CHAPTER 1

Building Bridges Through Marketing

The Complacent Seventh-day Adventist church had a marketing problem. It had other problems, too, some even more basic than its marketing problem. But the problems were all tied together, and very few people realized how serious they were.

Complacent was one of the larger churches in its conference, with a good mix of members, though the color scheme of the congregation ran exclusively to the white, light tan, and pink end of the ethnic spectrum. Of particular note was the fact that its membership rolls included a fair number of wealthy families, which had run the church for quite some time (and planned to continue doing so, thank you). In fact, most of the money that had gone into building the church, the church school, the community center, and every major program of the church had come from a handful of people. Every time the church budget got a little behind, one of these members stepped in to clean up the deficit. Every time renovation of any of the facilities was needed, a committee of the same people was formed, and the same people gave to complete the project.

Now, there could be no criticism of the commitment of these founding families. They were accustomed to getting behind things and pushing. They were doers. And the church had prospered, despite the fact that most of the other members tended to stand by and watch.

So you can see that the church was a little - well, maybe more than a little - "cliquish" and "clannish." Everybody who was anybody was related to the founding families, often to several of them. Occasionally new Adventists entered the community and got involved in the church program in various ways, at least for a time. However, none of them ever really broke into the "inner circle" that ran the church.

The Complacent Adventist church was quite pleased with itself. It was powerful in the councils of the brethren, got whatever pastor it wanted, and made sure he knew that he was the hired help, not the true leader. In fact, virtually everyone in the congregation (other than the founding families, of course) was made to feel, at times, like the hired help. This, in itself, wasn't the marketing problem. But it resulted in marketing problems on several levels.

You will discover in this book that I'm a strong proponent of involving the laity more fully in directing the church. It's a principle, in my opinion, that lies at the very core of true denominational renewal. However, in this situation, a small group of wealthy laymen had managed to lock up all the options in the Complacent Adventist church. The situation was considerably less positive than a surface view might indicate.

The marketing problem was that Complacent was perceived in the community as an elitist congregation, run by a bunch of rich snobs who drove Mercedes, Cadillacs, and Lincolns and who looked down their noses at those who hadn't accumulated as much wealth along life's path. Whether or not this was an accurate assessment, and whether or not it should be viewed as "bad" or "good" in any moral or spiritual sense isn't the issue considered in this context. From a marketing perspective, what mattered was that the church was perceived in this manner and that this perception was turning off many potential customers who really needed to hear the message of Jesus Christ as seen through the unique emphasis of Seventh-day Adventism.

Now, not everyone in the Complacent Adventist church was like this. There were poor families, almost poor families, and families that weren't poor, but weren't rich, either. And these members did bring in their friends and relatives to visit, and occasionally to join. There were even baptisms during the various well-funded evangelistic campaigns offered by the church. But there was no significant growth in the church. Indeed, it was common for as many people to drift away as came in.

Still, by the typical measurements of church life, Complacent was a successful church. It wasn't in any financial trouble. There was no racial strife within the congregation. Theological agitators, whenever they appeared on the scene, were quickly disposed of. Forgiveness was extended readily to a wealthy member caught in an act that otherwise may have had severe consequences for a poorer person. Sabbath services were fairly well attended, though many had a hard time staying awake for the sermon.

But ministry, making a telling impact for Jesus Christ in the community, just wasn't happening. The community knew what the product was the Adventist church was offering. And it simply didn't appeal. Unless things changed significantly, true marketing success, by which I mean true ministry, simply wouldn't happen. The marketing problems of the Complacent Seventh-day Adventist church were

complex and difficult to solve, especially since they were intermixed with so many other, more discreetly spiritual problems. But they were not insurmountable.

Your church may be nothing like Complacent. However, the reality of marketing problems is common in many Adventist churches in North America today. And they're not going to go away by wishing. Thoughtful, aggressive action is necessary.

As Christians, the world is our marketplace. We are literally surrounded with potential customers. The problem is, they don't all realize they're our customers. And we don't always realize we're in the marketing business. So, we often fail to hook up with one another as well as we might.

If we're going to do better at marketing our services, some bridges of understanding and communication need to be built, involving some basic marketing concepts. And that's what this chapter will review. But don't worry, I'm not going to go technical on you, at least not very technical.

We will be discussing some of the classic marketing concepts and tools, but only to provide structure for the applications we'll be making to the church. Once you get past the jargon, marketing is actually quite simple. Most of the concepts make a lot of common sense. Those that don't, I don't understand either, and I won't be including them in the chapters that follow.

This chapter should be viewed as an introduction to some of the basic ideas on marketing, and an attempt to build some bridges between these marketing concepts and the life of the church. Obviously, not all marketing concepts can be brought to bear upon such bridge-building. Marketing is a science that has been developed to enable companies to compete more successfully. It is by nature concerned with making money and maximizing profits, and to that degree doesn't always fit well with spiritual concerns.

But the chasm may not be as wide as an initial glance might suggest. Just as businesses can't afford to be so shortsighted that they operate only on the profit motivation, one of the undeniable truths about church life is that money - and the most efficient raising and spending thereof - is very important to the activities of any church. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, as a legal entity, was originally set up to hold property and manage the contributions of members. And the role money plays in church life, both from collection and distribution

perspectives, continues to be significant. Marketing is part of the process by which we both collect and distribute those funds.

So, both businesses and churches are concerned about people and money. Both want to allocate resources in a manner that brings the best return. And both want to go about what they're doing in a manner that brings them success in reaching their goals and aspirations. Marketing helps in all these areas.

Basic Conceptual Models

Perhaps the best way to contrast some of the various ways organizations look at what they're doing - and churches, as one specific form of organization, look at what they're doing - is to examine several different conceptual models around which organizations structure their efforts. Several of these models may be operating in an organization at the same time, at least to some degree. But there are four basic conceptual models generally in use today.1

1. The production concept. Companies that operate out of the production concept believe that consumers will favor those products that are most widely available and at low cost.

This is the K-Mart and McDonald's philosophy. When Henry Ford developed the assembly line, he was attempting to bring the cost of the automobile down to a price where every American could buy one. Similarly, if a physician were to line up ten patients in examination or treatment rooms, have nurses and other assistants gather preliminary data, and then visit each one for only the briefest period of time, that physician would be using the production concept. In order to keep his or her income at a desired level, yet keep the price of each visit low enough to satisfy all the markets the physician serves (patients, insurance carriers, federal and state regulators), he or she would need to operate what would seem very much like an assembly line. The price the physician would charge would not be low, in any absolute sense, but it would be far lower than if the physician did all the work.

Churches employ the production concept when they seek the largest possible membership by reducing or eliminating all controversial elements, such as demanding church standards or distinct and controversial theological positions. Their motto is: "It doesn't matter what you believe or how you live, just fellowship with us."

Know any churches like this?

In reality, you probably don't know many. Most churches have at least some standards or a few doctrines that the pastor, at least, adheres to with some conviction. But there are churches that are certainly at the production end of the spectrum. And it is not uncommon for them to grow quite rapidly. Many nondenominational or community churches take this posture. They allow their members to get a sense of being religious, without much effort involved. This appeals to human nature. But a closer look shows that despite the easygoing attitude, which ought to appeal, there is tremendous turnover in membership. People come in and go out with frightening rapidity. They like the low standards and lack of controversy, but they find they're not fed, challenged or inspired. And the lack of characteristic structure imparts an impersonal feeling to the whole operation.

Of course, the production concept does emphasizes the importance of making ideas available to as many people as possible. The assembly-line approach to manufacturing did enable people who would otherwise never have been able to buy automobiles to do so. And it may well be that we as Adventists have allowed our message to remain accessible to too few people, perhaps by making it seem too complex or by "majoring in minors."

The production concept emphasizes being efficient and thinking big. It builds on time and motion studies, examining whether we're spinning our wheels in certain areas, spending time and money in places where the potential impact is relatively minor. And it focuses on the broader marketplace, rather than becoming mired in parochialism.

Whatever else we say about it, the church may learn much from this perspective. We may not want to operate wholly on the production concept, but we need to embrace its positive elements. Religion does need to be made "user-friendly," so that those not steeped in its terminology can grasp it and sense its applicability to their situation.

2. The product concept. It might seem that the words, production and product aren't too different, but the concepts behind them are exactly the opposite. Organizations employing the product concept believe that quality, performance, and specialized features will attract consumers better than just low price. In this, they are on the opposite end of the spectrum from the production concept organization, which would tend to focus on the lowest prices and the best locations.

Mercedes-Benz is a product-oriented company. It would rather sell fewer cars, but make more money on each one. This opposes the approach American manufacturers typically follow, where sheer

volume is more central to success. Product companies sell on the image of being the best. Rolex sells fewer watches than Timex, but part of its success is based on how few people can afford its product. Both products have a market, but they go after different customers. The upscale producer sells his product on a certain image it holds, based on perceived higher value, an image that would be radically compromised if everyone had one.

The Seventh-day Adventist denomination tends to be product oriented. We're not just offering religious services and a belief system. We're offering what we believe to be the very best in religion. We acknowledge - indeed we emphasize - it may cost more to be an Adventist (in terms of what you might have to give up). However, we celebrate the satisfaction of knowing we belong to the elite - the people who have the Truth. This is an issue we'll explore more fully in our chapter on price. But due to this orientation, in a sense we ourselves have dictated the fact that we'll have only limited numbers in our church. Whether we've done so consciously or not, we generally feel keeping the product scarce tends to increase its perceived value.

If this characterization disturbs you, keep in mind that it disturbed the Jewish religious community during Jesus' day, too, when Jesus applied it to them. They viewed themselves as morally and spiritually better than the rest of the world, and in this perception had missed the whole point of God's blessings. The truth was, God had blessed the Jewish community so that they could be a blessing to the world. But they hoarded God's blessings and came to believe they had been given because they deserved. They built walls to protect what they had, rather than becoming missionaries to a needy world. Even the early Jewish-Christian leaders had difficulty with this, attempting to restrain the ministry of the apostle Paul to the Gentile world. For example, they demanded that he first make Jews out of the pagans. Paul rejected this vehemently and successfully, sensing that God wanted the broadest possible appeal for the gospel message.

It's important to keep in mind we do want to offer a quality religious product to the world. But we need to be very sensitive to the potential pitfalls such an approach displays. God didn't call us to be religious elitists, but servants (see John 13 :3-17 for a very clear presentation of this point). We can't afford to be smug and self-sufficient. The fact is, we have received in order to give. And we must be wholly oriented toward giving if we're to fulfill our commission and find our focus as Christians.

There has been a tendency within denominations - including ours - toward turning the church into little more than a religious club. We list a set of entry requirements, such as these:

- get baptized (by immersion)
- take off jewelry (wedding rings are "sort of" OK)
- give up smoking (a church absolute)
- give up drinking (except in the most liberal homes)
- pay membership fees (return tithe).

Then we ask our new members to maintain some rather exacting standards of behavior:

- keep the Sabbath (which has lots of implications)
- lay off the bacon and the shrimp (we have soy analogs)
- no more movies (videos are OK in the privacy of your own home and movies are OK in church settings)
- participate in Ingathering (a somewhat dying icon)

Finally, we elect officers of the club (the conference "brethren") and give them certain authority over us to enforce the standards of membership. And we sometimes become so preoccupied with perpetuating the membership concept, with its privileges and obligations, that we forget why we're really here.

If I seem to have "gone to preaching," it's to stress a basic point here in encouraging a sense of urgency about adopting a marketing perspective. I've seen too many people damaged due to the "religious club" mentality in the church. I've seen them embittered and driven away because we've forgotten just what we're here to do. And, worse, when they go, they are sometimes so frustrated with us that they contribute more to demarketing Adventism than the combined efforts of the churches to market.

Somehow, we need to recapture the vision that the church isn't an exclusive social organization. It's a vehicle for nurturing lost souls and for spreading the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

The product concept tells us that our religious product needs to be of the highest quality. And that's a perspective we can't afford to lose. But the product also needs to be available to everyone.

3. The selling concept. Organizations that operate out of a selling concept believe that consumers, if left alone, will not buy enough of the organization's product. So in order to succeed, the organization must be very aggressive in promoting those products.

The automobile industry is a good case in point. Television, newspapers, magazines - virtually every medium available - is filled with advertisements inviting the public to buy cars. And when you go into a showroom, you are literally surrounded by salespeople. Why? Because the industry believes you won't buy unless strongly induced. Political campaigns are also operated on the selling concept. The candidate stomps through voting precincts, spends millions on television advertisements, endures endless debates and press conferences to persuade the voters to choose him. He says what the audience wants to hear, varying his message according to the mix of the audience, desperately trying to shake enough hands, kiss enough babies, and raise enough contributions to keep his campaign alive until voting day.

Fund-raising efforts, either in the church or the secular arena, are typically operated on the selling concept as well. We know that people don't want to give, so we create remarkable systems to induce them into doing so. We offer them recognition in the form of plaques, buildings named after them, and commendations from "the front." And we use subtle psychological ploys to make them feel nostalgic, guilty, or greedy enough to give.

Evangelism, it can be argued, is typically structured along a selling concept too. It is assumed that the nonbelieving public doesn't really want to hear what the evangelist has to say. So massive advertising campaigns are inaugurated and the whole church is organized to invite friends and neighbors. Appeals from the pulpit are used to "inspire" the membership to extend themselves in bringing potential customers to hear the evangelist. The Ingathering program of the Adventist Church is another historic selling-concept activity. Generations of Adventists have been committed to weeks of house-to-house solicitation, where the good deeds of the church are presented in an effort to induce the general public to contribute to ongoing programs.

Again, keep clearly in mind that selling isn't bad. As we've observed earlier, there will need to be some selling activity in any behavioral model that seeks to communicate with the customer. We can't always expect the customer to come seeking our product. However, when the selling becomes primary, or increasingly difficult to accomplish, it

should signal there may be a problem with the product or the systems we're using to show how it meets the customers' needs.

4. The marketing concept. Organizations operating on the marketing concept believe their first objective must be to determine the wants and needs of their target markets. Then they must deliver need-satisfying products in a more effective manner than the competition.

Marketing-oriented organizations use language like, "Find wants and fill them" and "Make what you can sell instead of trying to sell what you make." When a company like Burger King presents the theme "Have it your way," it's doing marketing. When the Four Seasons hotel chain advertises "A Good Hotel Reacts To Your Requests. A Grand Hotel Anticipates Them,"2 it's using the marketing concept.

Of course, the marketing concept is the theme of this book, so we'll be elaborating on it in far greater detail as we go along. But one thing is worth noting here. When the church offers a seminar in family life or parenting, because need for such programming has been identified, it is utilizing the marketing concept. When a denomination such as ours spends thousands of dollars to provide assistance to those in need, delivering food and clothing to those who have been devastated by disaster or poverty, it is utilizing the marketing concept. When a pastor counsels a person in crisis, helping that person arrive at greater peace of mind and a strategy for coping with the crisis, he's employing the marketing concept. Of course these activities are motivated by love. Of course they are selfless. Of course they are but honest responses to evident deeds in the community. But that's just the point. Until we're identifying what people want, need, or demand - and then orchestrating our efforts to offer what they're needing - everything we do will be an uphill struggle.

Let me make myself clear on one point here. Marketing isn't a substitute for caring. It's not an artificial system to appear as though we care when we really don't. Instead, the marketing concept, as applied to church activity, involves a careful analysis of what we are doing in relationship to what our customers need us to be doing. If a program isn't meeting anybody's needs, then the marketing concept asks why we're wasting our energies and dollars on it. It may be a program or activity that was useful in another area or era, but doesn't fit where we are. Or it may be that it meets needs that aren't felt yet, and will only be appropriate after we've spent considerable time stimulating needs, so it

will be obvious to the potential customers that what we want to offer fills a need.

Take, for example, the midweek prayer meeting service. In many churches, prayer meeting is attended by the pastor, the head elder, and two or three silver-haired members. Even some pastors have opted to hand the service over to others, freeing them to do more "important" activities. Yet, if I were to suggest we should abandon prayer meeting because typically no one is coming, I'd get an immediate outcry: "Don't tamper with something so fundamental to church life!" But the question is, with so little support, how can we assert the midweek service is integral to church life?

So, should we abandon it? Not necessarily. And maybe so.

This is a difficult question, made doubly so because of the difference between theory and practice. The fact is, prayer meeting is working for some churches. These days I'm living in the Bible Belt. And, here, everything is different from the rest of the nation. On Wednesday evening you can drive from church to church checking out parking lots to see which churches are marketing and which are merely selling. It is normal, here, to see church parking lots as full on Wednesday evening as on Sunday morning. Normal. Yet, the Adventist parking lot is still as lonely and forlorn here as in California or New York.

Why? I'm persuaded part of the reason is that we've approached prayer meeting from a selling perspective, rather than a marketing one. From week to week the pastor expresses his concern about the low prayer meeting attendance (trying to sell attendance). But we've typically used prayer meeting to study bits of Adventist theology irrelevant to our lifestyles, confusing and perhaps boring even to our own membership, or to train our people to go out and sell Adventism. This sales training approach makes the members anxious and fills them with guilt over their past failures. And we wonder why no one comes.

In a church I pastored many years ago, some very creative members instituted what we called "the Saturday Night Program." It was a very casual time, when we did a lot of singing and sharing (much as some other denominations do in their prayer meeting services). People brought with them whatever musical instruments they might have, regardless of how accomplished they were at playing them, and shared their joy in the Lord. Others shared what God had been doing in their lives during the week. Usually, the testimonies weren't unusual or spectacular. They were, however, very personal and meaningful.

Sometimes, someone shared some biblical concepts God had showed him or her. Often a member of the group requested special prayer. We would stop the program at such a time and have someone pray for that specific need. And then we'd go on.

As the pastor, I was part of what was happening, in the sense that I shared the experience and participated with the others. I even played my guitar - well, sort of played - but I wasn't "in charge." I was a fellow participant in the experience, rather than the paid leader, which shifted the dynamics considerably from typical church meetings.

Of all the programming I've been associated with through the years, I can't think of any situation where the needs of a particular and diverse group of persons were being met more immediately and personally than during the Saturday Night Program. Young people, who would otherwise have been involved in secular activities on a Saturday evening, thronged to the program. Non-Adventists, who were looking for a church home, were first introduced to Adventism in this setting, and went on to become active members. Some who were able to get their spiritual needs met in no other setting came regularly to the Saturday Night Program.

Not every church situation merits this particular approach. But in this church at that time, it met the needs of the customer. In retrospect, I can see that it was a very real experience of marketing according to the marketing concept.3

A Developing Perception of Marketing

You may now have a reasonable idea of what marketing is, as it relates to the church. But then again, due to the pressures of traditional thinking and categorizing, there still may be some confusion. As people begin to grasp the concepts of marketing, there is a gradual evolution in their perception of what it really is. There are five steps they typically pass through:

1. Marketing is telling our story, through advertising, sales promotion, and publicity. Many in church leadership positions, in reviewing this material, might come to the conclusion that what I'm really advocating is increased expenditures in the typical marketing areas, such as doing more national advertising, hiring marketing specialists in our conference offices, and generally upping our investment in promoting Adventism.

Decisions to do these things might be helpful, particularly if done in concert with some of the specific suggestions to follow: But without a broader understanding of marketing, I suspect the dollars spent would largely be wasted. Quite simply, we don't need to promote more until we're clearer on what we need to be promoting and to whom we should be doing the promoting. Marketing isn't just the doing. It's also the thinking we do prior to the doing, so that the doing does what it's supposed to do.

Marketing is not just getting the word out. It involves that, of course, but marketing also involves determining just what the word should be, to whom it should be going, and then how best to get it to them.

2. Marketing is a welcoming environment, characterized by smiling and a friendly atmosphere. We would all agree with the need for more warmth in our churches, wouldn't we? And good marketing does involve friendliness. However, that's far from all it is.

Many who read these words may be challenged to make the church a warmer, more welcoming environment, feeling that in doing so, they've taken a major step in marketing. And they have. But again, as with advertising efforts, while a friendly church is important in an overall marketing approach, to stop here would be to ignore other, equally important factors. Warmth, alone, can be very shallow. Jim and Tammy Bakker on the PTL program had one of the warmest shows on television. Good feelings just seemed to ooze from the screen. But it was all a sham. Dollars raised were being used to support a regal and unethical lifestyle for the Bakkers and many of their senior employees.

A friendly atmosphere that isn't supported by sincere seeking after the will of God, with programming and support structures that meet real human needs, can lead to a sense of false promises and failed commitments.

3. Marketing is better programming, featuring large doses of innovation. Offering better types of programs, more sensitive to the needs of the church and the community, is an important part of good marketing. It's an element often sorely missing in the life of the church. However, taken alone, it's a technical approach that appeals particularly to those with a strong programming bent. It does not extend the marketing concept to its fullest.

Churches that innovate with better programming typically do grow. They're clearly stepping in the right direction. For example, the church growth movement today is a powerful tool that has crossed

denominational lines and helped congregations all over the world, including many Adventist congregations, get better organized.

But there is yet more we can do in the marketing concept than merely offer newer and better programming. We also need to be sure we're leading the customer to the point where his or her deepest needs are being satisfied. Along with our efforts to attract people, we need to be sure we're connecting them to God in a very real and personal way.

4. Marketing is discovering our niche through better positioning. One of the key perspectives marketing provides is the realization that we can't be all things to all people. We need to find a niche that best fits our capabilities and commitments. When we learn how to position ourselves against the competition, we'll be able to show how the strengths of Adventism meet precisely the needs of potential customers.

If we really believe we're a movement called into existence by God for a specific purpose, then positioning will enable us to make our distinctive offerings so appealing that we will no longer need to struggle so mightily to sell Adventism. Our niche, as a denomination, is one we need to understand better than we do, and one we need to expand in a thoughtful manner.

But there is a danger, too, in trying to position ourselves artificially, without any true commitment to a particular niche. We might discover, for example, that we could draw far more members by making a fundamental change in our views - which might be inconsistent with our inner convictions as a denomination. This would be a tragic, and ultimately futile gesture. Marketing has to do with what we are, not just what we say we are.

5. Marketing is organizing the church for greater ministry through marketing analysis, planning, and control. This is the most advanced concept of marketing. This is where we see that marketing isn't a particular program or short-term emergency effort, but a way of orchestrating all our activity. When the marketing concept becomes a way of life at all levels in the organization, when church administrators, pastors, and lay members are all sensitive to the marketplace and offer continual new approaches for meeting community needs, a telling and lasting impact can be made.

This view of marketing goes to the very root of our church, calling for a person-orientation that touches everything we do. It colors our priorities to such a profound degree that we become servants to mankind, so involved with giving, that elitist perspectives are

swallowed up in loving commitment to others. This sort of thing doesn't happen accidentally. It emerges from a clear sense of direction, supported by a prayerful commitment to being God's servants.

Doing Marketing Research

While any detailed review of market research doesn't fall within the scope of this book (due to the highly technical aspects of the discipline), some comment on marketing research is essential. We need to understand its importance to the typical business operation, as well as how it might be used for church outreach. Marketing research is based on the rather obvious notion that if you want to know what your customers want, you need to find them and ask them.

This isn't always as easy as it sounds. Just who and where your customers are, even in a church marketing sense, and how to ask what you need to ask are often matters of considerable complexity. Marketing research is an area of high specialization, with many intriguing computer models and statistical analysis profiles in general use today. It's usually done for companies by syndicated-service research firms, custom marketing research firms, or specialty-line marketing research firms. They study and report on such arcane matters as determination of market characteristics, measurement of market potentials, market-share analysis, sales analysis, studies of business trends, competitive-product studies, short-range forecasting, new-product acceptance and potential, long-range forecasting, and pricing studies.4

I told you it was a specialized field, didn't I? Market researchers use several different sources for gathering their data. They do observational research, survey research, experimental research, questionnaires, and even use a few mechanical instruments, such as galvanometers, which measure the strength of a subject's interest or the emotions aroused during exposure to a product or picture.

The only point I want to make is that it's amazing how little we as Christians do to find out what our customers are expecting from us. We seem to assume we know human nature well enough to tailor our approaches to the broadest possible audience. I suspect we would gain a tremendous insight just from surveying our own members, discovering what programming is working for them and what isn't, or where they would like to become more involved in the life of the church.

The key is information. How much information do we have on our customers, how good is it, and how are we using it? Are we getting better at anticipating their needs? Do we know, one way or the other? Some of us, I suspect, really don't want to know too much about our customers, for fear we'll find out how poorly we're doing at understanding and meeting their needs. But this is a hopeless approach. The only way to improve is by listening well, thinking creatively, and then moving aggressively to meet the real needs of our customers.

Setting Marketing Goals and Objectives

One of the critical functions of good marketing is that it forces the organization (including the spiritual organization) to take a careful look at what it is really all about, in terms of its goals and objectives. Even businesses view themselves as having a mission, and one of the early tasks of marketing is to write what is called a "mission statement." The mission statement is a motivating expression, which encompasses what the business sees as its purpose for existence. It describes where the company has been and where it's going, outlining its business domain, which includes the customers it is pursuing, the needs those customers display, and the technology or offerings that will satisfy those needs.

Clarifying what an organization is all about, in marketing terms, provides the opportunity to set more meaningful goals and objectives, particularly with reference to the customer. For example, if Revlon sees its business merely as making cosmetics, it will approach the marketplace far differently than if it sees its business as selling hope (businesses do use such profound-sounding language in their mission statements). If Xerox sees its business merely as making copying equipment, it will approach the marketplace far differently than if it sees itself as helping improve office productivity. And when a church gets a clearer picture of what it's all about, that vision can transform how it approaches its potential customers. In the next chapter, we're going to spend some time looking at our product and trying to clarify just what it is we're offering customers. Hopefully, out of that discussion will come a clearer picture of what we're all about too.

There are many systems available for enabling organizations to get a better handle on fixing goals and objectives. All such systems allow the organization to set long-range and medium-range strategies, out of which they may develop specific and detailed marketing tactics, budgets, and controls. One of the better known of these is called

"management by objectives" (MBO), where the entire organization is required to establish, from the bottom up, quantitative measurements of what it plans to achieve at each level in the organization. MBO is a powerful business system, when properly used. And that, of course, is the crunch. MBO has seldom been given the three-to five-year implementation time needed to be fully operational in a company. MBO isn't really a marketing tactic, per se, but good management is certainly part of the foundation for good marketing.

I'm not advocating that the church should introduce MBO into its structure. However, I'm fully persuaded that we could be more successful in many of our endeavors, including doing effective marketing, if we would spend more time identifying objective measures for church activity. When I was a church pastor, I had the typical problem with annual Ingathering goals. But I seldom failed to meet them, supporting the value of goals and objectives, even when they can be an irritant. Business psychologists have been able to demonstrate that there is intrinsic motivational power in setting goals and objectives. People will work harder, and in a more effective manner, when there are specific goals in place, even if there are no direct rewards attached.

Another current system involves turning each strategic business unit (SBU) within an organization into an entrepreneurial unit. A business would thus allow various divisions to compete against each other to come up with better ideas and more progressive strategies and allow them to profit directly from such innovation. In the church setting, SBU's might refer to departments in the conference or each local church or perhaps even various departments within the church. The concept behind entrepreneurial units is that if smaller components in an organization can bring their unique creativity and drive to individual tasks, the impact on the whole organization can be profound. We sacrifice some control, but we gain much in freeing the creative energies within each unit.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been among those denominations that have typically employed top-down control systems. The Roman Catholic Church is, of course, the utmost advocate and representative of this approach. It has many obvious advantages as a system for controlling theological or behavioral divergences. It has allowed Catholicism to survive longer than any other current human institution. But one weakness of this system is that creativity and innovation are stifled.

This, too, may be an area where a marketing sensitivity might impact on church life. The ideas and creative energies of Adventist laity could very well be the key to future success.

The Marketing Environment

The marketing perspective essentially puts us in contact with the various publics that might be affected by or interested in our services. We can't progress unless we're extremely sensitive to what these publics are like, both in terms of their needs and their perceptions of us as suppliers. There are two major groupings of these publics:

1. The microenvironment. Within the church itself there are several key publics that must be kept satisfied if the organization is to be successful. There are many we could mention here, but a sense of the issue can be achieved by listing only a few:

- Administrators. As the people who "run" the church, administrators tend to demand a fairly major say in what gets done and how it happens. Any effort to expand the witness of the church that doesn't first ascertain the support of the hierarchy is unlikely to succeed. Internal marketing often starts here, since programming in our organization tends to be a top-down process. In my experience, most administrators honestly want to see the Adventist product marketed widely and successfully. However, they are sometimes motivated by agendas that deal more with satisfying the various personalities and groups they serve than supporting creative innovations. Politics is a factor in all organizations. However, it is almost always a negative force, getting in the way of progress.

Almost by definition, administrators are the most conservative force in the denomination. They see themselves and function as a backstop to preserve the assets and interests of the organization. The value of administrators lies in their ability to keep the organization on center, moving on a steady path.

The danger is that their commitment to order may at times place them in opposition to needed progress. The responsibility of those seeking to market the church more widely is to state their case so well

that even the administrators are persuaded a particular strategy makes sense.

- Pastors. Pastors monitor the pulse of the church. Within their parish, they wield a power that can strongly support or hinder any programming. Even conference administrators depend on the pastor's support for ideas or programs they wish to propose. If the pastor is the voice for progressive ideas and is willing to enlist his lay members in true leadership activity, remarkable things can happen. If not, typically little happens.

Having been a pastor and a salesman (and a manager of salespeople), I can assert that generally the better preachers are born salesmen. What they do in the pulpit is a very defined type of selling. They are taking the Word of God and interpreting it to their congregations in such a manner that the listeners "buy" into the message of Jesus Christ, week after week. In a later chapter we'll look more carefully into how pastors can market, rather than sell, and thus increase the impact of their ministry.

- Educators. At all levels, educators are among the most potent voices in the church, often possessing influence they don't even realize they have. In the local congregation, they are often among the better educated, more articulate members, able to bring fresh ideas and to interface with various publics in a very positive manner. At the upper levels, educators are frequently individuals who have gone to outside institutions of higher learning and been exposed to the ideas and systems of the public and private sectors.

They are a resource we should be using far more than we typically do.

- Theologians. Having sat at the feet of Adventist theologians at the Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University and having received a graduate degree from them, I have a special place in my heart for the struggles through which these often misunderstood individuals pass. We expect a great deal of our theologians, yet we seldom give them their due.

To the degree that we believe Adventist theology is static, set in stone, we reduce our theologians to little more than technicians. They are in place merely to prepare our preachers and Bible teachers to fill their jobs. Training pastors is an important function, deserving of our best. However, the creative energies of our theologians are such that we ought to be using them far more widely in the broader church setting than we do.

If we can trust them to teach our preachers, we ought to trust them to preach to our congregations and take a broader leadership role in the church.

- •Older members. In a religious setting, the older members of the congregation play a very central role. They, better than anyone else, are able to pass along the "feel" of early Adventism, including the sense of our being a movement, rather than merely a church. Their years of experience tend to give them a sense of perspective we deeply need in these hectic, traumatic days. However, it is also common for older members to resist change vigorously. They use all their sometimes considerable financial clout to stop whatever they feel contradicts what they're accustomed to, regardless of its merit.

No programming can be successful over any extended period of time if it doesn't have the support of the older membership.

- Younger members. The youth are our future. Our efforts to market the church will prevail to the degree that we enlist their energy and enthusiasm. To the degree that we ignore them, we're sealing our own frustration. Quite frankly, we live in a youth-oriented society, and our young people, more than anyone else, can help us stay in touch with the outside world. When we allow our programming to come across as stale and uninteresting to our youth, we're encouraging them to look elsewhere. This is a serious mistake that we continue to make, over and over.
- Educated class. More so than many denominations, Adventists have a strong educated class, many of them educated in our own institutions of higher learning. The fact that we have many educated people in our congregations challenges our pastors to

make their sermons both stimulating and interesting. Some educated people are frustrated by having someone profess to tell them what to do or believe while using poor grammar, making embarrassing statements from the pulpit, or showing a lack of poise or intelligence and an inability to place thoughts in an orderly progression. A pastor doesn't need to be brilliant to be successful with his educated members, but he does need to be a thorough professional in all that he does.

- Working class. Interestingly enough, most of the new members of the Adventist church come from the working class. We don't win many converts from the educated classes. Perhaps this is due to the nature of our typical evangelistic approaches and perhaps due to the self-sufficiency that tends to accompany greater achievements in our society. But we educate the children of working-class people, so that they become members of the educated class. Still, working-class people are the backbone of our congregations. They tend to take their religion very seriously and serve as the most potent resource in our congregations.
- Women. The women's movement has accomplished many significant changes in the ways we all think and live, regardless of what we may think of various individuals who've occupied leadership positions or some of the strategies employed. Today, women represent an unusually viable resource for marketing the church. We need to learn how to better utilize their potential. And we must also be far more sensitive to their unique needs, offering programming and opportunities for involvement that stretch them and help them achieve their capabilities. Frankly, the larger percentage of our members are women, and it's wrong not to employ them at the highest levels of activity.
- Men. Church leadership positions have usually been filled by men, and this is still true to the largest extent. However, for the church to market itself in today's world, there will be a need for increasing numbers of women to move into decision-making positions. This will only happen when men with foresight and courage elect to open the necessary door of opportunity for them. It's a trend we can resist, at least for a while. But to do so would be wrong and make us vulnerable to criticisms we don't need to face.

- Homosexuals. While many Adventist members feel ambivalent about the homosexual movement, as well as homosexuals as individuals (particularly in light of the AIDS epidemic), they are a force to be reckoned with - people who deserve our understanding and ministry as much as anyone else. Surely, the love of Jesus Christ extends to homosexuals too. From a marketing point of view, we need to be known for an enlightened posture toward our homosexual members. This doesn't entail an endorsement of their lifestyle, but it does entail a generous spirit and a desire to help.
- Heterosexuals. The sexuality of our membership is a fact of life we can't ignore. Sexuality is a vital part of a balanced life. When we convey, consciously or unconsciously, that the church is antisex, we tend to repress our members' sexuality, almost making it a sin to be actively male or female. We stifle the flow of creative energy that often serves as the force behind major contributions to society. We contribute to situations where those with inhibited sexual energies may find themselves unprepared for confrontation with the real world, which is often rampant with sexual undertows. And we sometimes put in movement forces that result in extreme sexual pressure among our own members, particularly in major institutional settings, where there are large numbers of unmarried and divorced people, who particularly need to know how to deal with the unique sexual pressures their status provides.

Biblical admonitions regarding sexuality do not find fault with the human need for sexual outlet. After all, God made us the way we are. Instead, they focus on the damaging results that stem from inappropriate sexual activity. If the church is to play a major role in pointing out what is dangerous or inappropriate in the area of sexual behavior, it must also accept the responsibility of articulating guidelines on the positive and legitimate ways members can express their heterosexual urges.

Our pastors shouldn't be sheltered from the reality of sexual patterns in our society. They shouldn't be allowed to pass through their entire pastoral training naive about their own legitimate sexual needs or those of the people to whom they will minister. Prospective pastors should be carefully screened relative to their own marriages and sexual

perceptions. Otherwise we run the risk of loosing on our congregations men and women whose confusion over their own sexuality or sexual needs damages their ability to lead the church in this important area of life. Repressing a person's sexual nature is like blowing up a balloon until it's ready to explode. It's dangerous for anyone, but particularly dangerous for pastors. The very last thing we need today is more pastors whose unhappy marriages make them susceptible to the attractions of parishioners or potential converts of the opposite sex. In every aspect of church life we need a well-adjusted, positive ministry. This includes sexuality too.

- Special-interest groups. Any congregation or conference has within it numerous groups of individuals who cluster in support of their distinctive viewpoints or interests. These can be professional groups, such as lawyers or physicians, lay leadership groups with the clout of deep bank accounts, or bodies of believers who cluster for theological or other unique interests. We need to be open to the needs of such special interest groups, but careful about allowing them to dictate church policy.
- Extremists on the left. There have been times in our society when those whose views were to the left of center have been able to influence policy with wide-ranging impact. However, due to the fundamentally conservative nature of our denomination, this has seldom been our problem. The more continual problem in our church is that the voice of the left, by which I mean the more liberal members of our congregations, has not been heard at all. Balance is the key. We cannot allow extremists of any ilk to dictate church policy. But we need to listen to all viewpoints and pick and choose among various ideas on their own merit.
- Extremists on the right. Adventism has struggled against extremists on the right down through its history. Whether they call themselves the Shepherd's Rod, Brins-meads, or whatever, they have urged us into various theological postures that stood in vigorous opposition to historic Christianity. The dangers of legalism are a constant challenge to a group with high respect for the Ten Commandments, which includes honoring the seventh-day Sabbath as a part of the Law of God. When we err,

it's usually on the conservative side of an issue. This should give us perspective on our tendencies and a clear sense of what we need to do to maintain ourselves in the center.

- Denominational employees. In a tightly knit organization such as ours, large numbers of denominational employees sometimes find themselves in an awkward spot. Because they depend on the church for their livelihood, they are inhibited from the full participation in the life of the church, as is enjoyed by those who are not financially dependent upon it. Their freedom in Christ is compromised by their dependence on their regular paycheck. No marketing strategy for the church can hope to succeed that doesn't take into account the dependencies of the denominationally employed. Any threat to the status-quo that is a threat to the financial stability of these individuals, will be resisted.
- Assertive lay organizations. We touched on this before, in the special-interest category, but we need to acknowledge specifically the growing role lay members are playing and must play in the future of the church. To the degree that salaried church leaders diverge (or are perceived to diverge) from the will of the laity, there will be an unacceptable tension within the denomination. For this reason, vested interests cannot be maintained for their own sake. The salaried power structure of the organization must be sensitive to the need for influence among the laity. This does not constitute an abdication of control. It merely represents a sharing of control with others who have as legitimate an interest in the future of the church as do those who draw a salary from the organization.
- Major financial contributors. One must suppose that until the Lord comes there will always be those with more money and more clout than others. When Jesus said we'd always have the poor with us, we must presume He also was inferring we'd always have the rich. These individuals are sometimes generous and supportive, with no agenda besides that of their individual congregation's will. However, there are also those so accustomed to the privilege their status has allowed them to enjoy, that they feel free to dominate their congregations and dictate to their conferences. The marketing challenge is keeping the good will of those with money, utilizing them to the fullest,

while at the same time keeping them from dominating the congregational agenda.

Each of these groups, along with many others we might name, are specific publics who are customers of the church's services. They bring differing needs and demands. Any overall marketing strategy must include specific tactics that apply to these groups. The problem, of course, is that the interests of one group sometimes compete with or even contradict the interests of another. For example, liberalizing the church's stand on ordaining women would typically appeal to women's groups and to members on the left. However, it would likely disrupt the comfort zone of those on the right and might unsettle major financial contributors and older members, who tend to be relatively conservative. Consequently, specific tactics must take into account the impact on all the various publics and follow a course that is both sensitive and extremely creative at times.

The microenvironment of the church is an important part of its overall witness and can't ever be ignored. Many who have had innovative ideas have failed at just this point. Preoccupied with how their ideas would impact on the external world, they didn't take the time to gain support for their efforts internally. One specific area where the microenvironment focus is particularly weak, it seems to me, is in the area of evangelistic preparation. When evangelism brings into the church people who are unprepared for the reality of church life, dissonances are set up that often drive those people back out. This is partly due to failures in the evangelism process, but it is also why renewal of the church itself is a prerequisite for any aggressive self-promotion schemes. What is the advantage of bringing in new members if they aren't going to be loved and nurtured?

Again, this is what separates marketing from selling. For so many years, we've been bringing people in the front door and then losing them out the back door. Our selling hasn't been spectacular, but its weaknesses have been overshadowed by our lack of marketing management within the church itself. It's the evangelist's job to bring people in, but he can't control what happens once they're in. That's up to the church as a whole. We, as church members, have never really understood what it is we're supposed to be doing to nurture these new members. Indeed, we often feel we're not being nurtured as well as we might be.

What goes on in the church is as much a part of marketing as what goes on in the lives of those we're trying to reach in the broader, non-Christian community.

2. The macroenvironment. There are numerous factors in the larger world that impact the church's growth patterns. Some of them help, while others hinder our efforts. We need to be aware of them, so that our marketing strategies are both comprehensive and effective. Some of the key factors include:

- Explosive population growth worldwide. The number of people we need to be reaching continues to expand at a remarkable rate. What this means is that we can't keep pace with our commission to reach the whole world by traditional means. We're constantly losing ground. So we need to become creative and innovative, finding new and better means of getting the message across. And it may mean that we need to reevaluate our understanding of our role in the gospel commission, as related to the role of our brothers and sisters in other denominations. It may be that we're duplicating efforts when we should be multiplying them. We're all part of God's church, aren't we?
- Slowdown in U.S. birthrate. This is part of the reason why our growth in America isn't as rapid as in other parts of the world. It supports the wisdom of our thrust as a denomination on ministry to the Third World, where the greatest needs are. However, this shouldn't keep us from being innovative here at home. In a declining market, we need to devise strategies for capturing a greater share of the existing market. In a later chapter we'll explore this concept in greater detail, outlining several options available to us in the type of market we're now facing.
- Graying of America. Our country has a growing elderly population, who are becoming increasingly effective in making their concerns heard. But beyond that, the very real and proper concerns of the elderly need to be addressed with sensitivity and compassion, both by society in general and by the church. A unique ministry to the elderly, both the young-old and the old-old, would be a natural strategy in light of demographic shifts. We need to target both our efforts and our resources in

very specialized ways to meet the needs of such specialized publics.

Elder Americans offer a distinct market the church could reach with some creative planning.

- Breakup of the American family. The crisis of the family is one of the major tragedies of our time; it is also one of our major marketing opportunities. The Latter-day Saints are capitalizing on this in a remarkable way with programming and promotional campaigns that show their commitment to the institution of the family. Are we paying attention?

One of the major points we'll be introducing later is the idea that we market best to people in crisis, since they're at a point where their needs are more clearly defined than at any other time. The family crisis in our nation is a condition literally filled with difficult problems calling for creative answers. We should be among those dedicating significant resources toward finding them.

- Rise of nonfamily households. Unique and distinctive ministries to singles and special-interest groups with nonfamily overtones could pay us great dividends. But we need to be both open to new ideas and willing to make investments in nontraditional programming to achieve it. If we're uncomfortable with the idea of nonfamily households, we're not going to minister to them particularly well.

The fact that we support the family shouldn't keep us from investing in those who don't have that option any longer. The trend toward nonfamily households is one we need to acknowledge and learn to utilize in ministry. It's here to stay, and it is literally filled with opportunity.

- Shifts in American population. We'll elaborate on this factor shortly, and it is a major factor affecting how we market as a denomination. But it's enough here to point out that we need to be aware of where the people are, so that we can allocate human and financial resources according to real needs, not

according to historic patterns that may no longer prevail. The power base of the denomination is shifting, and our marketing thinking needs to shift with it.

- Better-educated white-collar population. Old answers that sufficed for relatively uneducated people, in fairly isolated situations, no longer work today. We need to put our sharpest minds to work finding church programming that appeals to today's more knowledgeable customer, regardless of how different he may be from the ones with whom we're familiar and feel comfortable serving.
- Changing ethnic and racial population. Instead of bucking the trend, we need to be adapting our message to the widely varying ethnic and racial groupings in our society. We can't expect what works with one group to work equally well with all. This demands an investment of resources, both human and financial.
- Emphasis shifting from a mass market to micromarkets. We need to segment our energies. Centralized programming is no longer as useful as it once was. Instead, there must be far more sensitivity to regional perspectives, marketing in unique ways to unique groups.
- Slowdown in real-income growth. If we see Adventism as a middle-class religion, appealing only to the reasonably well off, we're going to severely restrict our impact. Becoming doctors, lawyers, and teachers is not the only acceptable goal for us to project to our children. We need to be sensitive to the emerging America and ready with programming and attitudes that allow the full spectrum of the citizenry of our country to feel comfortable in our churches.
- Continued inflationary pressure. With costs escalating, we need to discover inexpensive systems and approaches, utilizing volunteer help far more than ever before. The appropriateness of a paid ministry and organizational structure in all settings needs to be seriously analyzed. What was the best strategy twenty or fifty years ago may be wholly ineffective today. We need to be adaptable, not wedded to traditional systems that no longer work. We were a movement before we were a hierarchical organization. Systems cannot be allowed to overwhelm the spread of the message.

- Increased cost of energy. Sending denominational personnel to the far corners of the world may be less appropriate today than ever before, both from a cost and utilization of energy perspective. Increasingly, we must be prepared to depend less on systems that allow us to maintain control, and more on the freedom of the Holy Spirit to lead our worldwide work. If God is in charge of human history, we can trust Him to keep the work of the church pristine all over the world, without on-site American direction.
- Increased levels of pollution. The church must be prepared to speak to important human issues beyond the Sabbath and eating pork. We need to show we care about matters of major ethical significance in the world today, such as the depletion of our natural resources and the fouling of our own nest. We're part of this world, not merely outside observers.
- Accelerating pace of technological change. If we allow change to intimidate us, we'll find ourselves increasingly out of touch with our customers. The world of computers and video is the real world, and we need to utilize the best it has to offer in communicating our message. The "good ol' days" just aren't coming back.
- Growth of public-interest groups. We need to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, fully aware of the ideas and convictions that are holding the day, and well able to adjust to the various challenges we face. We need an adaptable message. And we need to know when to stand up and make our position known.

There are so many factors changing in our macroenvironment that we need to be constantly evaluating our grasp of the market. Just when we feel we have a pretty good picture of our customers, they go and change on us. Another factor of concern here is that what seems to be programming that works well in one part of our country may fall flat on its face in another. To a degree that many of us may not realize, we are a group of diverse cultures, rather than one unit.

In The Nine Nations of North America,5 Joel Garreau refutes the idea that North America is a homogenous glob of humanity tied together by TV, WATS lines, and McDonald's franchises. Instead, he recognizes nine distinct regions or nations:

- The Breadbasket - central U.S., with its elemental simplicity of farming as a way of life.
- Ectopia - the western coastal region from about Santa Barbara, California, and extending northward, where an ethic of libertarian self-reliance and mystical relationship with the land prevails.
- The Foundry - Great Lakes area, with declining industrial cities and a tradition of heavy work with heavy machines.
- The Empty Quarter - vast region from Las Vegas up to Calgary, where lower population density and opportunity for land create a unique perspective.
- MexAmerica - southwestern area, starting with Los Angeles and stretching down into Mexico and across to Texas, where Hispanic values of Catholicism, pride in family, and close community prevail.
- The Islands - Latin cultures, most of which are not U.S. territories, but which claim Miami as their capital.
- New England - original boundaries of U.S., with traditional values.
- Dixie - unified southern culture, with unique historic perceptions, food, dress, and language.
- Quebec - French culture, with its own language, food, and perceptions.
- The point is that we need to be aware of the divergent viewpoints our potential customers bring to any effort we might make to market to them. We dare not assume that just because an idea or approach appeals to us, where we live, that it will be equally applicable in other situations. Centralized top-down management has a tendency to impose programming across diverse demographic areas, with confusing, often contradictory results.

Perhaps the most significant advocate for recognizing how our society is changing is John Naisbitt, who has been publishing The Trend Report for major corporations for many years. His recent bestseller, Megatrends, has gained his ideas a popular hearing as well. Naisbitt argues that there are ten key trends at work today:6

- The American economy is undergoing a "megashift" from an industrial to an information-based society.
- As the society increases in high-tech, there will be high-touch reactions.
- The U.S. is moving away from isolation and self-sufficiency and recognizing its global interdependence, as well as losing its dominance as an economic power.
- U.S. corporate managers are beginning to think about the long term rather than the next quarter.
- We're beginning to build from the bottom up in our companies and moving away from a centralized structure toward a decentralized structure.
- We're returning to an emphasis on self-reliance and deemphasizing help from institutions.
- Workers and consumers are demanding and getting a greater voice in government, in business, and in the marketplace.
- The computer is smashing the corporate organizational chart. We're moving from hierarchies to networks.
- Workers are moving from the North and Northeast to the South and Southwest.
- People are demanding variety instead of "one size for all."

Even a casual review of these trends should be a sober experience for Adventists. As our society shifts in these key directions, we must shift, too, or our voice is going to sound alien and archaic to our listeners. Take, for example, the shift from centralized to decentralized activity and the deemphasis on requiring help from institutions. As an organization that has depended on centralization and that has been built around institutions, we need to consider how we may need to reorient our priorities. The structure we're using denominationally is not central to our message. It's peripheral, at best. Yet if we ignore the ways our publics are changing, we'll be caught on the outside.

We need to keep in mind that these trends aren't good or bad. They're merely the realities of our world today. They affect the members of our church (microenvironment) just as much as those in the outside world (macroenvironment). And we must discover how to take advantage of them, rather than ignore or resist them.

Marketing Eyes

There are many other perspectives we could consider in this chapter. Some of them, no doubt, are of equal or greater significance for the church than the ones we've discussed. But the point is that we need to begin looking at what we're doing in the church through marketing eyes. We need to step back from the business-as-usual approach to church life and ask ourselves how well we understand the needs of the people we serve, both in and out of the church. We also need to assess our commitment to meeting those needs.

When Jesus addressed His disciples in the upper room, just before the end of His ministry, He urged them to love one another. In fact, He called on them to so love one another that the viewing world would note that love and identify it with the Christian church (see John 13). While the terminology hadn't been coined yet, Jesus was doing marketing. "By this all men will know that you are my disciples," He said, "if you have love for one another."7 This is a strategy that still holds true today, and that lies very close to the heart of how Adventists must, in my opinion, learn to market their church.

In many cases, a true marketing perspective might not result in our doing things that much differently from the ways we're doing them now. As I pointed out in the introduction, we are doing marketing, all the time. Some of it we do well, some we don't. In more than a few cases, better marketing undoubtedly would result in changes in what we're doing. But in either case, a better sense of marketing priorities would ensure that our approaches are motivated by a careful analysis of the needs of those we're called to serve. Our opportunities for success would inevitably be strengthened by this approach.

God surely expects nothing less from us than our very best.

1. For several of the concepts in this section I'm indebted to one of the new classics in the marketing field, Philip Kotler's Marketing Management (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984). Mr. Kotler is in no way responsible for the applications I've made.

2. See the February 22, 1988, issue of Forbes magazine (inside front cover) for an excellent advertisement by Four Seasons.

3. The truth in this statement is emphasized in that when I left this church and a new pastor came in with a different emphasis, the Saturday Night Program no longer fit the dynamic of that church's life and soon dwindled away.

4. Dik Warren Twedt, ed., 1978 Survey of Marketing Research: Organization, Functions, Budget, Compensation (Chicago: American Marketing Association, 1978).

5. Kotler, pp. 93, 94.

6. John Naisbitt, Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives (New York: Warner Books, 1982).

7. John 13:35, RSV.