

Making a plan by Troy Stempler

Are you ready to develop a strategic plan? Are you at that place in your ministry where you know what God wants you to do? You have a long-term goal in mind. You want to focus in on it and make it happen. You are willing to pay the price by writing things down and developing structures that will bring results. You just don't know how.

As we've helped many YWAM ministries develop these plans, we've taken them through the following steps:

1. Write a vision statement. Here you need to define your client and the client's problem. Clients come in two varieties: internal and external. Your external clients are the people you are trying to reach or serve with your ministry. Your internal clients are the people you empower to accomplish your goal (staff, students, outreach participants, donors, board members, etc.). Your vision statement describes your external clients and their problem you want to address.
2. Write a mission statement. What are you going to do to respond to this problem you've just written about? This is where the action comes in. You write down strategies that focus on the problem.
3. Develop a structure that will bring about implementation of these strategies. You try to anticipate the future. You develop an organizational chart and job descriptions.
4. Define your core values and operating principles. Core values are the words you want to describe your organization. For Mission Builders International, our core values are: professionalism, empowerment, integrity, accountability, stewardship and servanthood. To develop operating principles, ask: what will we never compromise, regardless of the situation?
5. Do a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis. Where you have weaknesses, you can focus on how to make them strengths. Where you have threats, you can examine how to overcome those. You also look at how to take advantage of opportunities.
6. Develop program plans, resource plans and facility plans. A program plan would be looking at, what are all the different operations that we need to run to make this thing successful. Once you understand that, you know what kind of resources you are going to need to pull it off. You also know what kind of facilities are going to be justified.

This process will take you probably two years or more, and you most likely won't be able to do it without outside help. If you try to do it on your own without having outside people asking you things as consultants, you will probably have a very difficult time. You may think this is a waste of money, but in the long run, it's the best investment you can make.

You should hire somebody you will respect, who understands the dynamic of your ministry. If you can't afford to hire a consultant, put together an advisory board. That's a good starting point. Make sure you include business people with success in managing businesses with around the same number of people you think you will need. Tell these people to challenge you by asking the hard questions. Be prepared to listen to them. Meet with them at least twice a year.

It took us five years to get through this process with the first YWAM ministry we consulted with, and in some ways we are not done yet. As this YWAM base started developing a strategic plan, they became a very successful ministry because they were narrowing down what they were trying to do and they were beginning to hit the target. Their base has been so successful, in fact, that we are now involved in planning with the national office and with many other YWAM ministries in this country.

The change began to happen for this base because they began to ask long-term questions: what is going to change this village that will then change this people group that will then change this nation?

In the beginning, they had 16 national staff. They were working with 35 unreached people groups that totalled over 11 million people. They were doing very little long-term. Their goal was to give people a short-term, exciting opportunity to see God move because miracles were happening. After awhile, the national staff were beginning to get tired of the excitement. They wanted to see God make a long-term difference in their nation. As we got involved and took them through the vision and mission process and we started working with job descriptions and structure, they focussed on making a difference in one village and building on that. They started finding that the field dictated what kind of schools were needed. All their different programs began to ask what is the end result we want to see and how do we fit into that?

What they are found is that they used to have a whole lot of converts, but no churches established. Now they are beginning to see churches established, and villages changed. They now have 35 full-time staff with several churches planted among the people groups they targeted.

I hope you can see how for this base, something as abstract as writing statements and putting plans on paper is translating into long-term fruit to the glory of God. I'm convinced the same can happen throughout YWAM. It's not just the physical buildings being built, it's not just the ministries being there, but the whole purpose behind it all, of reaching and discipling the lost. It can happen more strategically and a lot faster.

It's not easy. It's not a quick process. But it is worth it.

by Troy Stempler, former President of Mission Builders International. Reprinted with permission from the October 1999 International YWAMer.

[Ed. note: For information on strategic planning seminars check out the Mission Builders International website at www.missionbuilders.net]