

Introduction

Christian leaders are usually ambivalent about making plans because they know we are not to “take thought for tomorrow,” worrying about the future when each day has trouble enough of its own. And when Jesus originally commissioned His disciples to advance the kingdom, He sent them off without plans or provisions. Additionally, the rich farmer who sought to make plans for his future harvest is used by Jesus as an example of a fool who missed the primacy of today. The weight of Scripture — at least as it appears to the casual memory — seems to prize immediacy, spontaneity and lack of forethought at the expense of purposeful planning and consideration.

Unfortunately, our perspective about things is often shaped by what we remember of the Bible, not necessarily by the whole counsel it offers on all matter that matter. Actually there are many references in the Scriptures to the need for wise counsel, good thinking and planning. As with most truth, this requires balance — depending on the Lord without worrying about the future *and* making war by wise counsel and deliberation.

This brings us back to the dual dimensions of pastoring: our personal walk, mentality and ministry on the one hand, and our organizational leadership role on the other. Individually, we can and should abandon ourselves to the Holy Spirit’s daily leading. When it comes to following the Holy Spirit’s guidance for an entire congregation, however, it isn’t quite so simple. It is one thing for a pastor to sense the direction of the Lord; it is another thing to communicate that sense of direction to others so that they can embrace it as well. Adding to the dilemma is the need to coordinate all the movements of the whole body in that direction.

Making the most of our time organizationally requires us to live intentionally — carefully (*taking accurate, deliberate, pointed and purposeful steps*) and wisely (*not rash, reckless, random or scattered*); rather than taking the hit-and-miss approach, we must “understand the will of the Lord” (Ephesians 5:15–17). That’s the secret to directing our personal lives and our congregations. We have to understand what the will of the Lord is. What is He doing with us? How can we cooperate with Him?

Instead of planning, perhaps it would be better to talk about positioning ourselves and the elements of our church process to best participate in what the Lord is doing. We don’t really make plans as much as we subscribe to the plans God has already formed

in order to give us and others "future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11). Our labor is in vain if we try to build a house the Lord isn't building. All the good planning in the world will do nothing eternal if it is done in isolation from the plans and purposes of God. That is why I prefer to use the expression *strategic positioning* instead of planning.

Strategic positioning is a way for an entire organization to get in agreement with the Lord, to say "yes" to Him with our church structures, systems and programs. Strategic positioning helps a church process do just that — with its vital parts.

CULTIVATING THE FIELD

After all, a king who cultivates the field is an advantage to the land.
Ecclesiastes 5:9

*Whatever your hand finds to do, verily, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or wisdom in Sheol
where you are going.*
Ecclesiastes 9:10

The hand of the diligent will rule, but the slack hand will be put to forced labor.
Proverbs 12:24

Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed.
Proverbs 15:22

Prepare plans by consultation, and make war by wise guidance.
Proverbs 20:18

So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them with his skillful hands.
Psalm 78:72

But the noble man devises noble plans; and by noble plans he stands.
Isaiah 32:8

Strategic Positioning is Not...

1. Coming up with plans and asking God to bless them.
2. An issue of right or wrong, doctrinal purity, or normative behavior for all churches everywhere.
3. A response to what has already happened, a reaction to the past.
4. A logistical plan with the details of this year's Christmas program, or an empirical study with logical, sequential steps.
5. A final destination.

#1 MIND YOUR MISSION

Managers are people who do things right; leaders do right things.
Unknown

Planning sometimes fails because the planning group either did not understand the mission, objectives, goals, and implementation steps of the organization, or if charged with creation these, did not understand the process of goal setting.
Feeding and Leading—Kenneth Gangel

When managers the consequences of events that have already happened, their organizations are doomed always to be lagging behind the needs of their business.
Future Perfect--Stanley Davis

The mission is something that transcends today, but guides today, informs today. The moment we lose sight of the mission, we begin to stray, we waste resources.
Managing the Non-Profit Organization—Peter Drucker

Presume a Purpose:

1. Start with the end in mind. Clarify the real point for everything. Intend real impact and real change toward an predefined end result. Understand the right thing to try to do.
2. Search for better ways to accomplish the ultimate goals and to reflect who and what your are.
3. Define effectiveness in light of accomplishing real results in the external world—truly bringing change and growth into people's lives.
4. Envision a future state, which is better than the past or present.

Homework Assignment—What would you do with a \$300,000 gift if you could put it in land or buildings? How will your use of that money actually help your church accomplish its

#2 MAINTAIN YOUR IDENTITY

Stick with Your Distinctives:

1. Articulate the basic approach you take to ministry. Define the value system and the particular orientations and mentalities that comprise that philosophy under which you operate.
2. Distill the perspectives and thoughts that shape the way you do things. With what mentality do you solve problems, initiate new programs, and evaluate options?

Homework Assignment—Make a list of 4-5 words that best describe the atmosphere of your congregation—what it feels like to people who come? Ask some of your leaders for their list, and compare yours with theirs.

3. Do not undertake any ministry that does not correspond to your philosophy--unless you believe your philosophy is supposed to change dramatically.

Distinct Orientations of THE COASTLANDS' Ministry Philosophy

Our Orientation	Opposite Orientation
1. Creative, innovative	1. Conservative, traditional
2. Future possibilities; today as prelude	2. Past or present realities; today as postscript
3. Revelation, intuition	3. Facts and figures
4. A network of colleagues	4. A hierarchy of subordinates
5. Centering on the market place	5. Centering on the meeting place
6. Action	6. Deliberation
7. Risk-taking; playing to win	7. Playing it safe; trying not to lose
8. Effectiveness of church = success	8. Size of church = success
9. Serving	9. Being served
10. Empowering others	10. Controlling others
11. Making a place for people to grow in ministry	11. Keeping people in their place
12. Believing and hoping the best for people	12. Doubting and criticizing people

Self-Evaluation Exercise (Used at THE COASTLANDS)

Dear fellow Leader at THE COASTLANDS,

Probably none of these orientations are a surprise to you, even if you have never articulated the, before. You can see that most of what we have done at THE COASTLANDS does fit into a larger plan -- a calling to serve a very particular role in the Kingdom. Remember God first calls us to *be* something; He calls us by name and He fashions us in the womb. After He shapes us, He gives us assignments - things to do. Those assignments always flow out of who He has made us to be.

The same principle applies to congregations. God gives churches identifies - no two are alike. The distinct orientations I have listed for you, make up a large portion of our church personality and character. Can you see how these help explain a lot of what God has called us to do?

Each of these orientations has implications - things they mean will happen and be true around here. For instance our orientation to be creative and innovative means that we will always be trying new things and tinkering with the status quo. "We've never done it that way before" isn't something you will hear anyone say very much around here.

Additionally, our bent toward innovation means that we prize individual initiative - people who have ideas and thoughts of what else we might do. Rather than encouraging people to wait to be told what to do -- whether it is in a counseling session or planning a project - our church promotes the idea of everyone exercising a sense of responsibility to figure out what they can, and go for it.

I'd like you to think about some of our other orientations, which I have listed for you. What do they explain about how our church works? What implications do you see that they have for yourself and for others? Which ones are hardest for you to embrace?

*Ministry
Orientation*

_____ *Implications:* _____

*Ministry
Orientation*

_____ *Implications:* _____

#3 KNOW YOURSELF

Evaluate the Internal Environment:

1. Have a good understanding of your church culture – both its strengths and its weaknesses. Conduct a self-assessment like colleges and universities do.
2. Identify the personnel with which you have to work – key leaders, staff, volunteers, opinion shapers, and the pool of potential workers.
3. Develop a sketch of your entire program – events, activities, schedule, curriculum, outreaches and meetings.
4. Study your physical plant – how user friendly is it; how else it might be used; what needs attention; how is it restrictive?
5. Produce a realistic budget that is prescriptive rather than descriptive. Force the budget to answer the one important question: What can we spend?
6. Don't overlook the intangibles – the morale, the mood, the prophetic climate and the spiritual atmosphere. Build morale and discover the climate by participative inquiry.

Self Evaluation Exercises (for use with your leaders)

Why do we exist as a church? What's our purpose? What are we trying to do? What's the point of our church?

What five words best describe our church?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

To what sort of people is our church most attractive? Least attractive?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

For the types of people who think our church is more attractive, list any needs they have (i.e. parent training course, financial counseling) that you can think of.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What reasons would you give to a friend as to why they should "come to church" with you?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What specific benefits or good do people (you) get from attending our church? What sorts of things do we seem to specialize in that other churches may not?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List any and all things about our church that you really like – especially strengths or things that make us different from other churches you've attended. List them in any order.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List any and all needs of our church. Don't worry about listing them in order.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Homework Assignment—Reach a consensus with your leaders on the top 5 needs for your church, and list them in order – things we need within 6 months – and within 1 year.

#4 UNDERSTAND THE TIMES

Evaluate the External Environment by Asking Questions:

1. Why is McDonald's offering gourmet coffee?
2. Why are IBM and Apple cooperating?
3. Why all the home movie-style, black and white commercials?
4. What are the latest "how to" subjects in the secular book store?
5. What worldly language *can* we adapt?

#5 CONSIDER POSSIBILITIES

*Perceptions govern how and what we see. What we see governs how we behave.
7 Habits of Highly Effective People – Stephen Covey*

*Organizations die because their engine stops; their engine stops because it runs out to resources " the organizations do not replenish their supply. Resource problems develop because organizations do not adjust to a changing environment and changing fuel supply.
Time, Chance and Organizations – Herbert Kaufman*

Identify Strategic Issues:

1. Refuse to be preoccupied with internal issues only.
2. Select issues which have connection with what is done well already – avoid diffusing energies. Look for a fit between the church – its culture, history and positioning – and the issues.
3. Ask both what should be pursued, and what should be discontinued.
4. Link growth and survival with issue-responsiveness. Focus on customers – their wants, needs and interests.

#6 AIM YOUR CHURCH

Select a Few Issues to Address:

1. Your church cannot go into all the world itself. Pick a part of the world and focus your energy on it.
2. Your church cannot address every social evil. Decide which ones you could challenge most effectively
3. Physical proximity to a need, or some existing bridge to a need, may be good indicators for action.
4. Operate with a sense of initiative, rather than one of reaction.
5. Build on your existing strengths and successes whenever possible. Completely new ventures are rarely productive.
6. Have both long-range and short-range issues goals.
7. Realize that doing on thing will mean not being able to do another. Embrace the limitations of focus.

#7 POSITION THINGS

Arrange a Process of Integrated Objectives:

8. Introduce new pieces into the environment and remove old ones.
9. Reposition other elements; allocate resources differently. Assign responsibilities and accountabilities to people – preferably newer people.
10. Balance long-range and short-range results.
11. Design the process to address the strategic issues and to accomplish the mission, not to accommodate long-time Christians.

MENDING PEOPLE:

An Example of Strategic Positioning--How do people become torn in their soul?

Causal Trauma	Recovery Process	Preventative Measures
Disobedience	Repentance Experiencing Forgiveness	Obedience
Others' Sin	Forgiving Others	Loving and Blessing Others
Evil Spirits	Deliverance Prayer	Spiritual Warfare
Circumstances	Emotional Healing	Faith and Trust in God Comfort, Hope

A. What services/experiences will people need to be mended and more healthy?

1. Prayer, Revelation
2. Personal Bible Study, Meditation on Scripture
3. Love, Acceptance and Community
4. Time, Clarification of Experience
5. Accountability, Affirmation and Correction
6. Worship
7. Giving, Serving
8. Mentoring, Discipling and Modeling

B. What can our church do to introduce/develop 2-3 of these things in the next six months?

C. Are there special kinds of tearing for which people feel they need special services/experiences in order to be mended?

#8 JUDGE RESULTS

*Leadership is the function that fosters and maintains a congregation's focus on divine purpose, promotes rational efforts to achieve it, and keeps counterproductive processes in abeyance.
The Church on Purpose – Joe Ellis*

Measuring Success:

1. Organizations produce the results they are designed to produce; poor results usually come from faulty design.
2. Define success in measurable terms – relative to the institutional mission and to the constituents.
 - a. Number of Church Plants
 - b. Cell Groups with Apprentice Leaders
 - c. Willingness to Give People Away
3. Determine if the process as arranged has helped the organization do what it really wants to do.
4. Examine each part of the process for effectiveness.
5. Ask what has been accomplished; has it been worth the effort and resources expended?

A Quality Ministry Process

How Good is a Church (or a Program)?

Although everyone will claim not to equate church size with church success (quality), our traditional church paradigm offers us no other indices of quality – ways to evaluate how good a job a church is doing. At best, numbers tell us only part of the story. For instance, a church planted in a booming suburb of a fast growing city may well attract huge numbers of people not because of anything especially noteworthy done by the pastor, but because it was the only show in town.

No one wants to be evaluated; large-church pastors are as intimidated by it as are small-church pastors. We fear being told we aren't doing a good job. We dread the final pronouncement, "Poorly done thou bad and faithless servant." On the other hand, we are eager to make our lives count for more; and we can't define more without taking an honest look at the job we are presently doing.

More and more, those of us who want to do a better job at pastoring – no matter what the costs – are asking for evaluation. We want help knowing what else we might do differently. As long as we can see evaluation as a tool to achieve excellence, then I think we can endure the pain of it.

The problem is, how do we assess the relative quality of a church process? Trying to evaluate the quality of a church is much like attempting to determine how good a college is. It is very difficult to do. In the field of higher education, researchers have been trying for decades to arrive at a meaningful model with which to evaluate the quality of education students receive at colleges.

The folklore of college quality tends to focus on three factors:

1. Quality of graduates – achievement test results, salaries after graduation
2. Quantity of resources – number of library books, faculty Ph.D.'s, tuition expense
3. Institutional visibility – size, name recognition, tradition

Researchers know, however, that these are not legitimate indications of quality: 1) the reason such bright people graduate from Harvard is because such bright people enter as freshmen – the output is determined primarily by the input; 2) there is no correlation between institutional assets and students' intellectual development; and, 3) colleges become well-known through their sports programs, their highly visible professors and their bigness – none of which actually impact the average student.

In other words, measurements of quality that are easily translated into numbers rarely tell the story of college quality. The same is true for churches. Quality ought to be a statement of what actually happens to people who attend a college or a church. Are they affected by their church/college experience? What changes occurred in them which would not have occurred had they not attended that church?

1. The real question, then, is what does this church do to/for its people?
2. For a congregation, quality is an issue of effectiveness, not of size or wealth. Effectiveness is the measure of how much of what a church intends to accomplish (its mission) it actually does accomplish.
3. This requires that the church define its terms of success – to spell out exactly what it is trying to do. There are two ways to approach the task of defining success:
 - a. Determine specific numeric goals (attendance, conversions, baptisms, income, church plants, etc.).
 - b. Envision an ideal process/environment (teaching settings, accountability networks, counseling programs, outreaches, etc.).

In both cases, the focus should be on the *value added* – the difference the church makes – not simply on outcome measurements. The best evaluation of church quality will come by combining product evaluation (numeric goals) and process evaluation (ideal environment), looking for connection *between* changes in results and changes in process.

Additionally, evaluation of the process and of the results must focus on what happens: 1) To the people who attend the church – how the church affects them; and, 2) With people who attend the church – how the church makes use of them. This means people are both results of the process and resources in the process. Thus, church effectiveness should be measured by the quality of its goals and the degree to which it has accomplished those goals in people and with people who attend.

CHURCH QUALITY: Evaluating Plans and Performances

	<i>TO PEOPLE</i>	<i>WITH PEOPLE</i>
Numeric Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversions • Attendance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal witnessing • Inviting people to church

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offerings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tithing/endowing
<p>Process Goals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message, altar calls • Services, special programs • Stewardship, financial teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach program participation • Worship team/volunteering • Testifying, teaching others

Final Thoughts

Considerations for Leading the Whole Process:

1. Change will be the constant given.
2. Failures are very instructive for future successes.
3. Proximity of a church's vision is more important to people than the geographic proximity of the building.
4. Arrange everything in church to obey Jesus:
 - a. Make disciples.
 - b. "Advantage" people by "going away."
 - c. Mobilize people to "do unto" others what has been "done unto" them.