

*Go!* Magazine Focus Group

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### **Report of *Go!* Magazine Focus Group**

A focus group was conducted at the North American Mission Board on April 18, 2002 to discuss *Go!* magazine. The group was comprised of youth ministers of larger (300 total members) Southern Baptist churches in the greater Atlanta area.

Attached is a copy of the moderator script used to guide the discussion. This report follows the major issues raised in the script.

### **Resources Used**

Participants were asked what resources they generally use with their youth groups. The following is a listing of those resources:

- other churches—as models or mentors
- the internet
- magazines—activity pieces and as a motivational tool
- various organizations—i.e., Sun Life Ministries
- curriculum suitable for use in small groups
- other printed resources—as a communication tool and encouragement for parents of teens
- *Go!* magazine—distributed on a resource table for teens or given to prospects during visitation
- *Essential Connections*

### **Limitations of Printed Resources**

While leaders acknowledged various resources that were helpful in their particular ministry settings, they also saw the limitations of these resources. Printed resource limitations include: 1) too generic, 2) too topic oriented with little emphasis on theology, and 3) dated resources limit the utility of material.

These leaders wanted printed resources that focused on issues specific to teens grounded in evangelical theology. Additionally, dated resources or those with an expiration date are not viewed as good stewardship of limited funds for youth ministry.

### **Recommendations for Improvement**

Several recommendations were offered to improve the magazine. Most of the suggestions centered on making the magazine more interactive. For instance, for each issue an email newsletter could be sent to youth leaders who could then forward to their youth either the entire newsletter or selected articles. Another way to make the magazine more interactive is to include tear-out activity sheets. Also, a website that hosted a discussion board related to articles appearing in *Go!* would not only allow youth to interact with one another but also provide feedback to the magazine staff.

### **Evaluation of Content**

Focus group participants were asked what content needed to be addressed by the magazine. It was clear these youth leaders wanted articles for youth and articles for the adult leadership of the youth groups. Articles which the participants felt communicated best were first person articles and interviews with Christian celebrities—recording artists and athletes in particular. The first person articles were perceived as a better motivational story since other youth would be sharing from their own experiences. The interviews would gain more positive attention since celebrities are often held in high regard by youth.

### **Attitudes Toward *Go!***

When asked to give their impression of the magazine, participants noted the following about *Go!*

- Well done
- Targeted for a Christian
- Possibly too much text
- A good mix of types of articles
- Appealing—especially related to graphic design

Participants were also asked to rate types of articles they would like to see in *Go!* Students on mission trips were the top rated articles that focus group participants wanted to see. Next, in order, were interviews or articles featuring Christian recording artists or athletes. Finally, participants rated general advice columns fairly high as something that needs to be included in the magazine.

### **Summary**

Focus group participants noted that *Go!* is geared for Christian youth—specifically Southern Baptist youth. Participants felt the magazine was on target, but that it would have limited appeal to non-Christian youth or even non-Southern Baptist Christian youth.

Overall, participants perceived the magazine as well done and on target. There were suggestions to make the magazine more interactive with a supporting email newsletter, on-line discussion hosted by a *Go!* website, or even tear-out activity pages. Participants believe youth use printed resources to a much lesser degree today than in the past, so web-based interactivity is important. Also, participants did not like absorbing the costs of dated printed resources from their limited budgets.

While *Go!* itself received praise from the focus group participants, they had some negative views of the use of printed resources for youth. Since these participants are gatekeepers to their respective youth groups, it may be necessary to demonstrate to them how any printed resource, including *Go!*, may benefit their ministry.