

Interview questions for Metro DOMs in Tennessee.

**Interview with Rusty Sumrall, DOM, Nashville.**

**Rusty has been DOM in Nashville just over one year. He was previously the Associate Director in Nashville for several years prior to becoming the DOM.**

1. How has your Association changed in the past five years?

“Churches on the fringes are joining other associations. Nashville association includes churches in 6 counties. Some of the churches that have previously been part of Nashville association are now joining the association in the county where they are located. The resultant loss of finances to our association has caused difficulty for us.

“There also have been many language groups that have come into our area. There are now 131 language groups in the Nashville area, and services in the churches in our association are now being conducted in 31 languages.

“There is tension with the denomination leadership in Nashville. Lifeway and the National offices of the SBC are located here, and they are not supportive of the local association. However, we do have a very positive relationship with the TBC leadership.

“The ‘mega-churches’ are not on board with the work of the association.

2. Has your Association adopted the “Agee Model?” That is to say, do you agree with the philosophy that Associations should not be “doing” ministry, but instead, resourcing the churches to do ministry?

“Yes! We will implement this model in our association this fall.”

3. How has giving to the work of the association changed in your association over the past five years?

“Last year we set aside 5% of our total budget to meet requests of the churches. The maximum we will provide for any request from a church is one third of their estimated total cost for a project or need. We expect them to also request one third from the TBC to help them, and that the church will supply the other third. This year we gave \$30,000 to help our churches. Fifteen churches were helped.”

“Next year we will operate our association under the new structure we are adopting. We will have resourcing funds to help the churches in the association budget. We will have four (leadership) teams in our association. One of those teams will make decisions about how we will help resource churches.”

“We saw the first increase in five years this year in giving to the association by the churches. It is the first time giving has gone up since 2000. The increase in giving this year will be about \$10,000.00. Before this year, giving had decreased, beginning in 2000 when giving was at \$600,000 from the churches, down to \$430,000 last year.”

“We have cut back on giving to the BCM, from \$50,000 down to \$10,000.

“As the DOM I have been doing consultation with many of our churches encouraging them to

put in their constitution that their property would come to the association if they cease to exist as a church.”

4. Would you say that churches in your association are “more involved” or “less involved” in the work of the association than five years ago?

“There had been a steady decline until last year when things began to turn around.”

(1) What percentage of churches led by younger pastors (under 40) are involved? 25%

(2) What percentage of churches led by pastors (age 40-55) are involved? 50%

(3) What percentage of churches led by pastors (above 55) are involved? 90%

5. How do pastors in general view the work and ministry of your association today?

“Very positive, very hopeful.”

“But, pastors do not trust each other. They do not work together.”

6. How many church plants have there been in your association in the past five years? 50

“We have had ten new church plants this year.”

7. What is the prevailing attitude in your association toward new church planting?

“Positive.”

8. What changes do you believe your association must make to remain viable and to be considered “relevant” for the future?

“We must help churches accomplish what they want to accomplish.”

“We must build better relationships with both pastors and lay people.”

“When they ask, ‘How can we be involved in Missions?’, we must be ready to show them.”

9. If you could personally lead your association to do anything you believe would make it more effective, what would that be?

“Have a once-a-month pastors conference and get 50% involvement. Maybe establish 4 zones where we would meet in their area. They are saying that they will not drive long distances to come to meetings.”

10a. How is your time as a Director of Missions spent in an average week?

1. Crisis assistance. Helping pastors and churches.
2. Ongoing meetings. Committees and administration.
3. Responding to emails and correspondence.
4. Visiting in churches.

10b. George Bullard (in a presentation made to an ‘Associational Summit’ in Richmond in 2002 says that DOMs should be spending 80% of their time with new churches and only 20% with existing churches. Do you agree or disagree?

“I would agree with this.”