

HOW TO DEVELOP A MISSION ACTION PLAN THAT WORKS

Why have a Mission Action Plan? Why are goals and strategies important? You have heard it said, “Those who fail to plan, plan to fail”. This is so true. Why are most churches underachieving today? Why are most churches attendance 100 or less? Why do most churches become inward focused? It’s because there is no plan to move the church forward? The answer is because most churches have no plans or goals to help them achieve great things, they under-perform, never reach their potential, and very seldom do anything great in their community.

Jesus said to go out and make people come into his house, so it could be full. His plan is for the church to be full. So, if our churches aren’t full, then we must do something differently to insure they become full. It starts with a plan. Developing goals and strategies.

To attract people who can give of their time, energy, and finances, they want to know there is a plan and that it is worthy enough for them to join. They want to know they will be a part of something that will and is making a difference.

So why have a Mission Action Plan? What will it do for you personally, professionally, and for your church? It will help to bring focus. It increases productivity. It produces results. It gives a feeling of satisfaction that you have accomplished something. It helps you prioritize your decisions and make better ones. It helps to clarify what you will be doing now and in the near future. (1, 3, and 5 years or more) It helps measure your performance and if your time, energy, and finances are producing results. It gives everyone direction. It gives you a sense of accomplishment and reasons to celebrate when you achieve a goal. Goals will increase yours and the churches level of commitment. It gives you a feeling that you do have some control over your success. It forces those in leadership to become better leaders. It will prioritize your budget and time. Lastly, it holds you and others accountable. Accountable for success, growth, financial stability, salvations, meeting needs, and finally, commitment and ownership.

Some will say this is not biblical. Let me address those people now. The Bible states, “Let us make plans, counting on God to direct us”. Almost 7.0 million people did not leave Egypt without a plan. Food, water, animals, tents, restrooms, elderly care, sleeping arrangements, etc. The Bible is full of plans. Moses divided the nation into 1,000’s, 100’s, and 10’s for management. There was a plan to conquer Jericho. A plan to divide the nations. Jesus sent out the disciples with instructions and a plan. Peter and Paul had a plan to best win the Jews and Gentiles. Who builds without first counting the costs or making plans? What I have discovered in why most people don’t want to set goals or make plans is they don’t want accountability. We must make plans in order to better succeed in maximizing our resources and investments of time and energy.

To do this right, this process will take time. You want it to be right. You will need buy-in. You will need to analyze your present status. You may need to gather information on projected costs. So, don't rush the process, but complete the process. Below are a few suggestions that will help you and your church in developing a Mission Action Plan.

1. Strengths assessment. Assess the strengths of the church. Assess what you are doing well or what you should be doing but not presently.
 - a. STRENGTHS. Are you taking full advantage of your strengths? What should change to maximize results of a particular strength? Can you manage this strength well? Does it have pastoral or lay minister oversight?
 - b. WHAT SHOULD BE A STRENGTH? What strengths are you not taking advantage of that you should be? What are the reasons for not taking advantage of this potential strength? Money? Time? Leadership? Congregational mindset? What changes must be made to make this area a strength?
 - c. WHAT ARE WE NOT DOING IN THE COMMUNITY THAT IS A NEED? What are the costs that will make this ministry/program a success in the church/community?
 - d. LIST THE STRENGTHS IN ORDER. Consider their importance to the success of the church, numerical results, return on the financial costs, and volunteer participation.

2. Weaknesses assessment. Assess the weaknesses of the church. Assess what we are doing poorly or should not be doing.
 - a. WEAKNESSES. What programs or ministries are you presently doing that will not generate the results needed in order to be called successful?
 - b. MINISTRIES/PROGRAMS THAT SHOULD STOP. What are you presently doing that is not meeting a need in the church or community? Why haven't we stopped this ministry before now?
 - c. WHAT ARE THE DOLLAR SAVINGS WE WOULD HAVE IF A NON-PRODUCTIVE PROGRAM/MINISTRY WAS STOPPED? How much money could be saved if a particular program/ministry was stopped and applied to a productive ministry?
 - d. LIST THE WEAKNESSES IN ORDER. Consider the financial costs, results, and the level in which the program/ministry is embraced by the church.

3. Defining reality and truth. What is the bottom line truth about the church, facility, acceptance of change, desire to change to reach new unchurched people, and the truth about yourself and church members.
 - a. How hard will it be to initiate change to bring better kingdom results?
 - b. Can I lead the changes necessary? Am I willing to change?
 - c. Will the facility in its present state help in church growth? Is the facility positioned to help growth? IE: Sports ministry, community use of facility? Have you developed a first-class children's and youth programs?
 - d. Can the church change from being inward focused to a more outward focus?
 - e. Do the demographics of a 1 – 3-mile radius of the church match the people sitting in the pews?

- f. Is our church getting younger or older?
 - g. Do we really need to relocate to obtain better results?
 - h. What would the community miss if we ceased to exist?
 - i. Do the members see the need for change? Are they willing to step out of their comfort zone for kingdom growth?
 - j. Does the church need to close, restart or relocate?
 - k. What are the brutal facts about this church?
 - l. Does present church leadership see the need for growth and change?
4. Leadership assessment. Does the pastor, present board, and ministry leaders possess the leadership skills needed to bring about change and generate results?
- a. Does the present leadership have the skills necessary to lead change if necessary?
 - b. Does the church have leaders who can influence the members for change?
 - c. Does the church have a variety of leadership skills necessary to lead the church in making plans for growth?
 - d. Do members hold a title in a position or actually leading in their position?
 - e. Are the leaders and/or the board, if any, unified in the need for growth?
 - f. Is anyone developing leaders?
5. Develop Goals. Goals should be developed that will help achieve the vision/mission for the church. If there is not a compelling vision/mission, one should be developed. Goals should be developed by the Lead Pastor and the Church Board. Goals will help everyone stay better engaged in the overall mission of the church and give you more reasons to celebrate wins as they happen. Goals helps to keep everyone focused. Goals will help insure that you won't keep repeating the same thing year after year with little or no results or bringing needed change. Goals should be designed to be achieved.
- a. A goal should help accomplish the vision/mission.
 - b. Goals should be measurable to insure they can be properly tracked and to know if and when they are achieved.
 - c. Goals should have time lines of when they should be accomplished.
 - d. Goals should be made public, so it will raise the level of accountability.
 - e. Goals should be set at a level that are attainable but will stretch you to reach them. It also allows God to enter the picture and do only what He can do.
 - f. It is good when others participate in the goal setting. Leadership should oversee a collaborative effort to insure the goals will achieve the vision/mission and the direction those in leadership are leading. The Board should listen carefully to the Lead Pastor in this area as to hear his/her heart and minimize conflict. Both the Pastor and Board should negotiate the goals and agree on them before they are presented to the church. (In large churches, the Lead Pastor and Staff should develop the goals and present them to the Church Board for oversight and accountability) There will be a higher level of buy-in when others assist, but good leadership is needed to insure the right goals are set.

- g. You should not have too many goals. 4 to 7 goals are plenty. Otherwise, there is too much to focus on.
- h. Much prayer should be given as God has some God sized goals He desires to do through a people and leaders who can trust Him to help accomplish them.
- i. Develop goals for short term and long term. 1, then 3, then 5 or more years. When in crisis mode, you will need more short-term goals while keeping long range goals in mind.

6. Develop strategies. Strategies will state how the goals are going to be accomplished. These are the plans that make the goals successful. Strategies must be strong enough to accomplish the goals. Strategies should be carefully and thoughtfully thought out as you want to succeed with each goal. Only after you have reviewed your strategies and feel very confident that they are strong enough to accomplish the goal should you move to develop strategies for the next goal. You want to create wins for you and the church. This will not only give you reasons to celebrate but will build your influence for change. It will also help the congregation to embrace change as they see change brings success.

- a. Strategies are the details on how to accomplish a goal. You should have enough strategies needed to accomplish the goal.
- b. Strategies should have time tables attached to them to insure deadlines are met.
- c. Strategies are critical to achieving goals. You should give this some considerable thought. Remember, goals are to be achieved.
- d. Consider the manpower, financial costs and the priority of the goal. You will need time in developing your strategies.
- e. If the goal is worthy and needed, then you should find a way to fund the strategies needed for the goal to succeed.

Note: When setting goals and strategies, use the following: Start each goal off with the word "To". Example: To increase salvations by 20 people. Start each strategy off with the word "By". Example: By increasing invitations of the unchurched from 2% to 50% from our members.

7. Analyze your statistical area and common obstacles.

- What trends will affect our church/business. Is that area trending up/down? Is new construction happening in the area we are located? Have we become more susceptible to crime? Is our market area pro-growth? Have the demographics in the immediate community change and not matching those sitting in the pews? If possible, how/can we manage around these trends?
- What is the economic outlook for the area we are in?
- Do the members of our church match the demographics in a 3 and 5-mile radius?
- What are the keys to the success of larger churches in our area?
- Know your customer/community and what will attract them to your church.
- Do you have a balanced management team? What staff is needed that is missing? What staff do we have that is no longer needed or not producing?
- What is the operational plan and what must change?
- How can we obtain the finances necessary to facilitate growth?

- What ministries do you offer now? What ministries will you have to offer in the future?
- What will have to change to facilitate growth?
- Can we use our present facility in its present condition to facilitate growth? What are the costs of bringing our facility up to a good/modern condition that will attract and keep young families.
- Are we going to have to relocate because the demographics around the church does not match those in the pews and does the costs of bringing our facility back into good repair and updating to much of an investment? If you are in the wrong location to attract new families or the building will cost too much to repair due to deferred maintenance or updating, then you may need to consider relocating.
- Look at your stats for the last 10 years, what are they telling you?
- Is the present staff capable of leading the church to the next level? Do they have the energy and skills necessary to do so?
- What are other issues needing to be addressed that everyone is afraid to bring to the table?
- If the congregation is older? If so, can they change their focus from “taking care of me” to leaving a legacy of a vibrant church? Can they insure a healthy and growing church for the future when they die? Do they want the church to die with them?
- What are the brutal facts, can they be addressed, and can a positive mind-set for the future be developed with the remaining members?
- Would allowing the District Advisory Board to place the church in “Crisis” and allow them to make the tough decisions be an option?
- Would the church be better off asking the Mission Development Board to consider the church for a restart? This could be an option to help stop the deterioration of the facility because the church can’t make the needed repairs thus diminishing the financial assets of the facility.

Note: On the next page is how a MAP should look like. Each church should develop a MAP to insure they are fulfilling the Great Commission to the degree God is pleased. This is not easy. This will take hard work. It will take the Lead Pastor and Church Board Leadership to take a serious look at the facts, face them no matter how brutal they may be, and make plans to change and become a better Kingdom producing church. The Lead Pastor must take the lead role in developing a MAP. If you want to please God, or want to finish strong in your pastoral ministry, or finally want to see growth in your church, then start with a MAP. Let me encourage you to give this some serious thought and prayer. God has a plan for you and your church. He wants you to succeed. He can bring encouragement to you and your church if you will step up to the task and lead in this area of growth. Results produces momentum and helps restore hope for the future, increases volunteerism, produces wins to celebrate, and raises the level of commitment and ownership of those attending the church. So, make plans, counting on God to direct you and your church.

Mission Action Plan

(church name)

ACTION PLAN

Give a brief statement (one or two sentences) of your overall goal of your plan.

(Example)

A Mission Action Plan of goals and strategies for the development, training, and recruitment of the people needed to achieve projected growth numerically and spiritually.

MISSION

Aaa
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VISION

Aaa
aa

GOAL: To _____ aaa
aaaaaaaa. (the goal should be measurable to demonstrate to what
degree it was attained. Begin with the word To _____)

STRATEGIES: (list ways demonstrating how you will achieve the goal and begin
with the word By _____)

1. By aaa
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aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa.
2. By aaa
aa.
3. By aaa
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GOAL: To _____ aaa
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