

This document was prepared to capture data to be used as real-time anecdotal information to support: Using Videoconferencing to Conduct an Online Small Group. The basis for this document was an article written by Brandon Cox (former pastor of Saddleback Church, Orange County, CA.) There were four respondents. I have consolidated their answers and presented the results in a tabular form. Respondents received this document by email, and responses were returned by email.



## **The Viability of Using Videoconferencing Technology To Fulfill The Great Commission**

Case Study - Saddleback Church Online Small Group  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Theological Studies  
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In pursuit of my DTS, I've prepared this research document to capture data that will become a part of my dissertation under the heading: Using Videoconferencing to Conduct an Online Small Group. The basis for this document is an article written by Brandon Cox. For those who may not be familiar with Brandon, here is a brief profile:



Brandon Cox has been a Pastor for fifteen years and is currently planting a church in northwest Arkansas, a Saddleback-sponsored church. He also serves as Editor of Pastors.com and Rick Warren's Pastors' Toolbox, and authors a top 100 blog for church leaders. He's also the author of Rewired: Using Technology to Share God's Love.

The title of Brandon's article is **7 Signs of a Healthy Small Group** By Brandon Cox. In its entirety you may read the article here: (<http://pastors.com/7-signs-of-a-healthy-small-group/>). I'm going to list the 7 signs in tabular format and ask that you comment on each item as it applies to our small group hosted by Richard. If you choose not to participate, I'll understand and I will not be mad ☺. I will not use your actual names. Please send your responses to [patricia.carroll@snet.net](mailto:patricia.carroll@snet.net). Also, you leave your responses here on our small group site or in an oral message on our Skype site. Any and all response will be greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance.

1	How long have you been in this particular small group? A. Less than a year B. off and on for four years C. Over two (2) years D. at least 8 weeks
2	Where do you live? State/province/Country A. Rancho Santa Margarita, CA B. St. Joseph, MO C. Los Angeles, CA D. Manchester, UK
3	What device do you use to attend / participate in group? what is your frustration level regarding device failure? A. Lap top. Frustration – minimal. Skype – frustration – considerable (often miss partial comments) B. Lap top. Frustration – 5 (scale 1 to 10) when laptop is draggy or internet is sporadic. Device failure is not a constant problem. C. IPad. Sometimes unable to connect via Skype which sends frustration level high D. Mobile Phone, Android tablet, no technical problems so far

The remainder of this document is taken from the Brandon Cox article

4	<p><b>1. There is a consistency in meeting and a desire to meet.</b></p> <p>When a group is healthy, there is a desire and a delight in getting together. It doesn't feel like "one more thing" but rather "when can we meet next?" And healthy groups are intentional about meeting if at all possible. For the most part, healthy groups get together regularly because they <i>want</i> to do so.</p> <p><b><i>The metric: Does your small group consistently meet several times per month?</i></b></p> <p>A. Yes, our small group meets weekly regardless of the number of members available on the meeting day</p> <p>B. Yes, and some of us also connect via Facebook, on our small group page, or chatting via Skype</p> <p>C. Yes we meet weekly and connect with each other to share praise reports and prayer requests throughout the week as well</p> <p>D. Yes. At least once a week.</p>
	<p><b>2. There is genuine authenticity and transparent sharing.</b></p> <p>The beauty of small groups is that it's a place to be real. After three or four weeks of meeting together, a healthy group will be a place where people open up and start sharing their pain.</p> <p><b><i>The metric: Do group members know more about each other on a personal level than a month ago?</i></b></p> <p>A. In my opinion yes</p> <p>B. I believe so. At least in my case I have opened up and feel that others have done so as well.</p> <p>C. Yes. The group has a comfort level with each other, it is loving, supportive and encouraging.</p> <p>D. Yes, for me, who just joined (few) weeks ago, yes I am learning more about my fellow small group members.</p>
	<p><b>3. People are growing in knowledge, but they are also growing in grace.</b></p> <p>This is the difference between a traditional classroom setting for Bible study and a living room setting.</p> <p><b><i>The metric: Do online group members report a more gracious attitude and response to others in everyday life?</i></b></p> <p>A. I think that all followers of Christ exhibit this trait whether they meet online or in a more traditional "living room" setting</p> <p>B. I think if they meet via Skype, where they can see each other, that is more true than if they are doing an interactive study on Facebook or via a blog. There is a greater familiarity when you see people, an honesty that comes from seeing people's expressions as well as their speech tones and body language.</p>

	<p>C. Yes, our online small group often takes time out of busy schedules to post encouragement, support and prayers. One of the members has also taken time to send another member a music CD of her singing to encourage and bless that member who was going through a challenging situation. Others often take time to post encouragement via other social media outlets and emails. The group host also takes time out to reach out to each and every member to check in with them.</p> <p>D. Yes</p>
	<p><b>4. Real community and friendship is increasing.</b></p> <p>A small group might start out as a Bible study group, but if people respond by opening up, it is where real <i>koinonia</i> takes place – a kind of eternal bonding called fellowship.</p> <p><b><i>The metric: Do people contact each other outside of meeting times and respond in crisis moments for each other?</i></b></p> <p>A. In an online community it is more difficult to be physically present but I feel that we are there for one another through prayer and electronic communication, email, text, and or video conferencing.</p> <p>B. Yes, they do. It is a real blessing to get a message on Facebook, or via the group page or Skype chat.</p> <p>C. Yes, please see response #3 above.</p> <p>D. Yes</p>
	<p><b>5. There is an intentionality about serving together and developing as leaders.</b></p> <p><b><i>The metric: Are needs within the group being met? Is the group meeting needs in the community together? Are leaders stepping forward out of the group for other areas of serving?</i></b></p> <p>A. I think that the needs of the group are being met. We communicate with one another independent of our weekly meetings and the host communicates with us separately.</p> <p>B. That is a question I honestly can't answer. Yet. As a group serving together our situation has to be different. I have toyed with the thought of our group establishing an online prayer and encouragement ministry, but have yet to approach our group leader with the idea.</p> <p>C. Yes, even though we all live in different areas of the world, the group members are meeting needs in their various communities and sharing what is happening in their experiences with the group. Members of our group have also stepped up to lead within the group by either being a Co-host, or Prayer Champion.</p> <p>D. Yes</p>

**6. There is a culture of inclusion and inviting.**

I'm a big believer in allowing people to *belong before they believe*. To put it another way, people need a family to adopt them before they "fit in" or look like everyone else. Healthy small groups have an excitement about welcoming newcomers and they rejoice together to see a friend make a spiritual step forward.

***The metric: Is anyone in the group inviting someone or sharing their faith?***

A. I think so. We have had a few new members since I have started.

B. *I don't have an answer to that. I have not personally done that so as not to overstep the leadership. I did not know if there was a limit on the amount of people we could have.*

C. Group members do invite others and continue to share their faith in their daily lives when they encounter others who may not have a relationship with Christ.

D. I hope so

**7. New hosts are stepping forward.**

This is where multiplication happens. We embrace a "host" model of small group ministry where the emphasis is far more on hospitality than on teaching.

***The metric: Is anyone praying about stepping out to host a group of their own?***

A. I have been praying for guidance on this very topic

B. I have been doing that, yes.

C. Yes

D. I am not sure