

## Display the Value of Baptist Associations -

I had the privilege this week to consult with two different associations concerning future direction. One has a new Director of Missions (DOM) and the other is seeking the Lord for a DOM. Although both are in different places, however, each meeting involved discussion around the importance of value and how the association benefits the church. It was determined that the association must demonstrate value to the churches if it is going to expect participation and support from them. Likewise, the churches must demonstrate participation and support if they are going to receive value from the association.

There is a systematic process in the business world called “value engineering”. It is an attempt to improve the value of goods, products or services by using an “examination of function”. Value is defined as “the ratio of performance or function to cost”. Value can be increased by improving the performance or lowering the cost. In most cases, the practice identifies and removes unnecessary expenses, thereby increasing the value for the customer. Value engineering a service or product in the business world may boil down to dollars and cents that prove helpful to the bottom line. But what does it look like if applied to the local Baptist association?

An association must determine its value and how it will benefit member churches. One helpful way to do that is through an assessment and strategy review process. The review process should be followed by strategy development that allows member churches to determine the future direction and value of the association based on the needs of churches in their particular context.

Part of any review or assessment process is the asking of “hard questions” that cause us to examine how and why, we do what we do. I encourage you to ask the following questions about your association. Then, determine with the DOM to lead your association in providing great value to each of its member churches as they simultaneously provide participation and support.

- If members of the churches were asked to list why the association important - how would they answer?
- Are we connecting churches in order to reach the world, OR are we connecting churches in order to support denominational activities and ministries?
- Is the association’s goal Kingdom impact or self-preservation?
- Is there a different associational structure that would streamline our work and function more efficiently?
- Is my association shaping the future or reacting and adapting to it?
- Am I willing to embrace deep change that will help the association to be most effective?
- What will my role be as I seek to add value and relevance to my local association?