transformational leadership theory describes a leader who helps others achieve the best they can be by encouraging and empathizing with them (Bradley, 2020). Servant leadership theory describes a leader who determines the needs of the individual team members and sees that it is their calling to serve others (Bradley, 2020). Both theories were presented between the 1970s and 1980s during the time when I was debating my pursuits in life such as teacher, minister, or a person who does outreach. Since my foremost characteristic is being aware of the needs of others, especially in the realm of spirituality, I would consider myself to be a transformational servant leader.

Transformational Leadership. As a transformational leader, I hope to inspire people to trust me when I communicate the ways of the Bible that pertain to living a good and righteous life (DuBrin, 2016). Part of being a transformational leader is to guide and teach people to be the best at what God has called them to be in their life, whether it be a follower or leader (Rosenbach et al., 2012). I hope to instill in people that they can achieve anything they put their minds to as well as have an understanding in ministry that there is a purpose to their endeavors (DuBrin, 2016). I also hope to be able to authentically present to others that I understand their struggles by giving examples of my own story in terms that will encourage them to overcome their fears and struggles (DuBrin, 2016).

Servant Leadership. As a servant leader, I hope to listen to the struggles of others, learn what I, as their leader, or the team can formulate to help them achieve their goals with the best available action plan, and be authentic enough to understand all sorts of struggles not just physical ones that may hinder the person completing their tasks in life (DuBrin, 2016). A servant leader looks to aid in their followers becoming autonomous in their pursuits by providing better access to knowledge and healthcare when needed to instill confidence in them (DuBrin, 2016). Although in any type of organization there is a need for financial support, I, as a servant leader, hope to inspire righteous morals rather than obtain monetary rewards (DuBrin, 2016). The combination of these two leadership theories fits my personality and my pursuit of effective ministerial leadership. I am committed to helping people in their struggles by encouraging and empowering them to transform into the kind of person they desire to be.

My Leadership Strengths

I took several assessments concerning my leadership to better understand my strengths and weaknesses. One assessment was John Maxwell's DISC Method, which found my behavioral style to be an advisor. I found that I can be persuasive, trustworthy, optimistic, and relationally oriented with a flair for the casual, personal environment with others. Since I have no qualms about using my personal experiences to be a good example to others, showing they can transform in a positive way, this is a definite leadership strength. Another strength is related to task orientation. I can be very detailed and able to process and direct the team to get a decent quality product or service done in a timely manner.

Another evaluation of my leadership skills was through SelfStir 360 Assessment. My understanding of my strengths is having strong moral and ethical core values. I stand up for what is right even if I am alone and it is not popular. My honest, direct way of expressing myself, lets people know where I stand. I prioritize relationship building over task orientation, yet I am aware of my biases and how they can impact behavior.

The third evaluation is the Clifton Strengths Assessment, which I feel pinpointed both my strengths and weaknesses very well. My five strengths are belief, communication, connectedness, positivity, and woo. My understanding of these strengths follows.

Executing: Belief. Belief is defined by my core values that give meaning, legacy, and purpose to my life. Since I am steadfast in my core values with a hope to have a legacy of bringing people to Christ and changing their lives, this is one of my strengths, definitely a strength needed in ministry.

Relationship Building: Connectedness and Positivity. Connectedness is defined by my belief that there is a connection with all people and a reason for everything. Positivity shows that through my ability to empathize, I can encourage others even when I do not feel very positive about things. I have the ability to explain the connections we all have, and I thrive on celebrating other people's accomplishments.

Influencing: Communication and Woo. My communication ability is putting others at ease by being able to explain my point with stories and examples. I have an ability to communicate biblical core values without being confrontational. This strength is very much needed to reach people where they are in life without being judgmental.

Woo is my ability to be comfortable with strangers by starting conversations in the hope of winning them over to become friends. To me, there are no strangers because we are all a part of God's family regardless of situations. My hope is that with this strength, many lives have been changed in a positive way and many more are about to be as well through these many strengths.

My Leadership Weaknesses

According to the Clifton Strengths Assessment, I found five leadership weaknesses that were not surprising to me. These weaknesses are futuristic, strategic, ideation, focus, and achieving. My understanding of these weaknesses follows.

Executing: Achieving and Focus. My lack of achieving is that I need motivation to complete specifically set goals. It is my fear of failure or any risks that can hurt future plans. This weakness stifles my motivation to achieve reachable goals. This area is one that I need to work on to accomplish future ambitions both in life and ministry.

My inability to focus is because I can be easily distracted from the situation at

hand, or because I tend to I overcommit myself. I would include that I do not have the ability to create and set a specific timeline with exact goals. I need to build up self-confidence and build a timeline to achieve specific goals.

Strategic Skills: Futuristic, Ideation, and Strategic. There were no strengths at all in the area of strategic skills, meaning this is a definite area to develop into a strength. My lack of futuristic ability is that I do not have lofty ideas or long-term plans. It is best for me to set short-term and long-term plans for the ministry as a guide for reachable goals of the ministry worth pursuing.

Ideation is the ability to create a new idea or plan. My lack of confidence stifles my creativity to entice people to the ministry and is a definite weakness to work on. I believe my various strengths will help me because I can talk comfortably with anyone. I should be able to find creative, enthusiastic people who share my core values, vision, and mission to create something new and exciting!

Strategic skills are very much a weakness for me due to my inability to figure out if this happens, what do we do then. An example is that I created and led a women's Bible study group, which dissipated to the point of no communication at all among the women. I also taught Sunday School and preached at a new local church, which ended up disbanding altogether. For a while, I could not figure out what to do or where to go in ministry. It took about a year after all this disappointment to create a Christian group called HisHeart2OurHeart on Facebook. I believe the lack here is not having a contingency plan. I lack the ability to pursue more strategic plans to further the current ministry, which is due to my lack of confidence. This may be due to my fear of failure; I am not good at taking critical feedback. I either become confrontational or get quiet and

retreat rather than learn from it. This area needs much improvement because if these weaknesses do not improve, I will not be able to move forward in any kind of ministry adversely impacting lives.

As I use my strengths and work to improve my weaknesses, I can focus on what incentivizes me. My passion is the Bible, Jesus Christ, and people (Collins, 2001). I can use my communication, belief, and woo skills to connect with positivity through my sermons, teachings, and answering questions about my passions (Collins, 2001) while being able to sow seeds to lead others to Jesus Christ and salvation (Collins, 2001). One of the ways I have been able to use and work on all of my abilities is through and with the organization I partnered with for this action research project.

Myself as a Project Manager

To understand the characteristics of a project manager, one should understand what a project is as well as what is necessary to make it a success. According to Kloppenborg et al. (2019), it can be very difficult to develop a time limit to schedule and complete a project or service that needs specific talents and resources and may have a limited number of finances to create and develop something very unique. With all the specifications, I would suggest that the project manager would have the characteristics to coordinate the work to be done with the people who have the specific skills to complete it successfully (Kloppenborg et al., 2019). The project manager should be adaptable in any situation and have the skills and knowledge for the project (Kloppenborg et al., 2019).

Characteristics of Good Project Managers Assessment

Prior to undertaking this project, I took the Characteristics of Good Project Managers Assessment. I thought I did something wrong and took it a few times. I was

awestruck by the results (Schultmann et al., 2022). I do not look at myself in this kind of light, so I was not expecting these results. I scored so high that I did not have any areas for improvement based on the assessment matrix.

The average for planning is 93%, and I got 92% (Schultmann et al., 2022). I do agree with this assessment because I am forever writing and rewriting my weekly schedules, especially with balancing my ministries and the action research project schedules. I am a person who needs to have a good idea of what is needed when and how to make room for all of it. Time management is something I have relied on for most of my life and feel this is a plus in my characteristic of being a project manager.

For leadership, the average is 72%, and I scored 93% (Schultmann et al., 2022). I attribute that to my need to have everything in place and ready to go. I also try to be observant of my team, so I know who has the skills for their position to get the project done smoothly and successfully. One of my goals from the beginning of this journey was for me to develop my leadership skills as a transformational leader. My desire is to see people become the best they can be and hopefully inspire them as a team and as individuals to be who God meant them to become.

Communication on average is 83%, and I scored 86%. Communication is a skill set that is truly necessary for a minister (Schultmann et al., 2022). I need to be able to communicate to my team where to go to understand the Bible, other cultures, and other religions in order to convey the gospel to people who may have never heard of it, may be seeking a deity who will forgive their trespasses, or may be seeking how to live a good and righteous life. I also need to communicate to my congregants how and what the Bible describes as the righteous life and how to communicate it to others.

Creative thinking and problem-solving on average is 67%, and surprisingly, I got 96% (Schultmann et al., 2022). As I wrote prior, I did this assessment a few times to be sure of the results. I have learned from others that I tend to produce ideas on many projects with each team member's skill in mind. I learned when trying to start a project I hold myself back out of fear of failure, yet I have a lot of creativity within. I would suggest that I aim toward conquering that fear of failure in order to be successful as a leader; in this instance, a project manager.

Lastly, dealing with uncertainty, on average rated 80% and I rated 84% (Schultmann et al., 2022). I credit that to my many different life positions as a leader and as a follower. For much of my life, I have had to learn to go with the flow of what changes came my way. I believe those experiences gave me the unique ability to adapt to the uncertainty of a project to make it a success with the people who have the necessary skills and knowledge.

Leadership Characteristics of Project Managers Assessment

To get an idea of what the leadership characteristics of a project manager should be, it would be best to understand what a project is and how to make it a success. I suggest that the project manager would have the leadership quality characteristics to encourage, empower, and coordinate the people who have those specific skills to complete it successfully (Kloppenborg et al., 2019).

Prior to writing this paper, I took the Leadership Characteristics of Project Managers Assessment (Kloppenborg et al., 2019). I did take it a couple of times to be sure of the results. For this assessment, I expected the results as I was assessed. Forward thinking is my area to improve.

For being knowledgeable, the average is 93%, and I rated 94% (Schultmann et al., 2022). Prior to conducting a project of any kind, I tend to research to the point of ad nauseam. I figured that for me, it was good to know what I am getting into before beginning any project or assignment. This accounts for me usually being ahead of most people to complete tasks.

For being organized, the average is 86%, and I rated it at 96% (Schultmann et al., 2022). In the prior assessment for planning, I rated it at 92% (Schultmann et al., 2022). To me, this validates that I am a well-organized leader who tends to plan ahead to be a project manager.

For the next two, the inspirational average is 72% and the relationship building average is 67% (Schultmann et al., 2022). I rated 100% for both categories (Schultmann et al., 2022). The top five Clifton Strengths for me were connected, communication, belief, positivity, and woo. My assessment of these two characteristics is that it has been verified by more than one assessment, so it is correct. To me, this is vital for any ministerial project. I am blessed to know I have these characteristics.

Finally, forward thinking, on average rates 83%, and I rated 67% (Schultmann et al., 2022). According to this assessment, a leader needs to possess forward-thinking so that person can see past the present challenges and envision the future. This ability enables the person to open the larger future vision of possibilities and potentials in life and the organization. It creates a desire to be open to new ways to resolve conflict and to find tremendous opportunities for different ideas and unusual ways of methods of one's leadership (Schultmann et al., 2022).

I tend to be a person who may prepare for the next few weeks or months, yet

beyond that, I usually entrust that to others more suited to that capacity. I am hopeful that in this project, this ability will develop as it should so I can have a more complete set of leadership characteristics for a project manager.

My Desired Leadership State

Leadership Development Needs

There are three areas that I am looking to develop to be an effective and efficient leader. I need to develop and improve my ability to accept critical feedback in a positive and constructive way. I need to create a focused strategy for future online ministry projects that can inspire, encourage, and empower people to transform their own lives and goals into achievable plans. I need to develop a way to set up a timeline to achieve the goals set before me as well as accept the risks.

My Rationale

It has been noticed that when critical feedback is received, I either become confrontational or get quiet and retreat rather than learn from it. We all need to learn from our mistakes to change our ways for a positive outcome. I also tend to overcommit myself or am easily distracted from my goals. There seem to be too many things I need to do at any given time with no self-care or boundaries. This can affect my health negatively, making life and online ministry difficult resulting in contemplating giving up. I cannot let that happen because there are too many people out there who have not heard the Word of God or have never gotten any type of positive reinforcement. Lastly, I am held back due to the fears of failure and risks to myself and others. The idea of doing something significant with negative results hinders my pursuit of trying. I need to set up goals and go one step at a time, accept missteps, and continue forward strategically.

Map of My Leadership Improvement Plan

Goals, Objectives, Resources, and Timeline

My first goal is to complete the action research project with Dr. Dale Lamb and Gwen Sellers, Associate Editor at GQM. The objective is to complete requirements, set up periodic and specific meetings, and journal the progress and process to enhance my leadership skills. My resources will be the books during the project, meetings with Gwen and Dr. Lamb to assess a situation, then developing and giving an action plan for possible implementation or further research. My timeline for this goal is to be completed by the end of the summer of 2023.

My second goal is to complete a self-awareness and self-management plan to improve my self-confidence and alleviate fears of failure and rejection (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). The objective is to have an accountability partner and to set up periodic assessment meetings scheduled with an ongoing development plan with specific goals and timelines. My resource(s) is to develop a plan to improve how I process positive and negative feedback and to turn negative fears into positive outcomes, perhaps with self-help books, videos, articles, and various podcasts. My timeline is 1 year from implementation; 2 years if more improvement is necessary and agreed upon between partners, and no later than the end of summer 2023.

My third goal is to develop an interactive online ministry website. My objectives are to obtain a domain name and learn how to and then create an interactive online ministry website. I will be engaging with an accountability partner periodically to assess progress. Resources are to learn about and how to create and develop an interactive website at no or low cost through books, articles videos, podcasts, or others who have the

expertise. I will be willing to ask for expert assistance when needed. The timeline is to be fully operational within 2 years of implementation, after the end of summer 2023.

My Reflection of My Plan

I would say these assessments reaffirmed the positive and negative realities of various feedback I have been getting over the years. I realize there is a definite need for growth and strategic planning if I am to continue the pursuit of effective leadership in online ministry.

These assessments have confirmed my answers to the three questions of the Hedgehog concept (Collins, 2001). My best is formed in the five strengths from the Clifton Strength Finder. My drive to become a transformational servant leader is defined by my passion to help others, hoping to encourage and empower them. My weaknesses have shown me that I need to have an actual plan to stay on course. I have learned that I can ask for assistance to learn to overcome fears that stifle a positive outcome. I found that I can use the Rath and Conchie text and the Clifton Strength Finder website as well as many others to help me grow (Rath, 2008). They are great ways to assess future staff and volunteers for placement within the online ministry.

This assessment and plan are some of the many steps to take my growth as a transformational servant leader to new levels. It has steered me in the correct direction of growth to be effective and efficient in any organization. I believe it will be part of my guide throughout this action research project, and I look forward to my future growth in leadership.

Partnership

The organization I partnered with for this action research project is GQM. In full

disclosure, I have been a part of this organization as a volunteer staff writer receiving

numerous weekly questions for 17 years as of the time of this project. This partnership

was first approached and approved between Gwen Sellers, their Associate Editor, Dr.

Dale Lamb, and me in the fall of 2020 to begin the process of this project. The purpose of

the partnership in this project is to research actionable ways for online ministries to

improve their effectiveness and efficiency in answering questions pertaining to God, the

Bible, and daily living being aware of cultural and religious differences in the global

arena.

Organizational Background

The chosen organization, GQM, is a biblically based nonprofit 501c3 parachurch

ministry website based in Colorado Springs, Colorado in the United States of America

that began in February 2002 (Got Questions, n.d.-e). The organization's primary purpose

is to answer questions about various spiritual topics by receiving well-researched answers

in a specific and timely manner to guide people on their spiritual walk with God via the

Internet (Got Questions, n.d.-a). Their second purpose is to point the questioner in the

direction of what the Bible states about their question(s) without attempting to coerce

them to agree with GQM or create conflict with anyone (Got Questions, n.d.-a).

For accountability, the CEO, Shea Michael Houdmann (Shea), is deeply active in

reviewing the various answers to questions as well as the creation, development, and

launching of other websites aimed to outreach many different audiences (Got Questions,

n.d.-a). Shea has higher education in religious and theological studies (Got Questions,

n.d.-a). The expertise of the personnel within this organization varies greatly from people

who have a high school education and very good biblical education within their church to

others who have and are in pursuit of higher education degrees (Got Questions, n.d.-g).

Over the many years, GQM has grown with a team of 250 plus volunteer staff to answer questions, increasing the number of visitors and their questions, which has increased to 125 plus per day (Got Questions, n.d.-e). Technologically, GQM has added various websites, web links, and various social media including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, Podcasts, and Instagram. GQM has applications to download via the Apple Store, Google Play, or Amazon Alexa as well as netbooks, tablets, and smartphones (Got Questions, n.d.-e). Since GQM has been on the Internet, it has gone international with varying languages translated for the frequently asked questions as well as for the question and answer (Q&A) department (Got Questions, n.d.-d). On the website, there are technological means to donate to GQM and other ministries that are in need of funding to continue their endeavors (Got Questions, n.d.-c).

In order to expand their global influence, they created and developed several other websites focused on different audiences. Some of those websites include a Christian research search engine called www.seekfind.org in 2005 (Got Questions, n.d.-e). GQM created a website for kids called www.gqkidz.org in 2007 (Got Questions, n.d.-e). We launched our apologetics and worldview-focused website and a blog website named www.compellingtruth.org and www.blogos.org in 2011 (Got Questions, n.d.-e). Another often-forgotten audience, teens, prompted the website www.412teens.org (Got Questions, n.d.-e) in 2012. For the audience that would like to research a Bible commentary website, in 2016, www.bibleref.com was launched (Got Questions, n.d.-e).

As technology grows rapidly, so do GQM's efforts to get information and answers on the Internet. GQM has developed surveys to get more ideas for improvement

(Got Questions, n.d.-e). There are links to testimonials, audio/Mp3s, and videos in various ways including YouTube (Got Questions, n.d.-e). GQM created a Q&A chat for people looking for instant answers or discussion (Got Questions, n.d.-b). GQM also promotes other websites that may fill in their gaps for answers to other questions or needs (Got Questions, n.d.-e).

GQM provides monthly statements showing the statics of its website, how many network pages have been viewed, and application sessions and professions of faith by each global language emailed to the staff (GQM, personal communication, July 1, 2021). GQM emails its writers, translators, and ministry contacts a monthly newsletter to update them on new concepts, ideas, prayer requests, and praise reports (GQM, personal communication, July 1, 2021). This newsletter provides any new updates as to writing policies and suggestions and gives examples of answered questions as examples (GQM, personal communication, July 1, 2021). It gives a monthly scripture for devotional and encouragement showing positive feedback (GQM, personal communication, July 1, 2021). This monthly newsletter provides links to archival statements, a shortened version of the statical report with a link for a pdf (GQM, personal communication, July 1, 2021). Lastly, a list of contact information for the editing staff and their specific departmental specialty has been created (GQM, personal communication, July 1, 2021). GQM continues to search for ways to expand and improve the online ministry to reach people throughout the world for Jesus Christ (Got Questions, n.d.-e).

Organizational Analysis

I have found that Shea, MeLissa Houdmann, Gwen Sellers, Tiffany Shelton, and the personnel of GQM have done their research on building, conducting, and organizing a

very proficient online ministerial organization. They have found a way to make subject

matters relevant through an internet query system that generates a large number of

connections as they utilize search engine optimization to reach the most people for Christ

(Nagpal & Petersen, 2021). Most organizations have a social media policy, due to a

concern about how it will impact their credibility and integrity both in a positive and

negative way (Duffy & Knight, 2019). This is true for most organizations that have the

written word as the basis of their organization, especially on the Internet. However, Shea

and his staff have been together for so many years that he maintains confidence and trusts

the judgment of all of them while participating on the Internet, which is the reason GQM

does not have a social media policy (Houdmann, personal communication, June 16,

2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic proved to be a challenging time for our nation,

especially for various religious organizations. One investigation into the use of

technology and social media in a ministerial setting suggested that during that strenuous

time, a different type of system may be necessary for Christian worship, teachings, and

other activities via technology and the Internet to reach people (Short & Lemke, 2021). In

many cases, this was a difficult transition for churches and ministries. However, for an

internet-based ministry such as GQM, there arose no necessity to change procedures and

with the exception of some outages, there were no hindrances during the pandemic

(Houdmann, personal communication, June 16, 2022).

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Strengths of GQM

I have found that the strengths of GQM as per my conversation with Shea are as

follows:

1. Trusting the judgment of well-cross-trained staff

2. Staff and techs on the same page

3. Use of search engine optimization as a mission field

4. Use of independent contractors when needed

5. Roles well defined

6. Management of funds, equipment well defined; CEO then Board of Directors

7. Open use of other software applications

8. Use of technology for assessments, conferences, lessons, and professional development as needed

9. Additional links or websites minimal or free; have web servers

10. Records secure with backups and maintain per data security

11. Professional development opened to training including paying for additional education, workshops, conferences, or certification

12. Unless there is an occasional outage, GQM could run by itself for weeks or months without intervention.

13. COVID-19 did not hinder or cause it to cease.

14. Open communication and welcoming feedback

15. An internal and external audit annually

16. Good observance of ADA for people with vision difficulties

Weakness

I have found that the weaknesses of GQM as per my conversation with Shea are as follows:

1. Use of independent contractors when needed instead of further training of staff or obtaining new technology hires

2. Outside repairs or purchasing new equipment rather than learning to repair present equipment

3. No official social media policy in place even just to ensure the reputation of GQM

4. No funds aside for technology needs specifically

5. No ADA policy even simplified

Opportunities

I have found some opportunities of GQM as per my conversation with Shea as follows:

1. Willingness to hire new people with expertise

2. Willing to pay for assistance in any way for additional training

3. Willing to add to the website or create a new one

4. Willing to add new technology as needed or explored

5. Open to implementation of new ideas and suggestions

6. Set up a policy for emergency preparation in case of severe situations

Threats

I have found threats to GQM as per my conversation with Shea as follows:

1. Possible outside threats to GQM's social media reputation

2. Outside repairs from new places could create a negative impact on GQM

3. No emergency funds specified for technology; this could cause a delay if money is not available

4. Emergency preparation policy has not been written in case of severe situations for backup (Houdmann, personal communication, June 16, 2022).

Organizational Culture

The culture of an individual or an organization exists with a certain set of core values, behaviors, and goals that shape and develop the character of the individual or the organization (Denison et al., 2012). There are four components for organizational culture: mission, consistency, involvement, and adaptability which can be observed to better understand the areas of strengths and areas that need improvement within GQM.

Four Components

Mission

The mission statement of GQM reflects the culture and goals of the organization. (Houdmann, n.d.). Their mission is to help people who have questions about various spiritual topics to receive well-researched, biblically-based answers to help them on their spiritual walk with God through various online means. As I surveyed the areas of Strategic Direction and Intent, Goals and Objectives, and Vision, GQM is nearly at 100% capacity with no immediate need for improvement in the mission component.

Consistency

In 2001, the founder of GQM, Shea, found that he had a calling to help people find answers to their biblical questions through the Internet. Since February 2002, the website has been getting 30 to 125 questions per day and is growing. He saw the need for more assistance and increased the team to 250 plus people in various departments (Got Questions, n.d.-e). The consistency of GQM is as the organization grows, adapts, and develops, it stays within the guidelines of its mission statement and core values. GQM is

very consistent with core values and agreeing during decision-making. However, due to the unpredictable ways of the Internet and the subject involved on the website, it was a little lower at 81%. That is to be expected and not an area of concern for the consistency component.

Involvement

Many of the people have graduate degrees, masters and doctorates, in different areas of expertise: philosophy, Christian education, biblical studies, theology, various sciences, counseling including trauma and mental illness, military training, and business administration, and the list goes on (Got Questions, n.d.-g). GQM is very involved in maintaining its core values and puts the skills of its staff where needed and best served (Denison et al., 2012). GQM keeps their people in the loop except for ongoing business planning that is for managing leadership, since that is not necessary for some departments, teams, or staff. GQM rated very highly in the involvement component.

Adaptability

There seems to be a greater need for variation within online ministerial websites, so GQM adapted, created, and developed its own change (Denison et al., 2012). Not only is there a staff of writers, but there is also a staff that translates the questions for the writer and questioner. There are staff who created and maintained the videos, books, and other additional websites such as for children ages 5-12. There are staff who created and for maintained various websites for teens. There are staff who created and for maintained the international section of translated questions, research website, and a blog for people who just want bits and pieces. There are staff who created and maintained an outreach website called compelling truth which is a simple to read Bible commentary. There are

staff who created and maintained videos on YouTube as well as the new podcast and GWM continues to grow (Got Questions, n.d.-e). Shea has adapted GQM by finding ways to insert this website into nearly every area on the Internet globally that can be reached by anyone anywhere.

So, for the adaptability component, GQM is still growing and changing. In the areas of creating change and organizational learning, GQM got high marks with little need for improvement. In the area of visitor focus, 53.75% are positive and 46.25% need improvement. A suggestion for an area of focus is to have a deeper understanding of what the visitors are looking for, want, and need, perhaps in the area of various cultures and religions as well as encouraging some direct contact by the staff if it can be done securely.

Reflection of the Four Components

After assessing the four components of organizational culture, I feel that GQM has very few areas that could be improved. GQM has a vision and a mission statement that reflects its strategic intentions with a strong goal that portrays integrity and ethical values. GQM conducts the organization's culture in this manner, and it is admirable. Following the consistency of the mission and vision has enabled the organization to grow exponentially reaching the globe for Jesus Christ. GQM not only puts the knowledge and skills of the writing staff and other personnel where it is best needed, but GQM continues to add and search for others who possess skills and knowledge that may be new to the organization.

For adaptability, GQM seems to always be on the lookout for new areas to develop and create a website or links to help answer questions vital to understanding the

Bible. As technology develops, GQM adapts to the best of the abilities of the staff. This is also observed in GQM's willingness to be partners in this action research project to inquire and look towards the availability of ways to understand other cultures, religions, different perceptions, and perspectives.

Significant Challenges

The significant challenges to GQM as well as any online ministry are to address cultural and religious barriers when answering various questions concerning the Bible and daily living. There is a potential to create and develop resources to enable the staff writers to be more effective and efficient when answering questions on various topics. It can aid in decreasing how many questions become requests for reassignment or come back as follow-up questions for clarification, increasing positive feedback from visitors and increasing professions of faith. Finding, creating, and developing possible additional websites or weblinks to resources to further understand other cultures and other religions will broaden the knowledge base of the staff writers of GQM or any potential online ministry.

Risks, Assumptions, and Constraints

As this action research project has grown and continues to do so, looking into the risk factors, various assumptions, and constraints need to be addressed. The intent is to minimize the risks and clear up any assumptions to mitigate any potential negative impact on the project or organization to create a positive outcome overall (Kloppenborg et al., 2019). As for the constraints, depending on its severity, it can have an impact on how the organization applies the deliverables (Kloppenborg et al., 2019).

Risk Factors

High Risks

Risk factors are undetermined issues that could have a positive or negative influence on this project if they arise (Kloppenborg et al., 2019). There are three factors to look for in addressing risks. The first factor is to assess any risks that would threaten the success of the project in a timely manner to its completion (Kloppenborg et al., 2019). For this project, a high risk would be no commitment or a failure to understand what is involved (Tesch et al., 2007). Since the top management has agreed to the project and its commitment, there is no high risk. Also, the host, Gwen Sellers, has accepted that position and commitment through various emails between her, Dr. Dale Lamb, and me. The concept of the commitment has been explained via email in letter form to Gwen and GQM. This alleviates the last two factors of high risk.

Medium to Low Risks

The first medium to low risk to the successful completion of this project is removing my personal bias. As Dr. Lamb has often put forth in starting such research, to keep the bias risk low or nonexistent is to do it for an organization that one is not connected personally to in any way. Matthias (2018) emphasized that research studies that were conducted by people that the organization knew contained a certain bias that would invalidate and hinder the successful completion of the project and that an outside entity would have no bias and render a more valid conclusion. She did stress that a relationship between this new entity and the organization can begin a corporate relationship with the intention of keeping the bias out of any future projects if it can (Matthias, 2018).

As the researcher, I need to disclose that I am and have been a volunteer staff writer for GQM for 17 years as of 2023; the risk is concluded to be medium to low risk. I understand the risk if my bias is embedded in the research. I do understand it is not easy putting it aside. So, to mitigate risk at any level and due to confidentiality concerns, I will ask Gwen Sellers to hold me accountable for my assessments or conclusions to validate the project to its completion.

The second medium to low risk factor concerns the roles of the editors who graciously have given their time and effort to the organization and this project. The concerns are

1. What will their role be in it?

2. How will they maintain control over the Q&A department in this area?

3. How will GQM, specifically the Q&A department, maintain the integrity of the answers being provided by the volunteer staff writers with new tools and resources?

4. How will the tools and resources be accessed or distributed?

5. Will the tools and resources be used properly, if at all?

These questions and comments have been submitted through the Data Analysis Project for Qualitative Evaluation throughout the three open-ended question surveys I put forth to the editors of GQM. It can be concluded that as the team of GQM including myself work toward a successful completion of this project, these questions and any other comments shall be addressed with conciseness and precision to best suit the needs of the organization and its stakeholders. At present, this is open for discussion, research, and implementation.

The third medium to low risk is any international concerns for writers and editors to prevent any harm to stakeholders and the organization. GQM is an internet ministry based in Colorado Springs, Colorado in the United States of America. There are both American and international volunteer staff writers who use their time and effort to answer questions from the visitors of GQM. Most of the questions posed are from residents of the United States. However, there is a small percentage of questions asked by international residents. For example, a calculation from the most recent GQM Monthly Report, dated July 2022, shows that of 3,421 questions submitted, 723 were international, bringing the percentage of international questions to 21% and the American percentage to 78.8% (Got Questions, 2022).

The research project is to encourage cultural and religious awareness, especially among GQM staff writers. All the surveys were conducted with the editors who are all based in Colorado Springs, Colorado to avoid any conflict or additional process for the international ethical concerns of the Collaborative IRB Training Initiative (CITI) of the protection of human subjects in research (Cornell University, 2022). I understand that using both American and international participants would make this research project more difficult. In order to keep this risk low, the research project will remain within the United States during the process to its completion.

Assumptions

Assumptions are ideas that the project teams work through to prove factually correct or incorrect by identifying the belief and validating (or not) as part of the process of completing the project (Kloppenborg et al., 2019). The main concern of assumptions is that if not researched and validated, it can become risky for the research project

(Kloppenborg et al., 2019). The assumptions within this project are a result of the four surveys, one Likert and three open-ended, to find the potential obstacles that need to be addressed. The above three risk factors were examined, researched, and will have watchful supervision in order to keep the assumptions at a low risk level during the project. The two main assumptions, my bias and the concerns of the editors, are the factors that need to be focused on, addressed, researched, and implemented for this project. This research project has a good initiation and looks to research the mitigating factors to have a successful completion.

Constraints

To date, there is only one constraint to this project: the availability of communication. The definition of a constraint is anything that can limit the project to its successful completion (Kloppenborg et al., 2019). As the research continues, that factor only expounds its success with new and exciting ideas to implement either within this project or for future ones.

The findings of a recent technology interview with Shea indicated that the organization has a policy that welcomes honest communication and feedback as well as being open to new and innovative ideas and suggestions that further the ministry (Houdmann, personal communication, June 16, 2022). In this interview, when asked if there was anything further to add, the reply from Shea was that he had nothing to add, my suggestions were acceptable and sufficient, and the recommendation possibilities sounded like good ones (Houdmann, personal communication, June 16, 2022). With the CEO and other stakeholders on board, the resources, present and future possibilities, are not considered a constraint.

In the same interview, questions arose concerning the cost of the implementation of the deliverables. Shea stressed that there is not much to the cost of any additional websites, possibly as low as $20.00 (Houdmann, personal communication, June 16, 2022). The conclusion of this interview revealed that the budget, if there is one, will also not be a constraint; therefore, the only constraint is communication due to the time zones in which Gwen and I reside. I live in North Carolina and Gwen lives in Colorado where there is a variation in the time zones, so the meetings or phone calls need to be done during the working hours of GQM and Gwen because Colorado is a couple of hours behind North Carolina depending on the time of year. Although Gwen is willing to have virtual meetings like Zoom or Google Meet, the preferred communication is emails for the organization. This is acceptable to Gwen, Dr. Dale Lamb, GQM, and me. The lag of time between the emails may add to the constraint; however, having a written document validating concerns, ideas, and assistance needed can be a plus to this project and its success.

Definition of Terms

Assumptions

Hypotheses made during the action research that are treated as accurate but not yet proven until the end result (Kloppenborg et al., 2019).

Bible

The collection of writings sacred to Christianity that contain the Old and New Testaments (Dictionary, n.d.-a).

Biblical

Information according to the Bible (Dictionary, n.d.- b).

Constraint

Factors that limit the application of the research action's possible plan (Kloppenborg et al., 2019).

Culture

The quality in a person or society that arises from a concern for what is regarded as excellent in arts, letters, manners, scholarly pursuits, etc. (Dictionary, n.d.-c).

Denomination

A religious group within a larger sect yet with varying and distinctive beliefs (Dictionary, n.d.-d).

Editor

A person who possesses managerial and possible policy-making responsibilities in the area of the writing, compilation, and revision of content for an organization (Dictionary, n.d.-e).

Evaluate

To determine the worth, value, and quality of a person's work, of a product or service (Dictionary n.d.-f).

Global

In relation to the entire world, universal, international (Dictionary n.d.-g).

God

In regard to a sovereign deity (Dictionary, n.d.-h).

Gospel

The culmination of the story of Jesus Christ's life and teachings, within the first four books of the New Testament, in reference to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John;

something believed to be true and accurate (Dictionary, n.d.-i).

Jesus Christ

A person known as Jesus Christ of Nazareth, both fully human and fully God, lived and taught then was crucified, raised from the dead on the third day according to the Christian religion (Dictionary, n.d.-j).

Online Ministry(s)

Different ways the church would be able to reach people through the technology and its tools of the Internet (Resource UMC, 2023).

Ministry

The function of various services of a religion to the people beyond or within the church facility usually conducted by clergy of that faith (Dictionary, n.d.-k).

Parachurch

An independent faith-based organization that continues ministry(s) and missions alongside the church yet beyond its supervision (Got Questions, n.d.-f).

Profession of Faith

A declaration of what is believed within a particular religion, i.e., declaring complete faith in Jesus Christ and what is represented by that faith (Collins Dictionaries, n.d.-a).

Project Manager

A person who should understand what a project is as well as what is necessary to make it a success even though it can be a very difficult time-restrained project or service that needs specific talents and resources and may have a limited amount of finances to create or develop something very unique (Kloppenborg et al., 2019).

Questioner

A person who puts forth an interrogative form sentence to obtain information (Dictionary, n.d.-l).

Religion

A set of beliefs that can explain the purpose of the universe, as a consideration to its creation by a deity; practices may include devotionals and rituals and teaches a moral code of human behavior (Dictionary, n.d.-m).

Risks

An uncertain issue that may occur that negatively or positively possibly could affect the action research project (Kloppenborg et al., 2019).

Risks, High

A major issue or situation that would have a serious negative effect on the research action project (Ramachandran, 2023).

Risks, Medium to Low

Possible issue(s) or situation(s) that would have a medium impact on the research action project, yet not serious (Ramachandran, 2023).

Risks, Low

A non-impactful issue or situation having no effect on the research action project (Ramachandran, 2023).

Salvific

Having to do with redemptive power (Dictionary, n.d.-n).

Search Engine Optimization

The way of computing the process of adjusting a website's content and structure

to determine how it is displayed noticeably by any search engine (Dictionary, n.d.-o).

Servant Leader

A leader whose primary concern is the needs of others (DuBrin, 2016).

Significant Challenge

An objective that is new and innovative that needs a lot of determination to complete (Collins Dictionaries, n.d.-b).

Social Media

Internet technology that consists of various online forms of communication being used by large numbers of people to share information and to develop relationships and networks (Dictionary, n.d.-p).

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis

A plan used to evaluate an organization's internal and external factors to create and develop a strategy by focusing on its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT; Kenton, 2022).

Technology

Relating to the knowledge in the science and industry arenas in the creation of making life and the world by more efficient, effective, and practical means (Dictionary, n.d.-q).

Training

The means by which a person is educated or disciplined with an intention purpose (Dictionary, n.d.-r).

Transformational Leader

A person whose leadership focus is on the best ways to aid in changing one's

followers through their interests and perceptions that motivate them (DuBrin, 2016)

Volunteer Staff Writer

A person whose communication writing skill is offered without monetary compensation to produce written material that is relevant and understandable to the questioners (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023).

Conclusion

This chapter has given me the ability to look at myself as a transformation servant leader. I have the ability to focus on people who are involved with this action research project. I am honed into their needs and goals as it pertains to the challenges that await this action research project. I have the ability to look for ways that will give them good recommendations for improvement in the area of cultural and religious awareness for the volunteer staff writers as well as other members of their personnel. My ability extends into forming these challenges to affect not only GQM but other online parachurch ministries that desire to further the gospel of Jesus Christ and teach good moral, ethical, and salvific lessons on daily living.

I am learning to build up my weaknesses such as writing down a challenging and strategic plan with milestones to achieve for my own plan as well as GQM's and other online ministries. I am learning to face the fear of failing, dusting off my feet, picking them up again, and trying until it works. In that area(s) of weakness, I am learning to let others who are more skilled handle these areas within the plan and me take the backseat with a goal to achieve goals with a team.

My partnership with GQM is one that I am very proud to be a part of because this organization represents the good integrity of a parachurch ministry that strives for people

to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ without being coerced. Just answering questions, having video lessons, creating biblical studies, as well as other means to reach people around the globe with thousands upon thousands of professions of faith monthly, is an amazing achievement. I am honored to be a part of this organization as a volunteer staff writer reaching others for the gospel. I believe that together in this partnership, we can evaluate and form a resolution to the significant challenges of this action research project.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter discusses the thought process of whether this is considered a viable project. It touches on the scope of the project, scheduling resources, and the budget. There is a discussion on various literature I have researched for this action research study. The concepts for this study include creating, developing, and providing tools and resources to the staff writers of GQM to enhance their cultural and religious awareness with some writing improvement skill resources to make their ability to answer questions more effective and efficient. Another concept is to improve their writing ability and reduce requests for reassignment by providing tools to increase knowledge culturally and religiously. That concept continues in the goal to increase professions of faith in Jesus Christ through life and biblical examples and increase positive feedback for GQM. I will be discussing the benefits of being aware culturally and religiously as well as possible ways to present these resources and tools via online workshops to the staff writers. The Getzels and Guba (1957) theoretical framework will be discussed which gives ideas for resolving conflict and dealing with issues for both the leadership and staff in the social system within any organization.

Development of the Action Research Project

Viable Endeavor Possibility

As I was investigating the possibility of this project, I inquired whether it was a viable endeavor with my skills. I considered whether or not I had the knowledge and skills as well as if I needed more development in some areas. I can demonstrate my leadership skills in various ways. I already have the skills to answer questions on

different levels of difficulty. I would be assured that the direction of the project is for the benefit of GQM as well as other online ministries. I would be making sure each step is completed on time with flexibility if needed. Throughout the project, I would be showing progress to GQM as well as Dr. Dale Lamb to show it to be a positive and worthy project to completion. I am willing and learning to take critical feedback and criticism when it is needed for correction or praise. I am willing to participate during and after the process is completed. I will be researching much-needed resources to create and produce this much-needed tool. As I learn and grow with this project, I can develop my much desired and needed transformational leader skills in areas I tend to falter on, such as fear of failure.

Pondering whether I would be in need of help from others to complete the project, I would affirm that conclusion. During the process of the project, I continue to receive help from Gwen, other editors, and the leadership of GQM who have much more knowledge of the needs within the organization. They also get feedback from the questioners, good, bad, and in-between, which can assist in the development of this tool.

With all this in mind, I wondered if I knew the specific problems that needed to be solved. The problem I sought to solve is to enhance the answering performances of the staff writers of GQM through better tools for understanding other cultures and religions. Better tools for the staff writers mean that they will be more efficient and effective in answering biblical, possibly life-changing, questions that bring the gospel around the world.

At the time of my pondering this project, I had no particular time limit in mind, only a work in progress right now. I concluded that I would be responsible for coordinating the tasks. The scope, scheduling, resources, and other items will be

discussed later in this chapter.

As for the action research project, the start date began in January 2022, with completion in the summer of 2023. I will be looking into scholarly articles, journals, and other resources throughout the duration that come available to assist in formulating a better understanding of the problem and what can be done to address it to a successful conclusion.

Project Assessment

I also have considered how much involvement and impact there would be in this project that would affect GQM and other online ministries. Things to consider are return on investment, the timescale, strategic objectives, contributions, and whether it would initiate change and effectiveness to the organization. The strategic contribution would be to three strategic themes of cultural awareness, religious awareness, and online workshops. The return on investment in GQM should be seen within 1 year. This project will affect operation effectiveness through some improvement across the whole organization.

The complexity of this project will show that this is indeed a major project. The delivery timescale is between 12 and 18 months. For operational change, there may be some retraining needed for the staff writers due to the new resources and tools available. It will need multiple contracts for GQM with their known suppliers, both online and locally. This project has never been done on this scale for any online ministry including GQM. Since GQM is an online entity, there will be links to other projects and the availability will be when and if needed or necessary during the project. With all this in mind, this action research project is a major undertaking with a successful outcome.

Project Purpose and Scope

   This project's purpose is to address the cultural and religious barriers when answering various questions concerning the Bible and daily living for GQM and the staff writers in the Q&A. To understand the purpose of this project, there is a need to understand the product scope, in this case, a service presented to GQM as a resource for the staff writers to improve in specific ways their ability(s) to answer questions. (Kloppenborg et al., 2019).

   The project scope will discuss what will and will not be a part of the deliverables throughout the project (Kloppenborg et al., 2019). The scope of this project has a must-have to provide resources to enable the staff writers to be more effective and efficient when answering questions on diverse topics. The project scope has a goal to decrease how many requested reassignments and follow-up questions for clarification for the staff writers and editors. This project will benefit the staff writers in their proficiency in answering a question about the Bible and daily living by presenting it through the visitors' understanding culturally and /or religiously. An additional benefit for the staff writers will be new, never before researched knowledge of a particular culture or religion, which will increase their knowledge as well as provide a better understanding of the people within those systems.

   The project scope has another goal to increase the number of professions of faith locally and globally. This will benefit those visitors who now have professed their faith to grow spiritually and potentially become examples of Jesus Christ. The final project scope goal is to increase positive feedback from the visitors of GQM. This will benefit GQM and its stakeholders through the positive feedback on various internet media outlets as a

reputable website to search for answers to many questions of daily living via the Bible.

This project will develop and implement as a must-have an additional website specifically for resources for the staff writers of GQM in the Q&A department to become more effective and efficient when addressing questions that are in need of cultural and/or religious awareness for specific answers that require some knowledge of their particular culture or country and/or their belief systems. The project will, as a must-have, analyze, design, and develop a support system for the staff writers to increase their knowledge of other cultures and religions in order to increase proficiency in their answers to the benefit of the visitors, GQM stakeholders, and its reputation.

Since GQM is a parachurch ministry, there are people from various denominations including people who see themselves as just Christian, those people who embrace Protestantism, as well as others who are theologically conservative, evangelical, and those who consider themselves nondenominational (Houdmann, n.d.). A definite will not have is that the resources would encompass just one denominational perspective or just one cultural viewpoint. The reason behind that conclusion is that one denomination's viewpoint may or may not have a bias against certain cultures or religions making this project. If having more than one denominational perspective did not become a part of this project, it would block the foundations of GQM's mission statement, so it cannot and will not be a part of this project so the continuation of GQM as a parachurch ministry consisting of dedicated and trained servant-minded people who desire to help others to understand of God, scripture, salvation, and other spiritual issues in the true clear and concise manner (Houdmann, n.d.).

Deliverables

The deliverables are valid and different in this case, a service to perform more effectively and efficiently to the project's completion (Kloppenborg et al., 2019). In this case, recommendations will produce an additional website to GQM that will include links to various other websites along with including training sessions, as this portion will explain.

The deliverables I have and continue to research are in line with the IT department which researches, develops, and creates website or links in the following areas:

1. To develop an online training on sensitivity to religious and cultural diversity on the global stage

2. To develop a section with blogs, videos, and podcasts of resources for religious awareness concerning the differences of various belief systems in a deeper understanding and comparison to Christianity

3. To develop a section with blogs, videos, and podcasts on cultural awareness that will help internally and externally concerning communications, including the dos and don'ts that trigger a misunderstanding.

Many diverse kinds of organizations are using digital platforms that are interactive tools that either run separately from the other programs or as an accompanying intervention tool, to promote positive and effective changes for their staff and the well-being of their clients (Martin et al., 2020). Since GQM is proficient in the technology of the Internet, I recommend creating various websites or links and workshops to facilitate an increase in the effectiveness and efficiency of the staff writers in the Q&A department. The

anticipated results will be a decrease in follow-up questions for further clarification of original questions, a decrease in requests for reassignment to a different staff writer, and increased professions of faith to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, along with more positive feedback for GQM.

First Deliverable

The first deliverable is to develop an online training on sensitivity to religious and cultural diversity on the global stage. In my research, I found YouTube videos on how to create training videos. One link demonstrates how to create a training video using a smartphone or a video camera, which is detailed and simple to do (Camtasia, 2017). That link is https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAAkkexZ9xA. The second link demonstrates how to make a training video using recorded PowerPoint slides, again easy to use (Smith, 2021). That link is https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HD5q48xWSgY.The third link demonstrates how to create animated videos with PowerPoint (Crown, 2020). That link is https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoyE48W3RUY. This one seems difficult and time-consuming, but the results can be amazing and attention-getting for the viewers. These three video links would be able to show the organization, specifically Tiffany and Shea in the IT department of GQM, that it is at extremely little or no cost and can develop some skills if other staff members are willing to participate in the creation.

Cost Assessment of First Deliverable. Since GQM has most, if not all, of the necessary technology needed to create and develop an online training link to videos or PowerPoint slides, the cost would be minimal, according to my technology interview with Shea. The explanation was that there is little or no cost to adding a website. The annual charge for a domain name is $20. GQM already has the webservers, so adding a

website will not add any cost (Houdmann, personal communication, June 16, 2022). His answer to development in-house would not add any cost; however, he did say if external assistance or purchases are needed, there would be added expenses (Houdmann, personal communication, June 16, 2022).

Second Deliverable

The second deliverable is to develop a section with blogs, videos, and podcasts of resources for religious awareness concerning the differences of various belief systems in a deeper understanding of other religions compared to Christianity as well as American culture. In my research, I have found two web links to study religions and compare them to Christianity to help the staff writers better understand the questions posed to them. Those websites are LearnReligions.com and Patheos Library (Patheos, n.d.) with the capability to compare the religions next to one another. With these various websites to start, the GQM technology department, with other staff members who would like to participate, can develop a website aiming toward blogs, videos, and podcasts specifically for religious awareness.

Cost Assessment of Second Deliverable. Since GQM is already technologically and internally equipped to make blogs, videos, and podcasts for their answers and other biblically referenced subjects, the cost of creating and developing the same resources for religious awareness is nonexistent (Houdmann, personal communication, June 16, 2022). Some research on the web links showed that the licensing of the two links to start have no fees for their use.

Third Deliverable

My third deliverable is to develop a section with blogs, videos, and podcasts on

cultural awareness that will help internally and externally concerning communications, including the dos and don'ts that trigger a misunderstanding. I found two websites that give a rudimentary overview of the country one is exploring. One website is StudyCountry.com which will go into detail about the country, its culture, and various religions. The link to this site is https://www.studycountry.com/. The second website found is called CultureCrossing.net and is used for businesses that work internationally. There is a culture crossing guide within this website where a person can view any country in the world to get information about the culture of that nation. That link is http://guide.culturecrossing.net/. With these various websites to start, GQM's technology department, with other staff members who would like to participate, can develop a website aimed toward blogs, videos, and podcasts specifically for cultural awareness.

Cost Assessment of Third Deliverable. Again, GQM is already technologically and internally equipped to make blogs, videos, and podcasts for their answers and other biblically referenced subjects; the cost of creating and developing the same resources for cultural awareness is nonexistent, including the licensing of the two links to start, with no fees.

When further investigated, Culture Crossing offers some services with fees. I did email Michael Landers, the global director, to inquire about their services. His email stated that he would need specifics concerning adding links to the guide to a website and the exact use to provide options (Landers, personal communication, November 30, 2022). Since I have not gotten an answer to my more detailed reply, I cannot state whether further costs would ensue unless GQM adds some of their services, not just the links (Landers, personal communication, November 30, 2022.

Tentative Budget Assessment

For each of the deliverables, if an added website was created for each one, that cost would be $20.00 multiplied by three, equaling $60.00 per year. For each of the deliverables, depending on GQM policy of salaries per staff member, according to an email with Gwen, the Project Host, the average salary is $36.68 per hour (Sellers, personal communication, August 16, 2022). If GQM considers this project an added workload, that would be an added expense to pay each staff member, depending on how many hours are spent on the project.

SMART Goals

In order for GQM to have strategic objectives that achieve its important vision and mission goals to complete this project, GQM should have SMART goals acronymically known as (S)pecific, (M)easurable, (A)chievable, (R)ealstic, and (T)ime related (Kloppenborg et al., 2019). The concept behind the SMART goals is self-explanatory.

The (S)pecific strategy is to design with a specific and clear goal (Alves, 2018). For this project, this goal is to enable the staff writers to answer questions effectively and efficiently which will in turn decrease the questions staff writers are requesting to be reassigned to another staff writer, decrease follow-up questions from the visitors for clarification to an answer, and increase professions of faith due to clearer answers to questions.

The (M)easurable strategy is to have evidence that the goals can be achieved through an evaluation process (Alves, 2018). For this project, a system is to be developed and in place to keep track of the progress, such as a decrease in reassigned questions, a

decrease in follow-up questions for clarification, and an increase in professions of faith due to the scope of this project with a reasonable timeline, approximately 1 year to complete, and quarterly evaluations in place.

The (A)chievable strategy concerns the capability of reaching the strategic goals (Alves, 2018). For this project, the deliverables are achievable to create. The deliverables can begin to be made within 6 months to 1 year and be in place for staff writers to have access.

The (R)ealistic strategy concerns the relevance to the vision and mission of GQM (Alves, 2018). The mission statement of GQM has very specific and attainable goals to reach globally for Jesus Christ and the gospel. Through the project, the ability to increase cultural and religious awareness for staff writers has much relevance to the vision and mission of GQM.

The (T)ime-Related strategy concerns the total achievable period of the project should be completed in 1-2 years (Alves, 2018). For this project, there are four anticipated milestone accomplishments for the life of this project:

1. 1 to 3 months to gather material well-versed in cultural and religious diversity.

2. 6 months to 1 year to design and create an additional website with sections that include blogs, videos, and podcasts.

3. 12 to 18 months to initiate resource availability and give access to staff writers.

4. 12 to 18 months to initiate an online training video workshop, an evaluation process, and certification for present and future staff writers.

Project Scheduling

The project scheduling is a model instance that shows information required by the communication plan, which includes dates of activities, duration, milestones, and resource allotment (Kloppenborg et al., 2019). To better understand the concept, there are two activities that I have conducted called Ordering Dependent Tasks and Scheduling Tasks. Each activity took at least an hour or more to create a correct task. It was an excellent way to understand more clearly the significance of project scheduling.

The Ordering Dependent Tasks activity gave a clear understanding of the significance of what task comes first and what task is dependent on which task is to be completed before the next task is to be done. It also gave focus to what tasks are out of the scope of the project and can be done at a later time or not at all (Schultmann et al., 2018a).

The next project scheduling task activity was Scheduling Dependent Tasks which took significantly more time and effort due to my bias on how projects are scheduled in a specific and timely manner to complete from my own past experiences. This activity taught me to wait until specific tasks are set to be completed before adding the next tasks in the framework within the set amount of time (Schultmann et al., 2018b).

With these kinds of activities, I can be better prepared for the project scheduling and how to design it without my bias of how tasks can be done quickly. I learned that this kind of thinking may lead the project and its manager down to areas out of the project scope and that can be put aside until all is completed (Kloppenborg et al., 2019).

Project Schedule

Estimated Beginning

Prior to establishing a project schedule, the project manager needs to assess one's leadership abilities and assess the participants and their abilities for their involvement in the project. Also, a SWOT analysis should be conducted to see if it is a viable project that is beneficial to all stakeholders. For this project, these assessments were conducted from September 2020 through December 2021 which helped establish the personal leadership development plan as well as what area(s) would be the focus of the project for GQM. There is the work that has been done in the beginning that has nothing that depends on it to prepare the project (Schultmann et al., 2018a). However, the project schedule begins with a dependency on 15 months, understanding the skills of all involved as well as a focused scope of the project (Schultmann et al., 2018a).

I have established an estimated start date of January 2022 and an estimated end date of June 2023 for the project. This schedule is based on the anticipated project milestones proposed within the scope of the project as a setting for the total achievable time to be completed within 2 years or less (Alves, 2018).

List, Sequence, Duration, and Dependencies of Tasks

1. Likert Survey March 26- April 15, 2022, This Likert survey was dependent on the 15 months of my development and understanding of GQM, and some focus on areas that needed improvement. The Likert survey was a way to get a quantitative assessment of what the editors of GQM observe as areas in need of improvement. To be completed by April 15, 2022. Duration 3 weeks.

2. First open-ended questions, April 16-April 30, 2022. This qualitative survey

was to glean some more insight from the editors with a little clarity. This qualitative survey was dependent on the Likert survey to be completed prior to sending it out. To be completed by April 30, 2022. Duration 2 weeks.

3. The second open-ended survey, May 20-June10,2022. This qualitative survey was dependent on the previous qualitative survey to get some clarification of the Likert survey and the first open-ended survey to aid in formulating a more focused assessment of the area(s) that need improvement. To be completed by June 10, 2022. Duration 20 days.

4. Technology interview with Shea M. Houdmann, CEO, June 11-16, 2022, via email. This interview was dependent on the 15 months of my development and understanding of GQM, and some focus on areas that needed improvement as well as the prior surveys conducted. To be completed by June 16. Duration 6 days (Houdmann, personal communication, June 16, 2022).

5. Technology interview assessment written clearly and concisely. This assessment was dependent on the completion of the technology interview as well as the 15 months of my development and understanding of GQM, and some focus on areas that needed improvement as well as the prior surveys conducted. To be completed by July 9, 2022. Duration 18 days.

6. Third and final open-ended survey questions, July 17- July 31, 2022, to the completion of all data collection. This final survey was dependent on the prior surveys conducted and in much-needed specific clarity. As well as being dependent on the completion of the technology interview, its assessment, the 15 months of my development and understanding of GQM, and some focus on

specific areas that needed improvement. To be completed by July 31, 2022. Duration 2 weeks.

7. Conduct meetings with the technology department, Shea, and Tiffany to the viability and creation of an interactive website including budget and cost. This is dependent on the completion of the technology interview, its assessment to be able to establish what kind of website, and the cost of an additional one including the interactive protocols associated with added links, blogs, videos, and podcasts within the website. To be completed by August 31, 2022. Duration 30 days.

8. Create a team made up of GQM editors who are well versed in cultural and religious diversity to discuss creation, design, and decision concerning the new additional website, specifically whether the information is to be internal only for staff writers or external availability, made public. This is dependent on the technology interview, its assessment, and the meetings with Tiffany and Shea regarding any technology concerns and viability. To be completed by September 30, 2022. Duration 30 days.

9. Conduct meetings with the team to gather materials, resources, and tools, including permission and citation information for the website. This is dependent on the Likert survey, the three open-ended surveys, the technology interview and its assessment, and the creation of the team and its meetings. To be completed by November 30, 2022. Duration 60 days.

10. Create and design additional sections for cultural and religious diversity that include blogs, videos, and podcasts within the website. This is dependent on

the Likert survey, the three open-ended surveys, the technology interview and

its assessment, and the creation of the team and its meetings. To be completed

by December 31, 2022. Duration 30 days.

11. Create and design a section specifically for online training video workshops,

an evaluation process, and certification for present and future staff writers.

This is dependent on the Likert survey, the three open-ended surveys, the

technology interview and its assessment, the creation of the team and its

meetings, and the creation and design for additional sections within the

website. To be completed by February 28, 2023. Duration 59 days.

12. Create and design an evaluation process that establishes a baseline for the

scope of the project and shows results of improvement or areas that need more

improvement. This is dependent on the Likert survey, the three open-ended

surveys, the technology interview and its assessment, and the creation of the

team and its meetings as well as the additional website sections being

developed and the specific section of online workshops, evaluation, and

certification. To be completed by May 2023. Duration 90 days.

13. Initiate the completed additional website and give access availability to the

staff writers. This is finally dependent on the additional website sections being

developed and the specific section of online workshops, evaluation, and

certification. To be completed by June 30, 2023. Duration 30 days.

Project Schedule Reviewed

This project schedule has the nondependent clearing the groundwork of 15

months, September 2020 through December 2021, of my leadership development and

acquiring an understanding of GQM as an organization in order to have a better focus on

areas that need improvement. The above project schedule with the sequences of tasks and

activities and their dependencies is fully developed and doable within the time allotted.

All elements of the schedule are an accurate, clear, and concise description of each task

and activity as well as the relationship to its dependencies. This schedule is flexible as to

the achievement of each milestone proposed within the project scope and adheres to a

total achievable time to be completed within 2 years or less (Alves, 2018). The

anticipated hope for the completion of this project schedule is 18 months, with the

initiation of the completed additional website and the available access to be given to the

staff writers.

Communications and Stakeholders Engagement Plans

The communications plan is essential for any project to be done effectively,

efficiently, and accurately. It conveys the purpose of the project including the objectives

with a tentative goal in mind. The communications plan is especially important in

conveying information to the various stakeholders, especially those people involved in

the creation, development, and implementation of the project (MacKay, 2020). The

location of the organization and its team may determine the tools for communications

with stakeholders, staff, and any other internal or external people or organizations

involved in the project (Kloppenborg et al., 2019). The various types of communications

can be in-person meetings, telephone meetings, zoom or Google Meet meetings, or

emails and should be agreed upon with all involved to facilitate the productive and

ongoing progression of the project (MacKay, 2020).

Importance

To start an open communication with the organization and its stakeholders, there needs to be a record of all involved in the specificity of the goal to be achieved. Regularly planned meetings and communications with at least one member of the team, will help assist in the progression of the project and make sure it goes as efficiently as possible towards the goal. It creates key points of communication that may convey alternative ideas and various feedback to consider for the project's progression and its goal. To avoid the project falling short or failing completely, keeping all involved and up to date creates buy-in. When everyone knows their roles and is motivated to contribute to the project, it reduces the risk of failure and optimizes complete success (MacKay, 2020).

Lastly, the importance of the communications plan is to build great relationships with the stakeholders, staff, and any outside organizations that are used in completing the project. Those outside organizations can be of further use to GQM in the future as GQM expands the organization to keep up with the latest technology for the ministry (MacKay, 2020).

Structure of the Communications and Stakeholders Engagement Plans

For this project, the distance between GQM, their stakeholders, Dr. Dale Lamb, and me is great. Dr. Dale Lamb and I are located in western North Carolina and GQM and their stakeholders are located in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in the western United States, nearly 1,500 miles apart. This distance makes communications difficult to conduct in person, so the agreed-upon communication is email and either Zoom or Google Meet for the meetings. Email is agreed with all involved because it maintains good references and notetaking to what the meeting is about and what is discussed. Either Zoom or

Google Meets can be recorded to keep a good record of how everything is progressing. The frequency is varied depending on who is involved, what step of the project is being conducted, and when the next meeting(s) is scheduled (MacKay, 2020).

Using the Project Scheduling as a format, I can give a communications plan with some accuracy, not including emergency meetings, if any:

1. Likert survey, March 26-April 15, 2022, for a quantitative assessment of what the editors of GQM observe as areas in need of improvement. A communication was emailed to Gwen, the Project Host, concerning the Likert survey and the confidentiality of the participants. The Likert Survey was emailed to the participants via my Gardner-Webb University email with the understanding that it was to be completed by April 15, 2022, a duration of 3 weeks.

2. First open-ended questions, April 16-April 30, 2022. An additional email to Gwen reiterating the confidentiality of this open-ended survey with the understanding that it would be completed by April 30, 2022, a duration of 2 weeks. This qualitative survey was to glean some more insight from the editors with a little clarity and was dependent on the Likert survey to be completed prior to sending it out.

3. The second open-ended survey, May 20-June 10, 2022. An additional email to Gwen reiterating the confidentiality of this open-ended survey with the understanding that it would be completed by June 10, 2022. Duration 20 days. This qualitative survey was dependent on the previous qualitative survey to get some clarification of the Likert survey and the first open-ended survey to

aid in formulating a more focused assessment of the areas that need improvement.

4. Technology interview with Shea during the dates of June 11-16, 2022, via email. An email was sent to Gwen inquiring who I should conduct a technology interview with concerning GQM's operations and to inquire about suggestions for the project and its goal. I received an email from Shea agreeing to have the interview via email. We exchanged 15 emails for various clarifications on both our parts with a final assessment from Shea, completed by June 16, 2022, a duration of 6 days. This interview was dependent on the 15 months of my development and understanding of GQM, and some focus on areas that needed improvement as well as the prior surveys conducted.

5. Technology interview assessment written clearly and concisely and completed on July 9, 2022, a duration of 18 days. The assessment was emailed to Gwen to maintain a clear line of communication with the organization.

6. Third and final open-ended survey questions, July 17-July 31, 2022. There was much-needed specific clarity on the completion of all data collection to focus on a specific area that needed improvement. An additional email to Gwen reiterating the confidentiality of this final open-ended survey with the understanding that it would be completed by July 31, 2022, a duration of 2 weeks.

7. Conduct weekly meetings with the technology department, Shea, and Tiffany to the viability and creation of an interactive website including budget and cost, to be completed by August 31, 2022, a duration of 30 days. This is

dependent on the completion of the technology interview, its assessment to be able to establish what kind of website, and the cost of an additional one including the interactive protocols associated with added links, blogs, videos, and podcasts within the website.

8. An email to be sent out to Gwen to suggest and assist in creating a team made up of GQM editors who are well versed in cultural and religious diversity to discuss creation, design, and decision concerning the new additional website specifically whether the information is to be internal only for staff writers or external availability, i.e., made for public use. Weekly emails to Gwen and whoever is suggested for the creation of such a team. The goal for this creation is to be completed by September 30, 2022, a duration of 30 days.

9. An email will be sent to Gwen and the team with a set schedule of bi-weekly meetings, either via Zoom or Google Meet with the team to gather materials, resources, and tools, including permissions and citation information for the website. The goal is to be completed by November 30, 2022, a duration of 60 days.

10. Additional emails and scheduled either Zoom or Google Meet weekly meetings with Gwen and the team to create and design additional sections for cultural and religious diversity that include blogs, videos, and podcasts within the website, to be completed by December 31, 2022, duration 30 days.

11. Additional emails and scheduled either Zoom or Google Meet bi-weekly meetings with Gwen and the team to create and design a section specifically for online training video workshop(s), an evaluation process and certification

for present and future staff writers, to be completed by February 28, 2023, duration 59 days.

12. Additional emails and scheduled either Zoom or Google Meet bi-weekly meetings with Gwen and the team to create and design an evaluation process that establishes a baseline for the scope of the project and shows results of improvement or areas that need more improvement. This is dependent on the creation of the team and its meetings as well as the additional website sections being developed and the specific section of online workshops, evaluations, and certifications. This is to be completed by May 2023, a duration of 90 days.

13. Additional emails and scheduled either Zoom or Google Meet weekly meetings with Gwen and the team to initiate the completed additional website and give access availability to the staff writers, to be completed by June 30, 2023, a duration of 30 days.

14. An email will be sent to Gwen, the team, and the staff writers, including myself, about the intricacies of the additional websites, the necessity, and the benefits of completing the online workshops, evaluations, and certifications.

Review of Communication and Stakeholders Engagement Plans

In keeping this communications plan available to all stakeholders, the Stakeholder Engagement Plan was included in this scheduling process. All stakeholders knew what the project was about and its ultimate goal and purpose. As the project continued, decisions, feedback, and constructive criticism were discussed and if need be, alternatives were established. An agreement on how everything would be conducted now and in the

future with access to any changes or additions, if necessary, was decided and agreed upon by all stakeholders.

Closing out the project would be when completed and initiated with the staff writers, including myself. All documentation will be filed on both my computer and the organization's computer for future reference. It is believed that maintaining this kind of communication and stakeholder engagement during the progression of the project has been beneficial to all parties including those people sending in the questions to the Q&A department.

My Professional Literature Review Research

I have three inquiry questions for this Professional Literature Review as follows:

1. How does cultural awareness benefit the staff writers of GQM in their proficiency and efficacy in answering questions?

2. How does religious awareness benefit the staff writers of GQM in their proficiency and efficacy to answer questions?

3. How do online workshops benefit the staff writers of GQM in their proficiency and efficacy to answer questions?

The research into these questions should give well-rounded and well-organized answers to the benefits to GQM and its staff writers.

I have surveyed two books and 15 articles pertaining to three themes. The first theme of cultural awareness consists of one book, *Peace Child* by Richardson (2005), and six articles concerning that subject and its benefits. The second theme of religious awareness consists of one book, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* by Habermas and Licona (2004), and seven articles concerning the subject and its benefits. The third theme

of online workshops with the possibility of validation certificates consists of three

articles, giving ideas and tips on creation and its benefits to GQM, its staff writers, and

the stakeholders. This chapter continues with an explanation of the three themes.

Cultural Awareness

In researching how cultural awareness can benefit GQM and its staff writers, I

found that since GQM is based in the United States and many staff writers have not had

opportunities to learn about other cultures, finding tools to give them access to peruse the

culture of the questioner to aid in answering questions about the Bible and daily living is

beneficial. Getting to know another culture gives insight into people's daily lives, ethics,

and some of their perceptions that are usually different from our own (Abi-Hashem,

2015)

With this world becoming more globalized, knowledge of other cultures is

extremely beneficial to any organization (Cetina, 2007). This does not mean the staff

writers need to accept various traditions and cultures into their own, nor does it mean

they have to study the entire culture of that nation, which can come later if interested

(Sulkowski & Deakin, 2009). It does, however, enhance their knowledge of that culture

and their writing ability to answer that question as well as many others in the future by

understanding that the world has much to offer for our wisdom and knowledge

(Christopher et al., 2014). It helps ministerial organizations such as GQM to find a

commonality in order to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with various cultural customs.

Some people in distant lands may be seeking a deity or have the longing to know

God but are not sure of what information the staff writer is trying to explain to them

(Rosenmann, 2017). Writing for an organization like GQM has become a new mission

field for many people. There is an example of learning about a different culture and taking the lesson and then explaining the gospel in terms they can understand.

There is a true story of a missionary, Don Richardson, his wife, and children going to Western New Guinea, Indonesia, and living among the Sawi tribes. The Sawi tribes were cannibalistic headhunters who often warred with each other. The Richardson family lived among one of the tribes for many years, helping with medicines and teaching the gospel; however, the chief and his people never truly got a full understanding of it. Eventually, things were heating up again between the tribes, and Richardson was concerned for his family's safety, telling the chief that they would be gone when the next provision transport arrived (Richardson, 2005).

The chief did not want this to happen, so he and another chief performed the ritual known as the peace child. The chief gave his only son to be adopted by the other chief with the intent that as long as the child lived, there would be peace between the tribes (Richardson, 2005). Richardson saw the parallel between the chief giving his son for peace as long as he lived to God giving humanity Jesus for peace for as long as He lived. He explained to the chief that Jesus did indeed die but He came back to life and lives forever which means there will always be peace between humans and God. With that reference, the chief understood, and his whole village accepted Jesus as savior (Richardson, 2005).

There is a continuation to this story. Fifty years later, Richardson and his sons returned to the Sawi village. They found not only that the village had been impacted by the explanation of the gospel, but the people were witnessing to all the other villages in the same manner with many professions of faith (Pioneers, 2014). The impact of the

continuation of this true story indicates the benefit of learning about another culture; even a small amount of information can be significant in relation to answering questions toward increasing professions of faith.

Religious Awareness

In researching how religious awareness can benefit GQM and its staff writers, I found that since GQM is based in the United States and many staff writers have not had opportunities to learn about other religions, denominations, or nonreligious perceptions, finding tools to give them the access to peruse another religious aspect may aid in answering questions concerning the Bible and daily living. Getting to know other conceptions of religion or nonreligion ideals gives insight into perceptions usually and at times vastly different from our own (Locklin et al., 2012).

In a global society, there seem to appear new movements of theology forming different denominations within Christianity (Liogier, 2014). Other religions such as Islam have also developed new denominations as ethics and morality over the years change with new societal norms (Liogier, 2014). These new theologies can be confusing, especially to the layperson, so creating a tool that can give a rudimentary overarching understanding of whatever different religion the questioner may be a part of or be asking about will enhance the staff writer's ability to give a more complete answer with little possibility of offending the questioner or future visitors to GQM (Locklin et al., 2012).

There is an apprehension to learning world religions, other theological concepts, or scientific theories (Owen, 2011). Most individuals are uneasy to learn about something out of their comfort zone, especially in the religious realm. It could be the anxiousness of offending their deity for concern of punishment, temporarily or eternally (Owen, 2011).

Learning to explain theological concepts to scientific-minded people can also be challenging (Qureshi-Hurst, 2022). Science and faith can mingle, but it can be confusing, especially since science looks for empirical data (Qureshi-Hurst, 2022). The Bible has a lot of empirical data such as people, places, periods, and other information that have been written not only in the Jewish and Christian works but also in non-biblical writings of its day (Habermas & Licona, 2004). There are a lot of faith-based concepts that may or may not have empirical evidence that would be accepted by the scientific community (Habermas & Licona, 2004).

By having resources, the staff writer will have the means of learning a new theological concept, giving a more expanding ability to answer new questions beyond their norm (Shoemaker, 2019). It will also diminish misconceptions about other denominations, other religions, and nonreligious theories (Shoemaker, 2019). It will also enhance the staff writer's ability to do great research on such questions as well as further one's own education on those theologies or theories (Shoemaker, 2019); however, with a tool available, learning about these other ideas will enable the staff writer's witnessing ability not only to answer questions for GQM but in their own personal lives when they encounter people with these other perspectives. Obtaining more knowledge outside one's comfort zone gives more wisdom into the apologetics of one's faith, both for defending it and being a witness to it.

Online Workshops

In researching online workshops with or without some kind of certificate to show that the participants, in this case, the staff writers, have completed the workshop in order to increase their proficiency and efficacy in answering questions. The workshop will

show where and how to gain access to resources and tools to improve their writing skills in answering questions. Also, the creation of online workshops may decrease the need for requests for reassigning the questions or follow-up questions for clarification.

It has been noted in the answers to the open-ended question surveys that a resource such as an online workshop to improve writing abilities is something that is suggested as a tool for GQM. Developing videos or variations of recorded PowerPoint slides can be an effective resource to create workshops for the cultural and religious awareness that was just addressed as well as how to improve one's writing ability.

Starting the development of the online workshop, there would need to be collaborating with a team to discuss and brainstorm what issues have arisen that need to be addressed; for example, issues of how to answer a question. In the workshop, there can be features concerning avoiding bias and improving the ability to be more concerned about the other person (Rimmer, 2016). Examples can be used to show how to write the answer, stop and reread it from another point of view, and adjust it with more graciousness and clarity (Rimmer, 2016).

Interactive workshops for each of this resources, cultural and religious awareness, as well as writing skills, can be developed (Tang & Xing, 2021). Sets of multiple questions can be addressed throughout the workshops that do not have to be extensively long and end with a created certificate showing the participant passed the workshop (Yukelturk & Yildirim, 2008). This would not only be helpful to seasoned staff writers but would also benefit new additions to the Q&A department and GQM as a whole.

My Summary of the Professional Literature Review

Based on my research review of professional literature for this study, I found that

the benefits of each of the questions have been fulfilled. The example posed in the book

The Peace Child gives much credence that even the most rudimentary information of a

culture for those kinds of questions can have lasting results. Understanding other

religious, denominational, nonreligious, or scientific beliefs can give the staff writer the

means to answer questions with authenticity with which the questioner or other visitors to

GQM can relate. Online workshops can help the staff writer develop their writing skills

to be effective and efficient in answering questions. This research has been most helpful

in answering the inquiry questions. I do recommend further research into the subjects as

technology improves.

Theoretical Framework

Getzels-Guba Theory

The Getzels-Guba theory describes the process between the administration and

the social system within an organization (Getzels & Guba, 1957). The issues the

administration needs to consider are any organizational versus individual conflicts; issues

concerning being effective, efficient, and satisfied in the organization; the complexity

between leadership and personnel styles; and the issues with morale (Getzels & Guba,

1957). This theory focuses on the interactive relationship between leadership and

personnel as a concept rather than a societal description (Getzels & Guba, 1957). There

are two variables to consider in this social system. First, the organization has certain

expectations of goals to be fulfilled by certain roles of the individuals. Second, each

person has a different personality and needs to fulfill their obligation (Getzels & Guba,

1957).

Organizations have a purpose for their goal. For example, GQM's goal is in their

mission statement, which shows their goal is to find ways to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ through the means of writing biblical and pertinent answers to spiritually related questions within a good time limit through their online website (Houdmann, n.d.). Organizations such as GQM have a structure for this purpose. GQM's focus is on the editors, the staff writers, and its structure. Gwen Sellers, editor of GQM, clarified the structure and roles of the editors and the volunteer staff writers (volunteers) in the Q&A system in an emailed interview (Sellers, personal communication, August 16, 2022).

In the Q&A system, each editor assigns questions and approves responses. Each day one editor manages the questions submitted the prior day. Volunteer staff writers set their preferences as to how many questions per week, including their preferred day of the week and time of day, and what type of questions they are willing to answer. This department maintains general information about volunteer staff writers that aids in the management of matching the questions with the correct writer. When the question is assigned, the time period is 3 days to answer with a biblically based response. Then, when the answer is back in the system, it goes through the approval process by the due date listed. When a volunteer submits a response, it goes to our approval queue. The day's editors read it thoroughly, make any changes necessary, if any, and send it back to the questioner. In the rare instance that the answer is unusable, it may be reassigned or sent back to the writer to work on further (Sellers, personal communication, August 16, 2022).

Another position is that of the volunteer coordinator, who helps with the operational needs of writers who need to be out of the office or need assistance with GQM's dashboard. The volunteer coordinator's job description is that the person

conducts an annual assessment for each volunteer staff writer as well as receives the initial volunteer staff writer's applications. Both the managing editor and volunteer coordinator assess each application and make a decision concerning the viability of the applicant in GQM (Sellers, personal communication, August 16, 2022).

Editors also do a lot of work outside the Q&A department. There are two editors who assign 2 days per week and three editors who assign 1 day per week. There is one editor who manages problematic questioners and selects questions that need the editor's personal touch to the answer. There may be complaints about GQM that come through the Q&A department concerning the website articles that the managing editor oversees efficiently. Additionally, GQM's editors continue to work in various areas of the organization including writing, editing, and proofreading various articles as well as uploading content for the different departments such as the foreign language pages, many graphic images, videos, and podcasts to other GQM websites (Sellers, personal communication, August 16, 2022).

This very specific structure of the roles both for the editors and volunteer staff writers should allude to very few conflicts and problems in that department. Just like any other organization, personalities, in this case, some doctrinal differences, can be an issue, often quickly resolved. More recently, an observation that a needs disposition, may not have been fulfilled to accomplish the end goal of GQM. According to the Getzels-Guba theory, the definition of needs disposition is the propensity to achieve an end result with the inclination to do something with the means intended for the desired outcome (Getzels & Guba, 1957). The meaning is that the individuals need a resource or tool to complete their assigned role towards the goal of the organization. In GQM's case, it can be

explored to find and perhaps supply tools or resources to better understand the cultural and religious diversity of various questions to the end goal of positive results and feedback as listed in the introduction.

The ability to balance the social system of the institution, various roles, and expectations with the individuals, their different personalities, and their needs dispositions and to observe behavior toward the end goal of any organization is an ever-changing integration of an organization's productiveness and individual complete satisfaction (Getzels & Guba, 1957).

For GQM, this action research study will look at the concern for effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction of the volunteer staff writers with this theory as a guide (Getzels & Guba, 1957). As this theory has discussed concerning the concept of effectiveness, an individual may act in the manner of being effective in one situation but ineffective during a different circumstance and then it depends on how the individual is expected to perform with their attitudes and behaviors (Getzels & Guba, 1957). For example, a question may arise that has the volunteer staff writer researching and applying a biblical response to it, which is effective to a point, yet if the same question by the same questioner comes back as a follow-up question reworded or in need of clarification, it would seem that the prior answer was ineffective. This theory concludes that effectiveness is how well the conformity of the staff writer's applicable answer in adherence to GQM's expectations will be reviewed and changed to satisfy the question to its conclusion according to the organization's goals (Getzels & Guba, 1957).

The next concept discussed would concern the efficiency of the individual as to the need for a resource or tool available to complete the goal of the organization (Getzels

& Guba, 1957). For GQM, if the resources or tools were made available, the volunteer

staff writer may have been more efficient in their ability to answer the question the first

time. This theory concludes that efficiency is how well the conformity of the staff

writer's answer is with the available resources or tools (Getzels & Guba, 1957).

The third concept discussed concerns of the satisfaction of both the organization

and the individual simultaneously (Getzels & Guba, 1957). Without the tools or resources

needed to complete their role, the individual may just do their best and be neither

effective nor efficient concerning the role expectation, such as a question returning more

than once for clarification (Getzels & Guba, 1957). This theory concludes that

satisfaction of the staff writer's needs disposition for resources and tools is a result of

conformity to GQM's expectations (Getzels & Guba, 1957).

The three concepts are both independent and codependent of one another. The

theory suggests that the effectiveness and efficiency are personal and situational from the

start of the staff writer's answering questions to GQM's assessment of the response that

satisfies the relationship between the staff writer, GQM, and the questioner with a good

end result (Getzels & Guba, 1957). If the needs dispositions, in this case, resources or

tools, are available, the volunteer staff writer can be effective and efficient in answering

questions, thereby the causality would be that all would be satisfied: the organization, the

editors, the volunteer staff writer, and the questioner.

This theory examines three leadership-followership styles known as nomothetic,

idiographic, and transactional to accomplish the same goal (Getzels & Guba, 1957). The

nomothetic style emphasizes the obligation of the organization, its conduct, and

expectations, and doing everything just as the organization expects without deviation

(Getzels & Guba, 1957). The idiographic style emphasizes the obligations of personnel, their individuality, and their needs disposition; this emphasizes what the individual accomplishes is substantial and applicable, enhancing satisfaction in one's work (Getzels & Guba, 1957). The transactional style is a balance of both the nomothetic and the idiographic styles with the end goal being a crowning achievement. This balance achieves excellence that shows the person has combined individual satisfaction of needs disposition and the organization's modification to effectiveness to the goals (Getzels & Guba, 1957).

The fourth and final issue is morale, which has three elements that overlap: belongingness, rationality, and identification (Getzels & Guba, 1957). Belongingness is the anticipation and achievement of the individual's personal and well as organizational satisfaction (Getzels & Guba, 1957). Rationality is understanding and putting in a little extra effort to achieve the organization's goals (Getzels & Guba, 1957). Identification is how much the individual can combine the principles and behavior of the organization into one's own system of needs and ethics (Getzels & Guba, 1957). The interaction of the three factors, belongingness, rationality, and identification, keeps morale within the organization high (Getzels & Guba, 1957); however, if even one of them is at 0, morale will drop, and evaluation of the organization or departments will become necessary to bring it back to par (Getzels & Guba, 1957). Not all have to be at a high level, but they can and should balance each other out (Getzels & Guba, 1957).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the methodology of my action research. I explain the CITI training I took prior to starting the project and discuss confidentiality with the participants, in this case, GQM editors. I discuss definitions, action research, quantitative and qualitative research, and the importance. I intend to give a whole picture of its design as this project unfolds.

CITI IRB Training

CITI is designed to train for various agencies including for action research while completing a dissertation in practice (Cornell University, 2022). It focuses on integrity and ethical standards of conducting a responsible action research project (Cornell University, 2022). It maintains that no one is being harmed in any way and that their confidentiality is intact and protected (Cornell University, 2022). There are significant procedures to be conducted prior to and during action research that involves international policies (Cornell University, 2022). Since this could be complicated for my project, I opted to remain within the United States of America with my participants.

I completed 16 courses in CITI for the Graduate School of Education Research Investigators and received my certificate that it was done (Cornell University, 2022). Then I completed four in the course concerning conducting research with no more than minimal risk in the project and received my certificate that it was done (Cornell University, 2022). These certifications have an expiration date of January 2025 to allow me to continue in my action research project (Cornell University, 2022). With all that being completed, I began my action research project.

Action Research Design

Action research is a practice in which the researcher, in this case, me, ponders ways of improvement for a particular organization in its goals, vision, and mission with an action plan and possibilities for future similar research (Ip, 2017). It looks for opportunities to aid in empowering the personnel to become more effective and efficient in their particular knowledge and skills for their department and the organization as a whole (Ip, 2017). Within this design are different types of analyses to obtain data for further direction into the research that helps to identify the significant challenges and to develop and implement a plan while observing the process (Ip, 2017). Reflecting on all of this can emphasize further research in the future for more improvements in that department and other areas within the organization (Ip, 2017).

Research Questions

The research questions were designed to provide a better understanding of the direction of the significant challenges of GQM. The questions were

1. Will additional resources and/or tools to better understand cultural and belief systems/religious awareness enhance the staff writers' ability to be more effective and efficient in answering questions?

2. Will additional resources and/or tools to better understand cultural and belief systems/religious awareness decrease questions being requested to be reassigned to another staff writer?

3. Will additional resources and/or tools to better understand cultural and belief systems/religious awareness increase professions of faith to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?

4. Will additional resources and/or tools to better understand cultural and belief systems/religious awareness increase positive feedback for GQM?

Methodology

The methodology for this project is a mixed methods approach using both quantitative and qualitative data to understand the importance and impact these tools will have on the effectiveness and efficiency of the volunteer staff writers, the editors, and the stakeholders of GQM. The type of mixed methods approach is an explanatory sequential design. According to Creswell, this design is done by the data being sent out and then collected with a desire to analyze the findings and results in a more clear, concise, and detailed manner (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By using this mixed methods approach, a more thorough picture can be acquired to complete the project.

In the quantitative portion, a Likert scale survey of the population of editors was conducted. In the qualitative portion, some open-ended question surveys were administered following the results of the Likert scale survey, perhaps multiple times for clarity. They were conducted in Qualtrics which is used as an internet-based staging arena that helps the researcher create, send out, and receive back surveys and their results (Kent State University, 2022). Qualtrics can be used in many different types of research, such as marketing or finding the general consensus of a particular population sample or just the population if it is small enough (Kent State University, 2022). Qualtrics is designed to give results with precision and ease. This gives the researcher the ability to translate the results with accuracy, making them easier to understand and less time-consuming (Kent State University, 2022).

Quantitative Evaluation

Likert Scale Survey of a Population

The history of the Likert scale is that it was designed by an American social scientist in 1932 named Rensis Likert (Jamieson, n.d.). It is designed to measure people's opinions or perceptions using a range of responses to specific questions (Jamieson, n.d.). A strength of the Likert scale survey is that it is a straightforward set of statements that allows the participant to agree or disagree with each statement with some degree of strength in their answers to the statements (McLeod, 2019). In the Likert scale survey, the participants can respond using strongly agree or disagree, neither or somewhat agree, or disagree (Davenport & Kim, 2013) In this project, there is no response of neither, as part of this quantitative survey (Davenport & Kim, 2013). By making it a 4-point scale, it does give some degree of perception of the statements without room for a non-answer of neither agree nor disagree. This gives more accurate quantitative data without ambiguity (McLeod, 2019).

The weakness of this survey can be interpreted as the participants may have misread the statement and given an inaccurate answer (McLeod, 2019). The participant may be concerned that even though the surveys are conducted with confidentiality, no one associated with the organization, in this case, GQM, sees their answers. This will result in the participant wanting to be looked upon in a positive manner by the organization. (McLeod, 2019). That kind of inaccuracy can muddle the results, depending on the size of the scale (McLeod, 2019).

This survey was conducted with a population of the eight editors of GQM. The statistics are descriptive because it is a small population, summing up the mode in

viewing most recurring choice (Salkind, 2017). Of all the survey questions, the most frequent mode given by this population and the finding is that most participants agree or strongly agree with the statements, meaning the participants are on board with possible additional resources and/or tools concerning cultural and religious awareness to enable the volunteer staff writers to answer more effectively and efficiently.

Likert Survey Participants

I partnered with GQM, and my project host is Gwen, one of their editors. Within the Q&A department of GQM, there are eight editors, including Gwen, who agreed and were involved as participants in the surveys for this project. These eight editors were chosen because they receive the questions from the visitors of GQM, assign them to the staff writers, receive them back completed, and then make any corrections necessary. The editors are there to provide a writer who may be stuck on a question with additional resources to look for information. There are times when the editors get requests from the staff writers asking for the question to be reassigned to another staff writer who may be more knowledgeable or have less bias concerning that particular question. These request reassignments may reduce the time to research and answer the question effectively and efficiently for the reassigned staff writer. The answers can be time-consuming due to additional research involved beyond biblical research. The answers are to influence and guide visitors in their spiritual life as well as towards a professing faith of accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

This project provides the volunteer staff writers with resources and tools that will enhance their cultural and religious awareness. It provides the volunteer staff writers with resources and tools that will increase their effectiveness and efficiency in answering

questions provided by people of other cultures and/or other religious beliefs. This in turn will increase professions of faith to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. These available resources and tools to increase their knowledge and skills will decrease follow-up questions for further clarification of original questions. Also, with these available resources and tools to increase their knowledge and skills, it will decrease questions being requested to be reassigned to another staff writer, meaning there will not be any delay in the answer. When the visitors and questioners become aware of these improvements, positive feedback for GQM will increase.

Confidential Consent Form

To ensure the editors are willing participants of the Likert survey, I emailed a confidential consent form through Dr. Dale Lamb to the eight editors by way of blind carbon copy (bcc) to protect their names. A confidential consent form for the Likert survey was sent (see Appendix A).

Importance of the Confidential Consent Form

The importance of this confidential consent form is to assure the participants that they will be treated with respect. It is important to the participants and to the research that they have the ability to answer the questions set before them, in this case, the Likert survey, without concern for any risk of harm to them. Those possible harms may be revenge disciplinary actions that may include termination if the participant gives a negative perspective of the organization. Other harms could be ostracization from their coworkers upon learning any negative perspective not only to the organization but to the personnel as well (Hicks, 2019).

A clear and succinct explanation as to what to expect in the survey is that the

participant is duly informed and can make the best decision whether or not to participate in the research (Hicks, 2019). The consent gives information concerning the research. Uninhibited or unrestrained answers keep the survey in good standing with open and honest results (Hicks, 2019).

For the Likert survey, this information was limited. I explained that the purpose of this research study is to determine ways to assist the GQM editors to improve staff writers' communications more effectively and efficiently when answering various questions. This survey is aimed to update and enhance communication in order to better serve all stakeholders.

I explained that the participants are expected to answer all survey questions; however, if there is a question that caused discomfort or uneasiness, pass it, and go to the next question. It is anticipated that the survey would last for only a few minutes. I continued to explain that participation is completely voluntary. I explained that they have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. I explained that they have the right to refuse to answer any questions for any reason without penalty.

Further, for the Likert survey, I explained that the information the participant provides in this research will be utilized confidentially. I stressed that all their data will be anonymous, meaning names will not be collected nor will they be linked to any data provided. I informed them that there are no anticipated risks and no direct benefits to participation which includes receiving no payment for participation in this research. In addition, I provided my name, the fact that I am a doctoral candidate, the university name, my university email, and my cell phone number. I marked out my cell number with Xs securing my privacy for the dissertation in practice. I also included the faculty advisor

for this project, Dr. Dale S. Lamb, his title, and his university email. I ended the form with gratitude for their voluntary anticipated participation. I gave a date that I needed it back from them by, in this case, April 15, 2022, and asked that if they agreed, to check off the box below the consent form.

All participants agreed, checked the box, and answered the Likert survey. The 10 questions of the survey are as follows:

1. I am well-informed concerning the Vision and Mission of GQM.

2. GQM provides tips and tools for staff writers to improve communication with questioners.

3. I have seen at times that there is a language barrier between staff writers and questioners.

4. GQM communicates high expectations of clear and biblical answers to questions.

5. GQM is promoted through various social media platforms.

6. GQM addresses questions and concerns from people who live in various countries.

7. I have seen at times that there is a cultural barrier between staff writers and questioners.

8. I have seen at times that there is a belief systems barrier between staff writers and questioners.

9. When important information, changes, or additional resources are available, I am notified.

10. I have given as well as received critical feedback and criticism.

The results of this survey are discussed in Chapter 4.

Qualitative Evaluation

Introduction

In the qualitative portion, three open-ended question surveys have been administered following the results of the Likert scale survey in the quantitative portion. It was necessary to send multiple open-ended surveys for clarity. Same as the quantitative portion, all surveys were conducted in Qualtrics. All three of the clarifying open-ended question surveys enabled the action research to continue in its process.

Improved Confidential Consent Form

To ensure the editors are willing participants of the three open-ended question surveys, I emailed confidential consent forms prior to each survey through Dr. Dale Lamb to the eight editors by way of blind carbon copy (bcc) to protect their names. For these open-ended question surveys, I created an improved confidential consent form (see Appendix B).

Importance of the Confidential Consent Form

The importance of this confidential consent form is to assure the participants that they will be treated with respect. It is important to the participants and to the research that they have the ability to answer the questions set before them; in this case, the three open-ended question surveys, without concern for any risk of harm to them. Those possible harms may be revenge disciplinary actions that may include termination if the participant gives a negative perspective of the organization. Other harms could be ostracization from their coworkers upon learning any negative perspective not only to the organization but to the personnel as well (Hicks, 2019).

A clear and succinct explanation as to what to expect in the survey is that the participant is duly informed and can make the best decision whether or not to participate in the research (Hicks, 2019). The consent gives information as to the purpose of the research. The consent gives information concerning the research. Uninhibited or unrestrained answers keep the survey in good standing with open and honest results (Hicks, 2019).

For each of the open-ended surveys, I emailed a much-improved consent form with clear sections for understanding the project. I started with the title of the project, Cultural and Religious Awareness Resources for GQM Staff Writers. I again explained who I was as the researcher of the project.

I gave the purpose of the project, which is to address the cultural and religious barriers when answering various questions concerning the Bible and daily living. The purpose is to provide resources to enable the staff writers to be more effective and efficient when answering questions on various topics. These resources and tools can aid in decreasing requested reassignments and follow-up questions for clarification. An increase in professions of faith is a potential as well as more positive feedback from the visitors of GQM. I informed the participants that the survey would take approximately 8-10 minutes of their time. I gave a submission date of July 31, 2022.

In separate formats, I explained voluntary participation so they would understand. My explanation was that participants are expected to answer all questions; however, if there is a question that causes discomfort or uneasiness, they may pass it and go to the next question. It is anticipated that the open-ended questions will require additional time. I wanted to make sure they understood that their participation was completely voluntary.

The next separate format was to explain anonymous data. The information that the participant provides in this research will be utilized confidentially and all the data will be anonymous, which means no names will be collected nor will they be linked to the data provided.

Then I specifically explained the risks in another separate format. I assured them that there are no anticipated risks in this project. If as a result of this research project the participant experiences discomfort and would like to discuss their thoughts or feelings, that person is encouraged to contact the following individual for assistance, which would be me. I gave my name and my university email address for contact information since the communications with the participants and GQM are mainly through emails.

In another separate format, I then pointed out that there are no direct benefits associated with participation in this study. I expressed that no one would receive payment for participation in this project. I then explained that they have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty by simply exiting the survey without submitting it. I let them know that they have the right to refuse to answer any questions for any reason without penalty.

I put in very distinct and separate formats whom to contact for any questions about the project. I first listed my name as a doctoral candidate within the university and provided my university email and my cell number. I marked out my cell number with Xs securing my privacy for the dissertation in practice. I included information about my faculty advisor for this project, Dr. Dale S. Lamb, his position at the university, and his university email. Lastly, I addressed their indication of consent, asking them to check the box below the consent form to acknowledge that they have read and understood the

consent form. All this was done for each of the three open-ended question surveys.

All participants agreed, checked the box, and filled out all the open-ended surveys.

Open-Ended Questions

The qualitative tool used for this project is open-ended questions. By structure, open-ended questions are usually an informal means of an interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For this project, the open-ended questions were more of a semistructured nature because there was flexibility in the exploratory questions; however, there is a glimmer of a guide of where the questions may lead (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The data were guided by listing issues that needed exploration for the project, so more specific answers were needed to give direction toward recommendations, an action plan, and a timeline (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

This open-ended question interview was conducted in an asynchronous format online, which means there are some weaknesses as well as some strengths to this tool. One strength is that there is no location restraint (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I am located in Shelby, North Carolina, while the interviewees are located in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Another strength is that when the interview was conducted via Zoom or another online technique, it could be recorded showing the interviewees' facial features and reactions as well as some body language (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This was suggested, yet the Qualtrics written form gave the participants more flexibility in their answers as well as anonymity, which was highly recommended by GQM.

Some weaknesses are not being able to see reactions and other facial features or body language as one would in a physical interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Also, the

Internet for the Zoom call may be interrupted, making the interview virtually impossible (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). While during this project I am learning that this type of research is very challenging, since there is no blueprint for interpreting all this information (Kalpokas & Radivojevic, 2021), I need to have some sincere criteria to achieving the goal proposed with the mixed methodology.

It is advised that these suggestions would promote respect and a better understanding of qualitative research into any given topic or issue (Tracy, 2010). First, it should be a worthwhile issue that is relevant, timely, significant, and interesting (Tracy, 2010). Second, it should be independently accurate, meaning full of intellectual designs, original data, framework, and illustrations (Tracy, 2010). Third should be the goal of sincerity, as that can be achieved through reflection, being vulnerable and authentic, having clarity, and calculating the information provided (Tracy, 2010).

First Set of Open-Ended Questions

The first set of open-ended questions are as follows:

1. What area(s) do you think primarily needs improvement for staff writers to write and answer more effectively? Please briefly explain.

2. What is your perception of the level of cultural awareness that staff writers may or may not have? Please briefly explain.

3. What is your perception of the level of other belief systems/religious awareness that the staff writers may or may not have? Please briefly explain.

4. Do you believe that additional resources or tools in the areas of cultural and belief system religious awareness would allow the staff writers to be more effective in answering questions? Please briefly explain.

5. Are there specific resources you suggest would be beneficial in this area? Please briefly explain.

6. Please briefly explain what you feel are the Positives of having resources for cultural and belief systems /religious awareness for GQM.

7. Please briefly explain what you feel are the Negatives of having resources for cultural and belief systems/religious awareness for GQM.

8. Please feel free to add anything else you would like to suggest or have concerns or comments on.

Second Set of Open-Ended Questions

An additional set of open-ended questions were sent to the same editors for more clarification as follows:

1. What area(s) do you think primarily needs improvement for staff writers to write and answer more effectively? Please briefly explain.

2. What is your perception of the level of cultural awareness that the staff writers may or may not have? Please briefly explain.

3. What is your perception of the level of other belief systems/religious awareness that the staff writers may or may not have? Please briefly explain.

4. Do you believe that additional resources or tools in the areas of cultural and belief system religious awareness would allow the staff writers to be more effective in answering questions? Please briefly explain.

5. Are there specific resources you suggest would be beneficial in this area? Please briefly explain.

6. Please briefly explain what you feel are the Positives of having resources for

cultural and belief systems /religious awareness for GQM.

7. Please briefly explain what you feel are the Negatives of having resources for cultural and belief systems/religious awareness for GQM.

8. Please feel free to add anything else you would like to suggest or have concerns or comments on.

Third Set of Open-Ended Questions

An additional last set of open-ended questions were sent to the same editors for more clarification as follows:

1. Only writers who lack knowledge and experience in mind, how will resources about cultural and religious awareness help them grow in their capacity to answer new and different questions?

2. Only writers who lack knowledge and experience in mind, how will resources about cultural and religious awareness help them grow in their capacity and reduce requests for reassignment?

3. Only writers who lack knowledge and experience in mind, how will resources about cultural and religious awareness help them grow in their capacity and reduce follow-up questions specifically for clarification?

4. Only writers who lack knowledge and experience in mind, how will resources about cultural and religious awareness help them grow in their capacity and increase professions of faith of the questioners?

5. Only writers who lack knowledge and experience in mind, how will resources about cultural and religious awareness help them grow spiritually themselves?

6. Only writers who lack knowledge and experience in mind, what additional

and specific tools, resources, and training in these areas would be beneficial to

provide the staff writers to be more effective and efficient in answering new

and different questions?

7. Please feel free to add anything else you would like to suggest, comments or

questions.

Summary of Methodology

With the quantitative Likert scale survey and the three qualitative open-ended

questions, it seems reasonable that I can make a more conclusive assessment when the

results are reviewed. This research will assist in the purpose of enhancing the volunteer

staff writers' knowledge, skills, and ability by making them more aware of their cultural

and religious diversity and increasing their effectiveness and efficiency to answer

questions provided by people of other cultures and religious beliefs. This research should

also show a decrease in follow-up clarifying questions, a decrease in requested

reassignment questions, an increase in professions of faith to accept Jesus Christ as Lord

and Savior, and an increase in positive feedback for the website.

Chapter 4 shows the results of the investigation concerning the relevance, impact,

and necessity of resources to be available to the GQM staff writers to find the balance

depicted in Getzels and Guba's (1957) theory.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

I detailed and discussed both the quantitative and qualitative evaluations for this

project. I will continue in this chapter with the results of that data collection. These

surveys were conducted with the eight editors of GQM. The quantitative Likert survey

showed most of them were in agreement. The three open-ended question surveys gave

more details to the editors' assessments of what may be considered the best results.

Likert Survey Results

The survey questions and resulting variables in this survey are as follows. The

first question indicated that all eight participants strongly agree that they are well

informed of the vision and mission of GQM, with no standard deviation or variance. The

second question, answered by seven participants, concerns the provision of tips and tools

for staff writers for improvement by GQM. The results are that 57.14% agree and 14.29%

strongly agree that there is a provision from GQM. Only 28.57% disagree and feel they

are not always provided to the staff writers. There is a standard deviation of .64 and a

variance of .41. The third question, answered by seven participants, concerns a language

barrier between the questioners and the staff writers. The results are 71.43% agree and

14.29% strongly agree that there is a language barrier; 14.29% disagree that there is a

language barrier. There is a standard deviation of .53 and a variance of .29. The fourth

question, answered by seven participants, concerns GQM's high expectations of clear and

biblical answers to questions. The results are both for strongly agree and agree are

42.86%, and 14.29% disagree with the expectations. There is a standard deviation of .70

and a variance of .49. The fifth question was answered by seven participants, concerning

the promotion of GQM through social media platforms. The results are 57.14% agree and 42.86% strongly agree that GQM utilizes social media platforms. The is a standard deviation of .49 and a variance of .24.

The sixth question was answered by seven participants concerning visitors and questioners to the GQM website live in various countries. The results are that 14.29% agree and 85.71% strongly agree. The standard deviation is .35 and the variance is .12. The seventh question was answered by seven participants concerning if there is a cultural barrier between the staff writers and the questioners. The results are 85.71% agree and 14.29% strongly agree. The standard deviation is .35 and the variance is .12. The eighth question was answered by six participants concerning if there is a belief system/religious barrier between staff writers and questioners. The results are 50% agree and 33.33% strongly agree that there is a belief system/religious barrier; 16.67% disagree with that statement. The standard deviation is .69 and the variance is .47. The ninth question was answered by five participants concerning notification of important information, changes, and additional resources available. The results are 60% agree and 20% strongly agree that they are informed. Twenty percent disagree that they are informed. The standard deviation is .63 and the variance is .40. The 10th and final question of the Likert scale survey was answered by six participants concerning giving and receiving critical feedback and criticism. The results are 50% agree and 33.33% strongly agree that they give and receive critical feedback and criticism. There are 16.67% who disagree with giving and receiving critical feedback and criticism.

GQM Open-Ended Question Surveys

I found it necessary to initiate three open-ended question surveys so I could get a

well-rounded set of answers for the significant challenges of this project. Please see the first survey results in Appendix C. Please see the second survey results in Appendix D. Please see the third survey results in Appendix E.

Discussion of First Open-Ended Survey Answers

When I sent the first open-ended survey, issued eight questions. I will discuss the answers and explain the reason behind sending the next survey. For the first question, I asked what area(s) did the participant think primarily needed improvement for staff writers to write and answer more effectively and to give simple answers. One participant stated a need for clear expectations and clear communication. Simple enough; and for me, I thought this fit the narrative of the project.

The next participant claimed that it depends on the writer. It also depends on what works best for a particular questioner. Many, if not most, writers already answer very effectively. Some writers could improve basic writing skills. Some writers just need to be reminded to use the Bible as the primary source. Others could elaborate more on answers, whereas some could be more concise. This answer was more detailed but aimed more at the online training and writing skills part only.

This next participant's answer was interesting. The suggestions were for ongoing training, some writers need help knowing that they can research the answer even if they have no understanding of the topic preventing them from requesting reassignment. Writers also need to learn to be gracious. These were more specific to lowering requesting reassignment just by training the writers where and how to research the topics even if the writer has no idea about the topic. These suggestions would increase the writer's knowledge and skill base.

The next participant's answer was interesting as well. They suggested that the writers obtain a better understanding of the GQM doctrinal position and better writing skills. A lot of themes so far are aimed toward improvement of writing skills. Many writers would benefit from knowing the doctrinal position of GQM on issues.

The last participant to this question suggested the writer use their abilities to provide a careful assessment of the exact question being asked or the root question underlying a submission. For this answer, I would suggest some simple training in understanding the question being asked or what may be a hidden agenda to the question. This kind of skill can increase efficiency and effectiveness.

The second question was looking to understand the editors' perceptions of the level of cultural awareness that staff writers may or may not have and to briefly explain. The first participant's perception is that writers understand that there are cultural differences. This answer in my observation is a given because most people have that understanding. I was looking for a deeper explanation.

The next participant was more detailed in their answer. The person stated that it really depends on the writer and the questioner. The editors do their best to assign questions that have a cultural nuance to writers we know and/or think are experienced with that nuance. The participant gave an example of how they assign questions that reference a custom in India to a writer who lives in India. I believe that is an excellent idea; however, one of the purposes of this project is to improve the knowledge and skills of as many writers as are willing and to bring variety to their knowledge and skills.

The next participant was interesting as well. The answer was that there are some writers who are excellent at this, so when a cultural question comes in, I assign it to them.

Another example is if a question comes in from Asia or Africa that has cultural

undertones, the editors try to assign it to a writer who lives there or has served there.

Additionally, this participant stated that some writers could use improvement because

they are very U.S.A.-minded. I do understand this way of thinking to assign questions of

this nature to those writers with some experience; however, the last sentence that some

writers are U.S.A.-minded is very much my concern as well. This is one of many reasons

for this project in the hopes of opening minds and hearts to the people of this world

including how to relate to them while guiding them toward Christ.

The next participant hit cultural awareness in the religious arena in their answer.

The participant stated that most of the writers have good cultural awareness. Some

writers are locked into a particular church culture, usually having to do with

denominational affiliation. This answer is very authentic to a present-day awareness of

both issues. I am hoping for further suggestions in these areas.

The last participant to this question sees the level of awareness as reasonable and

varied. Some writers are aware of cultural trends at home or abroad, while some writers

are not. Some writers are dismissive of generational changes. This was a very open and

honest answer. I am again hoping for some suggestions to make improvements in these

areas.

The third question was similar to the second one but related to religious

awareness. Again, I asked for the editors' perceptions of the level of other belief

systems/religious awareness that the staff writers may or may not have and to briefly

explain. The answers were very similar to the second question. The first participant stated

that the writers understand that people believe different things. I can agree with that

statement.

The next participant stated that it depends on the writer. The editors do their best to assign questions that specifically reference other religions to writers who have indicated they have knowledge about that religion or who have demonstrated a willingness and interest to research such topics. These are great ideas; however, I am looking for ways to improve writers' knowledge of other religions without bias to help answer such questions.

The next participant stated that there is a way for the writer to mark what questions they are comfortable answering. It was interesting that this participant explained that those writers who mark cults or religions on their profile do well answering those questions. Those writers seem knowledgeable about various religions. This participant acknowledged loving to assign Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons or those who were formerly in those religions or have family members who are still in those religions. This participant stated that those writers are often more loving if there is a personal experience. I do agree with this way of assigning writers. I agree that personal experience in answering any question helps the questioner to relate to the answer.

The next participant related the answer to specializing in this field. The person answered that GQM has a few writers who specialize in other belief systems, and the editors rely on them to answer questions pertaining to those systems. Most of our writers do not specialize in other belief systems. The last sentence is where my concern for improvement lies and, I would give resources and tools to help in those areas.

The next participant stated that the level of knowledge of belief systems varies significantly. Typically, the level of knowledge varies to understanding one belief system

in depth at most or to understanding the basics of a few belief systems. Overall, the staff writers have a better than average self-awareness than the general public because they realize what they do not know. This was a clear understanding of the average person's level of knowledge of other religions. It seems to suggest that those who do not have that knowledge could use some resources if they are willing to use them.

The fourth question was aimed at searching for where GQM and its editors stand in regard to additional resources or tools that would allow the staff writers to be more effective in answering questions.

The first participant stated that the editors discern who answers what so people with experiences that fit the questioner usually answer the question. This answer does not leave room for improvement of the writers.

The next participant agreed that it would be useful to have resources and tools for writers. The reason the participant gave was that it could broaden the options to which writers feel equipped to respond. This answer gave hope to finding ways to help improve the knowledge of the writers.

The next participant again was in agreement to help our writers improve; however, the participant was unsure of what the available resources and tools would look like in the GQM Q & A department but thought that would be helpful. Another hopeful answer given was a suggestion that perhaps a participant in the project would be willing to help in the creation of what the available resources and tools will look like in that department, such as a weblink or additional website.

The next participant agreed that some additional training or resources would be helpful. This participant suggested that perhaps books could provide an overview of other

religions. That is a different kind of answer, and I am sure some writers would love to obtain books to cultivate better writing skills.

The next participant stated that it would be helpful to have some concise resources, targeted at writers, with key points and tips related to various systems, cultures, situations, and issues. I agree that these writing skills and knowledge need improvement. I suggest some online training either as a course or a video that the writer can refer to if there are any questions or something that can be done in their spare time.

The fifth question I posited was looking for specific resources to be suggested that would be beneficial to the writer. The first participant had no suggestions.

The next participant stated that GQM already has articles on other religions. Some books suggested in those articles would probably be helpful. GQM has several writers who have been involved in other religions and would also have personal experience. The participant stated that there are websites in those areas that may be helpful as well. This is a great suggestion, and the participant seems to have more specific and helpful answers.

The next participant suggested that there are some great websites that handle specific objections to various cults. This participant gave examples; for example, a site from a former Mormon who uses correct terminology when addressing Mormon questions. One of our writers does well with demon-related questions and perhaps that writer could share some resources to help other writers in that area. These are great suggestions that may help other writers who do not have knowledge or experience.

The next participant suggested a book called *Handbook of Today's Religions* written by Josh McDowell and Don Stewart. For some writers, having a book is an easier reference than the Internet, and I believe that suggestion to be helpful for those writers.

The next participant brought up that GQM articles are usually good for broad basics; however, the participant is unaware of resources that are not book-length. This suggests to me that the participant is open to suggestions that would be helpful, especially in the shortened length.

For the sixth question, I inquired about what the editors saw as the positives of having resources for cultural and belief systems/religious awareness for the writers. The first participant stated that it would provide a better understanding of where a person comes from or how something will be perceived or received. I agree with this answer that there would be a lot of improvement for the staff writers to better understand a question from people of other cultures and religions.

The next participant suggested that such resources could help equip writers to answer questions and save them the time of doing their own research. For example, having a collated resource that is one area for writers could be efficient. This participant suggested having a resource in which other writers can share their experiences so it would be more of a personal resource than just collated research. Also, something like this could be helpful for new societal or cultural trends not specifically related to a different religious belief system. This was the most detailed answer to this question. This answer gave some ideas for other resources that I had not searched for at the time of this survey.

The next participant suggested ongoing training, hopefully resulting in more gracious answers to real seekers. The next participant suggested that the writers would better understand the questions and the reasons behind them and therefore give a better answer if they had such resources. I am still hoping for a more detailed answer in this

arena that would help GQM writers.

The next participant stated that there would be greater consistency in answers, less chance to miscommunicate a point or miss a chance to clearly explain, less risk of offense, and less chance to be dismissed as ignorant or unfair. I agree with this answer because some writers tend to just answer the question in front of them without looking any further into it. The resources and tools could help in that arena, and the answers may be clearer and more concise to the questioner.

The seventh question asked what the editors see as the negatives of having resources for cultural and belief systems/religious awareness for GQM writers. The first participant stated that the writers cannot know or understand where everyone is coming from in order to give a good and full answer.

The next participant stated that the only potential negative would be in spending time and human resources on a tool that would not be used or would not be that helpful. The next participant made a similar statement, wondering if they would be used. There is hope but there is always a possibility of people not utilizing a good resource. Again, the concern is more for the writers who just answer questions with little or no research not using these resources. However, I am hoping the majority would love these resources.

The next participant stressed that it would be more work for the writers. Being one of the writers, I would posit that I tend to look for my own resources on almost every question so I believe that many more writers would love to have a single place to find the answers that they are researching for a particular question.

The next participant's concern is that having resources or tools can lead to a copy-and-paste approach to answering questions. If that happens, it may lead to t the stifling of

being led by the Holy Spirit when responding to questions. I have that concern as well; however, again, I posit that there are many more who would embrace such resources than those who would not.

The last question in the first open-ended survey was to ask if there was anything else the editors would like to suggest or if there were any other concerns or comments. There was one answer to this question. The participant suggested that it would be good to have consistent resources to expand which writers can handle basic questions on those topics. It can collate ideas and points which have been verified. It would need to be editor-controlled but easily accessible to writers. It would need to be enforced in the sense that writers should not blatantly contradict those statements. It would give credence to reasons given about accuracy, fairness, and consistency.

Discussion of Second Open-Ended Survey Answers

When I sent the second open-ended survey, I issued eight questions. I will discuss the answers and explain the reason behind sending the next survey. The second set of questions was posited in an attempt to gain more detail on the answers that may assist in the action research project.

The first question asks the editors what they thought were the primary needs for improvement for staff writers to write and answer more effectively. The answers to the first question are consistent with the first open-ended question survey that was sent out.

The second question asked for the editors' perceptions of the level of cultural awareness that staff writers may or may not have. Again, unfortunately, the answers were similar to the first set of questions sent out. The third question asked for the editors' perceptions of the level of other belief systems/religious awareness that the staff writers

may or may not have. Again, the answers to this question were similar to the first survey.

The fourth question asked if the editors believe that additional resources or tools in the areas of cultural and belief system/religious awareness would allow the staff writers to be more effective in answering questions. The answers thus far have not changed from the prior survey.

The fifth question asked for specific resources to be suggested that would be beneficial. Again, there were no different answers than the ones from the first survey. The sixth question asked about the positives of having resources; same answers, no change. The seventh question asked about the negatives of having resources for cultural and belief systems/religious awareness for GQM. The answers were the same as the first survey.

When asked for any other suggestions, the exact same answers applied. At this point, I looked for a different and very specific way of conducting the third and last open-ended survey.

Discussion of Third Open-Ended Survey Answers

When I sent the third open-ended survey, I issued seven questions. I will discuss the answers and explain the reason behind sending the next survey. With this last open-ended survey, I used very specific questions aimed toward only the writers who lacked knowledge and experience of the subject of the survey.

Remember all the questions begin with only writers who lack knowledge and experience in mind, with no deviation for the answers.

The first question asked about how will resources about cultural and religious awareness help the writers grow in their capacity to answer new and different questions.

The first participant answered that it would help with grasping the different worldviews and perspectives that questioners have or with which they are presented. This is exactly the reason for the research project.

The second participant stated that having a source of information about other cultures and religions will help writers engage in intelligible cross-cultural dialogue. They will be able to avoid asking off-the-point questions and making incorrect assumptions. This is another reason for the research project.

The third participant stated that the more such writers want to increase their own knowledge on any given topic, the more they will be able to help others on those topics. These were the answers I sought. The fourth participant added that giving them training might help them understand better, but we would likely assign them different questions that they can answer better. Yes, this would help in a variety of ways.

The second question asked how the editors think the resources about cultural and religious awareness will help the writers grow in their capacity and reduce requests for reassignment. The first participant suggested that having basic resources about alternate cultures and religions could reduce anxiety and limit the perception that a question requires specialized knowledge to answer. More writers will have increased knowledge!

The second participant suggested that having a source of information about other cultures and religions will make writers more comfortable and more confident in tackling cross-cultural questions. This is exactly the reason for the research project. The third participant stated that the more such writers have knowledge and comfort with a topic, the more likely they will be to want to answer questions on the topic. This is another reason for the research project.

The fourth participant suggested that assigning better might be a better route than fully trying to train someone, but it would help them understand better how to respond to culturally and religiously sensitive questions.

The third question asks the editors how they think the resources about cultural and religious awareness will help the writers grow in their capacity and reduce follow-up questions specifically for clarification. The first participant explained that knowing more about a worldview or culture can help narrow in on specific needs or points of conflict, making it less likely to miss a major and/or unspoken aspect of a request. This is another reason for the research project.

The second participant stated that the informed writers will already understand the basics of the culture or religion from which the question stems and will have a familiarity with the terms used by the questioner. This shows it would definitely help in more ways than anticipated.

The third participant stated that the more such writers have knowledge about a topic, the more they will understand questions related to the topic and the jargon used by questioners when asking about the topic. More knowledge means better efficiency and effectiveness! The fourth participant gave the same answer as the last question. Assigning better might be a better route than fully trying to train someone, but it would help them understand better how to respond to culturally and religiously sensitive questions. I believe what I hear here is that it can benefit the editors as well as the writers.

The fourth question asks the editors how resources about cultural and religious awareness will help the writers grow in their capacity and increase the professions of faith of the questioners. The first participant stated that more efficient answers tend to

inspire greater confidence in questioners. The opposite is true that a misunderstanding of other faiths and religions invites intense skepticism that the person answering fully understands. Caution is warranted while training the writers in this area.

The second participant stated that informed writers will be more adept at apologetics, considering they are familiar with different worldviews and can couch answers in ways that the reader will identify with the concepts. The hope is that the writer will not only learn about other faiths but a deeper understanding of one's own and will have to know how to explain it without coming off as brash.

The third participant stated that it really depends on the work of God and the hearts of questioners. It seems that if a questioner who does not know God writes in and receives an answer that conveys an understanding of the questioner and accurately addresses that questioner's posed questions and felt needs while explaining biblical truth, they would be more likely to hear and understand the truth presented. But, again, salvation is ultimately a work of the Holy Spirit. I truly agree with this statement; however, it is my belief that the Holy Spirit will use the gained knowledge if the writer is willing to put the work in.

The fourth participant stated that if they could answer questioners better, there might be an increase in professions of faith. This is exactly one of the main reasons for the research project.

The fifth question asks the editors how resources about cultural and religious awareness will help the writers grow spiritually. The first participant stated that it is always useful to understand the distinctions between one's beliefs and others' beliefs. Contrast is often the most useful way to explain something. This is exactly the reason for

the research project.

The second participant stated that if nothing else, such resources should cause the writer to pray more for people around the world. Knowing that God shows no partiality as read in Acts 10:34, writers should try to view the world's populations from the divine perspective. This is exactly the reason for the research project.

The third participant stated that learning about new things can increase understanding of God and appreciation of Him. When people study things that are against God, they often become more confident in His truth. When people study other cultures and see God at work there too, people can come to appreciate God's magnitude and creativity all the more. Also, as people study other things, they will want to compare them to the truth of Scripture, which involves people intentionally studying Scripture more. This answer was very well stated and very precise for this project.

The fourth participant stated that it will help them think about what others are trying to communicate and help them grow as they learn.

The sixth question asks the editors to think of what additional and specific tools, resources, and training in these areas would be beneficial to provide the staff writers to be more effective and efficient in answering new and different questions. The first participant stated that general resources on the basic worldviews of various cultures and religions can be useful. Anything from a Christian perspective focused specifically on explaining how those other approaches view spirituality and the world, in a brief, layman-level format, would be useful tools. The resources and tools may need to have different levels of format based on the various levels of knowledge of each writer. The second and fourth persons were not sure of what to answer.

The third participant was unsure. The editor's perception is that much of this seems to need to come from the self-motivation of the writers wanting to increase their knowledge of a certain topic and then spending their time doing so. GQM has some helpful articles on certain topics already as well as some resource recommendations to study further. This editor would suggest going to experts in any given field for truly in-depth knowledge and study. GQM has good and helpful content but the organization does not have experts in every field and often the articles are not designed to be in-depth or extensive. Reading all the articles on a specific topic could be a helpful start, and, as stated, those articles usually do offer recommended resources for further study. Those resources will likely offer even more resources. I agree that those resources help very much in answering questions for one's own increased knowledge.

For the seventh question I asked if they had anything else they would like to suggest or if they had comments or concerns about what had been discussed; however, every answer from the participants at this point was that it was not applicable.

Review of the Survey Results

The review of this Likert scale survey is that between 70% and 85% of the participants agree with the statements made indicating a need for further investigation. This resulted in the need for multiple qualitative open-ended relevant and more pointed and accurate question surveys posed to the same eight editors of GQM resulting in authentic accuracy of the perspectives concerning needs for improvement. These surveys combined enlightened my perception of the relevance, impact, and necessity to have resources available to the GQM staff writers in order to find the balance depicted in Getzels and Guba's (1957) theory.

These investigations have aided the purpose of enhancing the volunteer staff writers' ability by making them more aware of cultural and religious diversity. It aided in the purpose to increase their effectiveness and efficiency to answer questions provided by people of other cultures and religious beliefs. It aided in the purpose to decrease follow-up clarification questions and to decrease requested reassignment questions. It aided in the purpose to increase professions of faith to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior as well as positive feedback for GQM. The combination of the theoretical framework and mixed methodology will aid in developing further findings, recommendations, and an action plan for the project.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This action research project has yielded accurate and attainable goals through various assessments for GQM and me. I have been able to take a step back and look at myself as a transformational servant leader with all my strengths and weaknesses. One of my goals to overcome my fear of failure was to complete this action research project in a timely and well-organized manner. Since the completion has been reached, I have completed that goal. I can honestly say that I can see from the beginning to the end of a project with confidence and innovation.

GQM has been a significant part of my life for 17 years, and this partnership with GQM has been a blessing to me as we learned together what the significant challenges are and how together we can find ways to conquer them to help the staff writers and other personnel of GQM. This also has significance for other online ministries. As technology improves, the hope is that this project will give some ideas for how to improve their websites to reach people globally.

In my research, I have been pleasantly pleased that this project is greatly cost-effective as well as beneficial to GQM and all its stakeholders. I was concerned at first that this project would be starting from scratch, and the costs would be too tremendous to be worth pursuing; however, with this list of resources and possible budget, it is well worth every bit of cost and all the time necessary to pursue the goals to educate the staff writers by providing the tools to improve their abilities to be more effective and efficient when answering questions of various topics. I feel that GQM will reach other goals such as decreasing the many requested reassignments and follow-up questions for clarifications, and it will show in the monthly newsletters. I anticipate the likelihood of an

increase in potential professions of faith. With these resources at no or low cost, there is a potential to have better, more positive feedback from the visitors to GQM.

Recommendations

This major project has very good strategic goals, and the project schedule has flexibility for any necessary changes. One recommendation that I have not mentioned thus far is the need for experts in the fields for the three deliverables. This would mean finding experts in cultural anthropology, archaeology, modern cultural norms, and the like. My recommendation would be to look for and recruit professors or students whose passion is the study of other cultures.

Another recommendation would be to find experts in various religious beliefs, perhaps in specific religions, who would be professors or students whose passion is the study of other religions. GQM could also recruit people who have left other religions with no bias but a deep understanding of that belief system.

I recommend future and further study into this project as technology unfolds and increases exponentially. Possibly adding more experts in the technology fields that generate the deliverables I have provided to this project.

Conclusion

The quality, integrity, and scope of this project have been maintained with no deviations (Kloppenborg et al., 2019). This is a very good project for GQM as a ministry and as an organization. The impact on the staff writers to be more efficient and effective in answering questions, especially cultural and religious ones, will continue to be helpful.

This project was done correctly and with precision. The service to the organization and all stakeholders, present and future, is of excellent quality (Kloppenborg

et al., 2019). GQM is encouraged to keep researching these issues. GQM is encouraged to add to the webpages/web links as the need arises to encourage and enable the staff writers to grow in their spiritual walk and in their ability to write for GQM. The hope is that this project has empowered their evangelism as they continue to write for GQM while going through life and meeting people of diverse cultures and religious beliefs.

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Appendix A

Likert Confidential Consent Form

The purpose of this research study is to determine ways to assist the GQM editors to improve staff writers' communications more effectively and efficiently when answering various questions. This survey is aimed to update and enhance communication in order to better serve all stakeholders. Participants are expected to answer all survey questions; however, if there is a question that causes discomfort or uneasiness, pass it, and go to the next question. It is anticipated that the survey will require approximately 1-3 minutes of your time. Your participation is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions for any reason without penalty.

The information that you provide in this study will be utilized confidentially and all of your data will be anonymous which means your name will not be collected nor will it be linked to the data provided. There are no anticipated risks in this study and there are no direct benefits associated with participation in this study. You will receive no payment for participation in this study. If you have any questions, please contact: Mrs. Joanne Jacene DeVoe, EdD Candidate College Education, Gardner-Webb University phone: XXX-XXX-4864; email: jdevoe@gardner-webb.edu or Dr. Dale S. Lamb, Faculty Advisor, Professor College of Education, Gardner-Webb University; email: dlamb@gardner-webb.edu

Again, your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please complete and submit the survey by April 15, 2022. Please indicate that you have read this Informed Consent by checking the box below.

Appendix B

Confidential Consent Form Improved

Title of Study: Cultural and Religious Awareness Resources for GotQuestions Ministries Staff Writers

Researcher: Joanne Jacene DeVoe, EdD Candidate, College of Education, Gardner-Webb University

Purpose of research study: This project is to address the cultural and religious barriers when answering various questions concerning the Bible and daily living. The potential to provide resources to enable the staff writers to be more effective and efficient when answering questions of various topics, Decreasing requested reassignments and follow-up questions for clarification. An increase in professions of faith is a potential as well more positive feedback from the visitors of GotQuestions Ministries.

Time required: 8-10 minutes.

Complete and Submit By: July 31, 2022

Voluntary Participation: Participants are expected to answer all questions; however, if these is a question that causes discomfort or uneasiness, pass it, and go to the next question. It is anticipated that the open-ended questions will require approximately 8-10 minutes of your time. Your participation is completely voluntary.

Anonymous Data: The information that you provide in this study will be utilized confidentially and all of your data will be anonymous which means your name will not be collected nor will it be linked to the data provided.

Risks: There are no anticipated risks in this study. If as a result of this research study, you experience discomfort and would like to discuss your thoughts or feelings, please contact the following individual for assistance: Joanne Jacene DeVoe at jdevoe@gardner-webb.edu

Benefits: There are no direct benefits associated with participation in this study.

Payment: You will receive no payment for participation in this study.

Right to Withdraw from the Study: You have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty by simply exiting the survey without submitting. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions for any reason without penalty.

If you have questions about the study, please contact:

Mrs. Joanne Jacene DeVoe,

EdD Candidate

College Education, Gardner-Webb University.

Phone: XXX-XXX-4864

email: jdevoe@gardner-webb.edu

Dr. Dale S. Lamb, Faculty Advisor

Associate Professor College of Education, Gardner-Webb University

email: dlamb@gardner-webb.edu

Consent: Please indicate that you have read and understand this Informed Consent of this survey by checking the box below.

Appendix C

First Open-Ended Survey Results

1. What area(s) do you think primarily needs improvement for staff writers to write and answer more effectively? Please briefly explain.

    a. Clear expectations/communication.

    b. This really depends on the writer. It also depends on what works best for a particular questioner. Many, if not most, writers already answer very effectively. Some could improve basic writing skills. Some just need to be reminded to use the Bible as the primary source. Others could elaborate more on answers, whereas some could be more concise.

    c. Ongoing training, some need help knowing that they can research the answer (even if they have no understanding of the topic) instead of requesting reassignment, learning to be gracious.

    d. Better understanding of the GQ doctrinal position, and better writing skills.

    e. Careful assessment of the exact question being asked, or the root question underlying a submission.

2. What is your perception of the level of cultural awareness that staff writers may or may not have? Please briefly explain.

    a. They understand that there are cultural differences.

    b. It really depends on the writer and the questioner. We do our best to assign questions that have a cultural nuance to writers we know and/or think are experienced with that nuance, for example assigning questions that reference a custom in India to a writer who lives in India.

    c. There are some writers that are excellent at this, so when a cultural question comes in, I assign it to them. Or if a question comes in from Asia or Africa (that has cultural undertones) I try to assign it to a writer who lives there or has served there. Some writers could use improvement (they are very USA minded).

    d. Most of the writers have good cultural awareness. Some are locked into a particular church culture, usually having to do with denominational affiliation.

    e. Reasonable, varied. Some are aware of cultural trends at home or abroad, some are not. Some are dismissive of generational changes.

3. What is your perception of the level of other belief systems/religious awareness that the staff writers may or may not have? Please briefly explain.

    a. They understand that people believe different things.

    b. It depends on the writer. We do our best to assign questions that specifically reference other religions to writers who have indicated they have knowledge about that religion or who have demonstrated willingness and interest to research such topics.

    c. Those writers who mark Cults or Religions on their profile do pretty well at this. They seem knowledgeable about various religions. I love to assign JWs or Mormons or those who were formerly in those religions or have family members. They are often more loving if they have personal experience.

     d.   We have a few writers who specialize in other belief systems, and we rely

         on them to answer questions pertaining to those systems. Most of our

         writers do not specialize.

     e.   Varies significantly. Typically applies to one other belief system, in depth,

         at most. Or to the basics of a few. Overall, better than average self-

         awareness than general public (realize what they don't know).

4. Do you believe that additional resources or tools in the areas of cultural and belief

   system religious awareness would allow the staff writers to be more effective in

   answering questions? Please briefly explain.

     a.   We are discerning who answers what so people with experiences that fit

         the questioner usually answer the question.

     b.   Yes, I'm sure that would be a useful tool for writers. It could broaden the

         options to which writers feel equipped to respond.

     c.   Yes, I'm always on board for helping our writers improve. I'm not sure

         what that would look like, but I think that would be helpful.

     d.   Yes. Some additional training or resources would be helpful. Books that

         provide an overview of other religions are helpful.

     e.   Would be helpful to have some concise resources, targeted at writers, with

         key points and tips related to various systems, cultures, situations, etc.

5. Are there specific resources you suggest would be beneficial in this area? Please

   briefly explain.

     a.   No

b. Got Questions already has articles on other religions. Some of the books suggested in those articles would probably be helpful. We have several writers who have been involved in other religions who would also have the personal experience (I think there are websites like that as well).

c. There are some great websites that handle specific objections to various cults. For example, a site from a former Mormon that uses correct terminology when addressing Mormon questions. Or one of our writers does well with demon-related questions. Perhaps she could share some resources to help other writers in that area.

d. McDowell's "Handbook of Today's Religions" was suggested.

e. GQM articles are usually good for broad basics. Not aware of resources that aren't book-length.

6. Please briefly explain what you feel are the Positives of having resources for cultural and belief systems /religious awareness for GQM.

a. Better understanding of where a person is coming from/how something will be perceived/received.

b. Such resources could help equip writers to answer questions and save them the time of doing their own research (i.e., having a collated resource that is "one stop" for writers could be efficient). I could also imagine a resource in which other writers can share their experiences so that it would be more of a personal resource than just collated research. Too, something like this could be helpful for new societal/cultural trends not specifically related to a different religious belief system.

  c. Ongoing training, hopefully resulting in more gracious answers to real seekers.

  d. Our writers will better understand the questions and the reasons behind them and therefore give a better answer.

  e. Greater consistency in answers, less likely to miscommunicate a point or miss a chance to clearly explain, less risk of offense, less likely to be dismissed as ignorant or unfair.

7. Please briefly explain what you feel are the Negatives of having resources for cultural and belief systems/religious awareness for GQM.

  a. Please briefly explain what you feel are the Negatives of having resources for cultural and belief systems/religious awareness for GQM.

  b. We can't know or understand where everyone is coming from.

  c. The only potential negative I see is spending time and human resources on a tool that would not be used or would not be that helpful.

  d. Would they be used? I hope so, but there is always a possibility of people not utilizing a good resource.

  e. More work for the writers

  f. Can lead to copy-paste approach. Can stifle Spirit-led responses if not properly understood (resource, not mandates)

8. Please feel free to add anything else you would like to suggest, have concerns or comments on.

  a. Would be good to have consistent resources to expand which writers can handle basic questions on those topics. Can collate ideas and points which

have been verified. Would need to be editor-controlled but easily

accessible to writers. Would need to be "enforced" in the sense that writers

should not blatantly contradict those statements (for reasons given about

accuracy, fairness, consistency).

Appendix D

Second Open-Ended Survey Results

1. What area(s) do you think primarily needs improvement for staff writers to write and answer more effectively? Please briefly explain.

   a. Clear expectations/communication.

   b. This really depends on the writer. It also depends on what works best for a particular questioner. Many, if not most, writers already answer very effectively. Some could improve basic writing skills. Some just need to be reminded to use the Bible as the primary source. Others could elaborate more on answers, whereas some could be more concise.

   c. Ongoing training, some need help knowing that they can research the answer (even if they have no understanding of the topic) instead of requesting reassignment, learning to be gracious.

   d. Better understanding of the GQ doctrinal position, and better writing skills.

   e. Careful assessment of the exact question being asked, or the root question underlying a submission.

2. What is your perception of the level of cultural awareness that staff writers may or may not have? Please briefly explain.

   a. They understand that there are cultural differences.

   b. It really depends on the writer and the questioner. We do our best to assign questions that have a cultural nuance to writers we know and/or think are experienced with that nuance, for example assigning questions that reference a custom in India to a writer who lives in India.

c. There are some writers that are excellent at this, so when a cultural question comes in, I assign it to them. Or if a question comes in from Asia or Africa (that has cultural undertones) I try to assign it to a writer who lives there or has served there. Some writers could use improvement (they are very USA minded).

d. Most of the writers have good cultural awareness. Some are locked into a particular church culture, usually having to do with denominational affiliation.

e. Reasonable, varied. Some are aware of cultural trends at home or abroad, some are not. Some are dismissive of generational changes.

3. What is your perception of the level of other belief systems/religious awareness that the staff writers may or may not have? Please briefly explain.

   a. They understand that people believe different things.

   b. It depends on the writer. We do our best to assign questions that specifically reference other religions to writers who have indicated they have knowledge about that religion or who have demonstrated willingness and interest to research such topics.

   c. Those writers who mark Cults or Religions on their profile do pretty well at this. They seem knowledgeable about various religions. I love to assign JWs or Mormons or those who were formerly in those religions or have family members. They are often more loving if they have personal experience.

    d. We have a few writers who specialize in other belief systems, and we rely on them to answer questions pertaining to those systems. Most of our writers do not specialize.

    e. Varies significantly. Typically applies to one other belief system, in depth, at most. Or to the basics of a few. Overall, better than average self-awareness than general public (realize what they don't know).

4. Do you believe that additional resources or tools in the areas of cultural and belief system religious awareness would allow the staff writers to be more effective in answering questions? Please briefly explain.

    a. We are discerning who answers what so people with experiences that fit the questioner usually answer the question.

    b. Yes, I'm sure that would be a useful tool for writers. It could broaden the options to which writers feel equipped to respond.

    c. Yes, I'm always on board for helping our writers improve. I'm not sure what that would look like, but I think that would be helpful.

    d. Yes. Some additional training or resources would be helpful. Books that provide an overview of other religions are helpful.

    e. Would be helpful to have some concise resources, targeted at writers, with key points and tips related to various systems, cultures, situations, etc.

5. Are there specific resources you suggest would be beneficial in this area? Please briefly explain.

    a. No

b. Got Questions already has articles on other religions. Some of the books suggested in those articles would probably be helpful. We have several writers who have been involved in other religions who would also have the personal experience (I think there are websites like that as well).

c. There are some great websites that handle specific objections to various cults. For example, a site from a former Mormon that uses correct terminology when addressing Mormon questions. Or one of our writers does well with demon-related questions. Perhaps she could share some resources to help other writers in that area.

d. McDowell's "Handbook of Today's Religions"

e. GQM articles are usually good for broad basics. Not aware of resources that aren't book-length.

6. Please briefly explain what you feel are the Positives of having resources for cultural and belief systems /religious awareness for GQM.

a. Better understanding of where a person is coming from/how something will be perceived/received.

b. Such resources could help equip writers to answer questions and save them the time of doing their own research (i.e., having a collated resource that is "one stop" for writers could be efficient). I could also imagine a resource in which other writers can share their experiences so that it would be more of a personal resource than just collated research. Too, something like this could be helpful for new societal/cultural trends not specifically related to a different religious belief system.

    c.   Ongoing training, hopefully resulting in more gracious answers to real seekers.

    d.   Our writers will better understand the questions and the reasons behind them and therefore give a better answer.

    e.   Greater consistency in answers, less likely to miscommunicate a point or miss a chance to clearly explain, less risk of offense, less likely to be dismissed as ignorant or unfair.

7. Please briefly explain what you feel are the Negatives of having resources for cultural and belief systems/religious awareness for GQM.

    a.   We can't know or understand where everyone is coming from.

    b.   The only potential negative I see is spending time and human resources on a tool that would not be used or would not be that helpful.

    c.   Would they be used? I hope so, but there is always a possibility of people not utilizing a good resource.

    d.   More work for the writers

    e.   Can lead to copy-paste approach. Can stifle Spirit-led responses if not properly understood (resource, not mandates)

8. Please feel free to add anything else you would like to suggest, have concerns or comments on.

    a.   N/A

    b.   N/A

    c.   N/A

    d.   N/A

e. Would be good to have consistent resources to expand which writers can handle basic questions on those topics. Can collate ideas and points which have been verified. Would need to be editor-controlled but easily accessible to writers. Would need to be "enforced" in the sense that writers should not blatantly contradict those statements (for reasons given about accuracy, fairness, consistency).

Appendix E

Third Open-Ended Survey Results

1. Only writers who lack knowledge and experience in mind, how will resources about cultural and religious awareness help them grow in their capacity to answer new and different questions.

   a. That would help with grasping the different worldviews/perspectives which questioners have, or with which they are presented.

   b. Having a source of information about other cultures and religions will help writers engage in intelligible cross-cultural dialogue. They will be able to avoid asking off-the-point questions and making incorrect assumptions.

   c. The more such writers want to increase their own knowledge on any given topic, the more they will be able to help others on those topics.

   d. Giving them training might help them understand better, but we would just likely assign them different questions that they are better at answering.

2. Only writers who lack knowledge and experience in mind, how will resources about cultural and religious awareness help them grow in their capacity and reduce request for reassignment?

   a. Having basic resources about alternate cultures/religions could reduce anxiety and limit the perception that a question requires specialized knowledge to answer.

   b. Having a source of information about other cultures and religions will make writers more comfortable/confident in tackling cross-cultural questions.

   c. The more such writers have knowledge and comfort with a topic, the more likely they will be to want to answer questions on the topic.

d. Assigning better might be a better route than fully trying to train someone, but it would help them understand better how to respond to culturally and religiously sensitive questions.

3. Only writers who lack knowledge and experience in mind, how will resources about cultural and religious awareness help them grow in their capacity and reduce follow-up questions specifically for clarification?

a. Knowing more about a worldview or culture can help narrow in on specific needs or points of conflict, making it less likely to miss a major (unspoken) aspect of a request.

b. Informed writers will already understand the basics of the culture/religion from which the question stems and will have a familiarity with the terms used by the questioner.

c. The more such writers have knowledge about a topic, the more they will understand questions related to the topic and the jargon used by questioners when asking about the topic.

d. See above same answer as last question.

4. Only writers who lack knowledge and experience in mind, how will resources about cultural and religious awareness help them grow in their capacity and increase professions of faith of the questioners?

a. More efficient answers tend to inspire greater confidence in questioners; misunderstanding of other faiths/religions invites intense skepticism that the person giving an answer fully understands.

b. Informed writers will be more adept at apologetics, considering they are familiar with different worldviews and can couch answers in ways that the reader will identify with.

c. This really depends on the work of God and the hearts of questioners. It seems that if a questioner who does not know God writes in and receives an answer that conveys understanding of the questioner and accurately addresses that questioner's posed questions and felt needs while explaining biblical truth would be more likely to hear and understand the truth presented. But, again, salvation is ultimately a work of the Holy Spirit.

d. If they could answer questioners better, there might be an increase in professions of faith.

5. Only writers who lack knowledge and experience in mind, how will resources about cultural and religious awareness help them grow spiritually themselves?

a. Always useful to understand distinctions between one's beliefs and others. Contrast is often the most useful way to explain something.

b. If nothing else, such resources should cause the writer to pray more for people around the world. Knowing that God shows no partiality (Acts 10:34), writers should try to view the world's populations from the divine perspective.

c. Learning about new things can increase our understanding of God and our appreciation of Him. When we study things that are against God, we often become more confident in His truth. When we study other cultures and see God at work there, too, we can come to appreciate God's magnitude and

creativity all the more. Also, as we study other things, we'll want to compare them to the truth of Scripture, which involves us intentionally studying Scripture more.

    d. It will help them think about what others are trying to communicate and help them grow as they learn.

6. Only writers who lack knowledge and experience in mind, what additional and specific tools, resources, training in these areas would be beneficial to provide the staff writers to be more effective and efficient in answering new and different questions?

    a. General resources on the basic worldviews of various cultures and religions. Anything from a Christian perspective focused specifically on explaining how those other approaches view spirituality and the world--in a brief, layman level format--would be useful tools.

    b. Not Sure.

    c. I don't know. Much of this seems to need to come from the self-motivation of the writers wanting to increase their knowledge of a certain topic and then spending their time doing so. GotQuestions.org has some helpful articles on certain topics already as well as some resource recommendations to study further. I would suggest going to experts on any given field for truly in-depth knowledge and study. We have good and helpful content, but are not experts in every field, and often our articles are not designed to be in-depth or extensive. Reading all of our articles on a specific topic could be a helpful start. And, as stated, those articles usually

do offer recommended resources for further study. Those resources will

likely offer even more further resources.

    d. I am not sure.

7. Please feel free to add anything else you would like to suggest, comments or have

concerns about or for the above questions.

    a. N/A

    b. N/A

    c. N/A

    d. N/A