

## TOOL #15: Board Retreat Trend-Spotting Exercise

Use this trend-spotting template to generate insights and interaction on a key hot topic at your next retreat—each person presenting one article.



### Many Important Topics Are Not Book-length!

#### Leverage the Media for Trend Analysis

From a 1983 (not a typo!) interview in the *Washington Post* with John Naisbitt, futurologist, on how he spots trends:

In a word, Naisbitt analyzes a trend—say, a growing backlash to television, or the waxing of concern about crime—through the systematic reading and clipping and categorizing of millions of news items from thousands of individual copies of newspapers. Actually, content analysis is a technique as old as the hills. The news hole in a given paper on a given day is only so big, and if something comes in, then of necessity something must go out.

So if you analyze what is coming in and what is going out, country-wide, on a systematic basis, you start to pick up shifts and movements, a nation's worries. Trends, John Naisbitt says, are generated from the bottom up (though fads come from the top down). That is, America changes most substantively at the grass-roots level, contrary to what Washington and New York may think. And it is at the grass roots level that our social, political and industrial organizations are undergoing massive change.<sup>1</sup>

John Naisbitt's 1982 book, *Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives*, was on the *New York Times* bestseller list for more than two years mostly as No. 1. *Megatrends* was published in 57 countries and sold more than 14 million copies.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paul Hendrickson, "Catching a Rising Trend." May 3, 1983, *Washington Post*. [www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1983/05/03/catching-a-rising-trend/d01c6278-b439-41d0-bf80-a53768139670/?utm\\_term=.abedd21abb38](http://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1983/05/03/catching-a-rising-trend/d01c6278-b439-41d0-bf80-a53768139670/?utm_term=.abedd21abb38).

<sup>2</sup> See "About Us." John and Doris Naisbitt: <http://www.naisbitt.com/about-us/>.

## Board Retreat Trend-Spotting Exercise



An invigorating exercise for all 4 social styles:<sup>3</sup>

- Drivers
- Analyticals
- Amiables
- and *Expressives!*

### 5 STEPS:

- 1. Select a hot topic on trends.
- 2. Email a blank template to each board member.
- 3. Ask each board member to find a relevant article on the hot topic from: a newspaper, magazine, TED Talk, blog, professional journal, or a niche chapter in a book.
- 4. Each board member shares the article and distributes copies of the article (fill in the template, per the attached sample).
- 5. Each board member has EIGHT MINUTES MAXIMUM to share the hot topic. (Award a Chick-fil-A card if the board member is done before your iPhone alarm goes off.)

### How the 4 social styles do trend-spotting in 8 minutes:

Drivers	3 memorable points and a bottom line take-away
Analyticals	17 major points, backed by research, and a 10-page handout
Amiables	1 heart-warming story
Expressives	Balloons! Food! Microphone! Big Ideas! <i>Maybe even vacation videos.</i>

***“You can never do enough looking over the wall to learn how to do things. Seeing excellence in action helps individuals visualize how they can do it for themselves.”<sup>4</sup>***

James Belasco

<sup>3</sup> For more on the four social styles, visit: [www.tracomcorp.com/social-style-training/model/](http://www.tracomcorp.com/social-style-training/model/).

<sup>4</sup> James Belasco quoted in the “Leadership Tip of the Day” email from the (now-named) Frances Hesselbein Leadership Forum, June 29, 2010, [www.HesselbeinForum.org](http://www.HesselbeinForum.org).

**Trend-Spotting Presentation**  
**2020 Board Retreat – ABC Ministry International**

You have 8 minutes for your presentation:

- Retreat Hot Topic Trend: “Church or denominational trends that impact our work”
- Discussion

Your Name	
Trend: <b>Church or Denominational Trends</b>	
Publication	
Article Title/Headline	
Article Date	

Implication for our organization	
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**Article Options**

1. “Copy” the article from a website and “paste” it here and on page 2.
2. Photocopy the original article and attach it to this sheet.
3. Bring two copies of the article: 1) Original for the file; and 2) one copy to pass around during your presentation

**EXAMPLE**

**Trend-Spotting Presentation**

**2020 Board Retreat – ABC Ministry International**

**Theme Church or Denominational Trends**

MY NAME	Hector Hernandez
Trend: <b>Church or Denominational Trends</b>	American Protestants (47 percent of the U.S. population) are increasingly identifying with nondenominational churches.
Publication	“Facts & Trends” (published by LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention®) <sup>5</sup>
Article Title/Headline	“What Does the Growth of Nondenominationalism Mean?” by Aaron Earls - <a href="https://factsandtrends.net/2017/08/08/what-does-the-growth-of-nondenominationalism-mean/">https://factsandtrends.net/2017/08/08/what-does-the-growth-of-nondenominationalism-mean/</a>
Article Date	August 8, 2017
Executive Summary	A study by Gallup says that the percentage of Americans who “identify” with a specific Protestant denomination <b>has dropped from 50 percent in 2000 to just 30 percent in 2016</b> . “Among Protestants, the most popular denomination is Baptist.” And according to research by Pew, “millennials seem to be more attracted to nondenominational churches than previous generations are.”
Implication for our organization	Historically, our organization has employed two full-time staff to market our church resources to denominations, generally by building relationships through the district or regional executives (and their annual meetings). Perhaps we should split our focus into two staff and volunteer teams: denominational churches and nondenominational churches?
My Recommendations	<p>#1. Ask our CEO to conduct an analysis of our denominational relationships (sales, etc.). Is it trending up or down?</p> <p>#2. Ask our CEO to study the feasibility of launching a pilot program or test to nondenominational events and conferences and/or influential churches—to discern receptivity and interest in our resources.</p>

Reminder! Attach a photocopy of the article to this worksheet.

<sup>5</sup> We recommend reading the 24-page PDF called *18 Important Stats in 2018: Facts & Trends* (Nashville: LifeWay, 2018).