

Growth Points

with Gary L. McIntosh, Ph.D.

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The Planning Gap

One of the reasons people are reluctant to serve on a church's long-range planning team is a lingering frustration they have from serving on ineffective committees. Many of the plans and goals developed in the past were never completed.

People are just too busy to spend time serving on a long-range planning team that does not produce something worthwhile. People have less than three hours to devote to ministry outside of Sunday morning worship. Hence, people in our churches are

very selective about service in ministry or on a committee.

A planning gap exists when plans and goals are not implemented. This occurs when a plan is developed without properly aligning the resources that are needed to actually see the plans fulfilled. For example, if a church develops a plan to use projection of songs in its worship service, it must align enough financial resources so a projector, screen, and other necessary components may be purchased. Failure to budget enough money for the project leads to a planning gap.

To eliminate the planning gap, church leaders need to employ the Four M's of Alignment. By aligning resources, goals will be accomplished.

What is alignment? Alignment is the intentional organizing of a church's practices and resources so that they are consistent with its stated mission, vision, values, and goals.

The biggest hurdle to seeing your church's goals fulfilled is internal misalignment. A church can set wonderful goals, but if the church's organization does not align in support of the

goals, most will fail. The main obstacle to overcome in reaching your goals is internal rather than external.

Manpower

The first principle of alignment is manpower. The manpower of the church must be deployed to fulfill its mission, vision, values, and goals. This is clearly an internal issue. One of the main obstacles to overcome in reaching goals is the lack of people support.

For a goal to be accomplished it must have sufficient people devoting their talents and energies to seeing it fulfilled. When you set a goal ask yourself, "How can I make sure people are working toward the achievement of this goal?" If you cannot align people with the goal, there is a high probability it will not be reached.

"Planning is bringing the future into the present so you can do something about it now."
-Alan Lakein

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Organize resources to fulfill your goals.

Prayer must be deployed to reach your mission.

Money

Money is the second key to alignment. We do not like to talk about money too much in churches, but the reality is we cannot do much without it. Not only the manpower, but also the money of the church must be deployed to fulfill its goals, values, vision, and mission.

This is where the budget of the church comes into play. A church must ask the question, "Is the budget supporting the accomplishment of the church's goals?" Someone once remarked that we can tell our priorities by looking at our checkbooks. The same can be said for our church. What does our church's checkbook say about its commitment to its mission, vision, values, and goals? When it comes to money, we must remember the cost of doing nothing is greater than the cost of doing something. One of the major obstacles to overcome in reaching goals is the lack of financial support.

Management

Management is the third key ingredient to successful goal completion. The management of the church's calendar should be deployed to fulfill its mission, vision, values, and goals. Since people have only so much time to devote to ministry today, wise church leaders will carefully plan the church's calendar so that it directs people toward fulfillment of its goals rather than away from them. Church leaders should ask the question, "Does our calendar of events reflect our mission, vision, values, and goals?"

Think of it this way. If the average person only gives three hours to church activities beyond the Sunday worship service, then we need to be certain the opportunities offered point us in the direction of our mission, vision, values, and goals. I think this is why so many people today do not attend everything the church offers. Years ago it was common practice for people to go to church every time the doors were open. But there is so much more competition for our time today that

people must make choices. People are astute enough to see that some events the church offers are not as strategic as others. One of the reasons churches are streamlining their programming is related to this principle of alignment. Time is so valuable today that an effective church must carefully align its programming so that it supports its goals.

Ministry of Prayer

The last key to alignment is the ministry of prayer. A church's ministry of prayer should be deployed to fulfill its mission, vision, values, and goals. Now, all churches pray, but most do not strategically pray in a way that aligns their prayer ministry with the goals of the church. For example, how many churches have prayer intercessors specifically aligned to pray for worship, facilities, or youth? One of the reasons some churches do so well in reaching goals is that they actually recruit people to pray specifically in line with their mission, vision, values, and goals.

If you have never considered the necessity of aligning these aspects of ministry to advance your goals, take the time to think through your current goals. Align your manpower, money, management, and ministry of prayer to each goal. This will overcome your planning gap.



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For information about training workshops, seminars, and church consultations call 951-506-3086.

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