

Got Goals? Conference Summary

Submitted by: Beth Ann Williams

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“Even if I testify about Myself,” Jesus replied, “My testimony is valid, because I know where I came from and where I am going.” John 8:14

Do you find yourself trying every new idea that comes along? Do you move from one crisis to the next? Are you unprepared for growth? Are you dealing with funding issues? Is there no leadership/mentor training in place? Do you feel paralyzed? If you answered yes to any of these questions it is time to work through a master plan for your ministry. Working through a master plan for your ministry will give you clear focus that will enable you to keep moving forward.

Our thought processes ultimately become our plan. When you have taken the time to articulate, communicate and write down your plan you will default to that plan when decisions need to be made. When another good idea comes along you can evaluate it through the perspective of the plan you have put into place.

Working through the following questions can help guide you through the development of a strategic plan. Involve others in this process. Don't work through it alone. Involving others will provide a wider perspective and lead them to a deeper commitment to future ministries.

Start with Needs.

What needs do we feel deeply burdened by and uniquely qualified to meet?

Identifying needs are the driving force of a strategy. Needs should make us feel emotional. They are what keep us up at night trying to figure out ways to meet them. Be careful as you identify needs that you are truly identifying the needs of those you feel called to serve. Many times we assume what their needs may be or we have a program idea that we want to put into place that may not meet their needs in any way. Take time to pray, walk the community, ask questions, listen and pray some more.

There may be many categories of needs, but they should be defined and specific. Clarifying questions include: Who are the people we serve? What is the most urgent need in our community? If Jesus were here in person – in bodily form – in my ministry setting what needs would make Him pound the table and weep?

Once your list is developed begin to narrow it based on the needs you/your ministry are uniquely qualified to meet. What are your strengths? Are there other organizations in the area already working to meeting some of the needs on the list?

Spend as much time as you need to come into agreement with those on your team about which needs you are focused on meeting. It will be the foundation on which your ministry plan is built.

Define Your Purpose.

Why do we exist? What can we accomplish together that we can't alone?

A purpose statement is focused on the present state of what your ministry is working to accomplish. It should be a short statement that is clear, concise and can be

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easily memorized. A purpose statement will help focus your activity and give you a clear consistent sense of direction.

- Spend time answering the question “Why do we exist?” using as many words as possible. Allow those working through this process with you to list words, phrases and sentences that answer the question.
- Next, work together to narrow the answer to the question to just one word.
- For additional clarity ask your team to write an epitaph for the ministry. If the ministry died tomorrow, what would you want to see written about its life?
- Using no more than two sentences write a final purpose statement.

Your purpose statement will become the filter through which all future decisions are made.

Objectives

Objectives are 3-7 areas that break down how you will accomplish the purpose of your ministry. They are the areas in which your ministry will be involved in the future. They should be non-measurable and non-dated. Objectives can be broken down by function, geography, season, age, etc. The clarifying question for writing objectives is “Can I give a person responsibility for this particular area?”

Milestones

At this point in the process you have identified the needs you will meet, why you want to meet them, and how you will meet them. Stop and take time to celebrate the milestones the ministry has made in the past. Make a list of how God has blessed the ministry. If you are new to the ministry talk with those who have served in the past. Work to understand the history of how God has led and answered prayer. Record these milestones through pictures, scrapbooks, videos, written testimonies, etc. By understanding where the ministry has come from will help move it forward into the future. Sharing milestones will also help orient new staff and volunteers.

Roadblocks

What three roadblocks will keep the ministry from reaching its fullest potential?

Be proactive by thinking through what obstacles may prevent you from accomplishing your purpose and objectives. Even though you may be able to make a long list, identify the top three. Make sure the roadblocks you list are realistic. Many times imaginary roadblocks keep us from moving forward such as history or assumptions.

Resources

What are our greatest resources?

The best way to remove roadblocks is to identify resources. What is your greatest strength? What is the greatest strength of our team? Are we looking for resources outside of our “mental models?”

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- For financial needs consider partnerships, sponsorships, or grants.
- Network in your community and local churches to find people with expertise that could help you with financial, legal, and leadership development needs.
- Discover the passions and skill sets of people in local churches to plug in new volunteers.
- Keep telling the story of your ministry in local churches, associational, state or national events.

Goals

In the next 12 months what are the most realistic, measurable targets of accomplishment? The acronym commonly used to describe goals is S.M.A.R.T.

Strategic and Specific – Answers the questions who and what

Measurable – Answers the question how

Attainable – Goal can be achieved in a specific amount of time

Results Oriented – Goals are aligned with a greater purpose

Time Bound – Answers the question when. Goals have a clearly defined time frame including a target date.

Example:

Our goal is to distribute 50 gift bags to new lifeguards on Surf's Up Beach between May 30 – June 6.

Going through a strategic planning process will put you, your team and volunteers on the same page. It will increase motivation and energy as everyone understands what needs you are trying to meet, your purpose for doing so and how you are going to meet those needs.

Strategic Planning Formula from:

Biehl, Bobb. Masterplanning. Lake Mary, Florida: Aylen Publishing, 2004.