

Ministry Project Management

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*Planning and Executing Ministry Projects
In Local Churches, Associations, and Conventions*

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Introduction

This course is about planning and executing projects in local churches, associations, and conventions. So, let's begin with some definitions.

Local Church: A local church is a group of baptized believers, joined together by covenant to help each other grow in the Lord and to organize for the preaching of God's Word, to observe the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, and to fulfill the Great Commission.

Association: A Baptist association is a group of self-governing churches, from the same region, upholding a common faith and shared practices, voluntarily networking together to fulfill the Great Commission and to strengthen its member churches.

Convention: A convention supports a larger geographical area than an association. It is responsible for missions agencies, seminaries, and other ministry entities in that the convention elects their governing boards and distributes the financial support of the churches to the entities.

An individual believer joins a local church with the church being responsible for examining their Christian testimony and seeing that each member has been baptized by immersion after conversion as a symbolic act. A local church joins an Association with the Association examining the church and verifying that it is of like faith and order. A local church supports a Convention.

In regard to training events, the association and the convention may resemble each other, and sometimes even overlap in their work.

Project: A project is a step-by-step procedure, undertaken to solve a problem, meet a need, or take advantage of an opportunity. A Team is used when the work is too much for one person to do, the objectives cannot be completed by one person in the time available, or multiple skillsets are needed.

Most of the projects which ministers find themselves engaged are either for events or to create processes. These events may be, for example, evangelistic, training events, or mission projects. As a new church gets on its feet, they must decide how they will select their deacons; that is an example of a process. Once a church determines a process, they then have a template they can use again and again.

Introduction

What Kinds of Projects Do Churches, Associations, and Conventions Do?

Below is a list of examples of projects which churches, associations, and conventions might do. In secular books on project management, much of the material better relates to such projects as constructing a new building, creating a new product, or developing new software. In ministry, most of our projects involve either planning an event (training or outreach events) or developing a process (for example, how will we select deacons?).

There are more complex ministry projects, such as planting a new church, for example.

Examples of Church Projects:

- ◆ Evangelistic Emphasis
- ◆ Prayer Emphasis
- ◆ Planning a Mission Trip
- ◆ Mothering a New Church
- ◆ Strategic Planning
- ◆ Organizing a Sunday School/Small Group Ministry
- ◆ Adding a new ministry

Examples of Projects of an Association:

- ◆ Events to gather for prayer, discipleship training, etc.
- ◆ Helping a Church Organize an Ordination Council and Process for Ordination
- ◆ Evaluating an Existing Church for Membership in the Association
- ◆ Construction projects in which members from multiple churches participate
- ◆ Evangelism projects (e.g. Operation GO Guatemala) or Crusade type evangelistic events
- ◆ Community help projects
- ◆ Vision Trips (to evaluate the need for a project)

Examples of Projects by a Convention:

- ◆ Preparing for the Annual Convention Meeting
- ◆ Training and resourcing leaders of the Associations
- ◆ Training and resourcing for Disaster Relief
- ◆ Intervention in Crisis Management
- ◆ Assessing, training, and coaching church planters.
- ◆ Training events for ministers and church staff.
- ◆ Training for Safety Teams to keep worshippers and children safe.

Introduction

Examples of Processes:

- ◆ How will we bring people from the Outside-In? That is, how will we help people in a spheres of influence move toward becoming deeply devoted followers of Jesus Christ?
 - ◇ “Come and see” (John 1:46) — We are secure in our faith and are open to questions and investigation. Come, check it out for yourself.
 - ◇ “Come and follow (Matthew 4:18-19) — Inviting people to follow Christ and helping them assimilate into the church.
 - ◇ “Come be with me” (Mark 3:13-15) — Training believers to serve the Lord and deploying them as witnesses into the world.
 - ◇ “Remain in me” (John 15:1-16) — We are all fragile in our Christian walk and need encouragement and accountability to stay in fellowship with the Lord.
- ◆ How will we train new members – in faithful church membership and in how we do things in our church?
- ◆ How will we choose our leaders for Sunday School, etc.? Bill Hull says that leadership in a church is either earned or it’s just a popularity contest.
- ◆ How will we train people for their places of service? We can create a path to leadership: Developing a way for members to develop in consecration, character, recognizing their spiritual gifts, and practical training in ministry skills.

Spirit-Led Planning

Planning is NOT Unspiritual!

Many Christians have somehow gotten the idea that planning is unspiritual. They would say we should “Just let the Lord lead.” Certainly, we have all been in worship services and something unplanned happened... the Lord intervened. Such moments are special. That does not, however, negate the biblical basis of Spirit-led planning.

God Plans

- ◆ Ephesians 1:9-10 says the Father saved us, “according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a **plan** for the fullness of time...” So, there is the plan of salvation.
- ◆ Isaiah 25:1 “O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name, for you have done wonderful things, **plans** formed of old, faithful and sure.”
- ◆ Isaiah 46:9-10 “...Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and **I will accomplish all my purpose**’”
- ◆ We are saved because Jesus was “delivered up according to the **definite plan** and fore-knowledge of God” (Acts 2:23).

God’s Word Teaches Us How to Plan

- ◆ Proverbs 21:5 “The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.”
- ◆ Proverbs 20:18 “Plans are established by counsel; by wise guidance wage war.”
- ◆ Proverbs 15:22 “Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.”
- ◆ Proverbs 16:3 “Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established.”

Spirit-Led Planning

God's People Plan

- ◆ David gave Solomon the building plans for the temple complex (1 Chronicles 28:11) and explained how God led him in developing the plans, "All this he made clear to me in writing from the hand of the LORD, all the work to be done according to the plan" (1 Chronicles 28:19).
- ◆ Nehemiah had been praying for Jerusalem and about the desperate need to repair its walls. When the king asked what he would like to do about it, Nehemiah had a complete plan ready to present to the King, including a timetable and the necessary letters of authorization for travel and building materials (Nehemiah 2).
- ◆ Spiritual gifts are supernaturally empowered specialties in Christian service. One of the gifts named in Scripture is the gift of Administration (1 Corinthians 12:28).

Planning Helps Us Reach Escape Velocity

It takes a great amount of energy for a spacecraft to reach "escape velocity" and escape the earth's gravitational pull. The same is true in our Christian lives and in our churches. The gravity of our fallen condition pulls us down. For example, if we don't plan to have care group leaders in our small groups, people on the fringes of the group will fall between the cracks. Reaching out and ministering must be done on purpose. If we hide between the words, "We're just letting the Spirit lead," we will end up ministering only to our friends.

Before You Start, Pray!

Peter Lord used to tell a story to illustrate the importance of prayer in planning. He said, "Suppose there is a church that has a real burden to reach young couples. They don't have as many of young families in their church as they should. So, they give themselves to fervent prayer. They pray for some time and then God gives them a plan. The Lord lays on their hearts to do A, B, and C. They do those three things and young adults flock to their church. They reach so many couples that other churches begin to ask them how they did it. "We did A, B, and C," they tell them. But that's the wrong answer. The correct answer would have been to say, "We prayed and asked God for his plan." Each church is unique and has its own niche. So each congregation needs to ask God for his specific guidance.

Spirit-Led Planning

As You Plan, Trust the Holy Spirit to Lead You

It is one thing to make our plans and then ask God to bless them. It is quite another to develop plans as the Holy Spirit leads us. Romans 8:14 says it is a mark of our salvation that we are led by the Holy Spirit – “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” The Holy Spirit leads. Our assignment is to keep in step with the Spirit. This should be a continuous and deliberate choice on our part.

Getting Started in the Planning Process

When We Need to Plan

Someone in church business meeting stands up and says, “Somebody ought to do something!” Everyone in the church business meeting may be picturing in their minds a different solution to a slightly different problem, as they perceive it. Answer the question, “Something about what?”

When do we need to plan? Sometimes, we plan when there is a problem to be solved. Sometimes, we plan because there is a need to be met. And other times, we plan when there is an opportunity to be seized. This is a very important moment in the planning process — determining exactly what problem needs solving. Describing, precisely the nature of the need we should meet. Stating specifically, what opportunity we have before us. If there isn’t clarity at the starting point, then we might develop a great plan to fix the wrong problem!

Once the problem is clearly described and everyone agrees on its definition, the next step is to describe what the solution would look like. What are the indicators of success? When will the goal be reached and the project considered complete?

In the distance between the problem and the envisioned solution lies the project. The project takes us from the problem to the solution.

Who Decides There is a Project That Needs to Be Done?

The answer to this question can vary greatly. It may be the pastor sees a need and makes a recommendation to the church and the congregation votes to assign some members to undertake the project. It may be a State Convention Director assigns staff members who work under him to undertake the project with ministers from several departments in the convention forming a Project Team. However, in Baptist life, no one is a king. No one is unaccountable.

Getting Started in the Planning Process

Develop a Project Assignment Document for Your Team

So often people say something along these lines: “I know what I mean; I just can’t put it into words.” However, the truth is that if we cannot put it into words, we don’t understand the concept as clearly as we think we do.

People remember things differently. Why rely on memories when we can put it in writing? A written document can clarify the assignment and protect the project from drifting off course.

Secular books on project management often use the term, “charter” for this Ministry Assignment document.

We had teams to oversee and carry out the ongoing ministries of the church. We called their job descriptions “Team Task Directives.” Their work was done in “teams.” The team members not only planned the work, but did the work, so it was for a “task.” Team members were receiving clear direction from the church as to what they were being asked to do, so it was a “directive.”

Regardless of what it is called, any minister, member, or team assigned to meet a need should have a clear understanding of what they have been asked to do.

The Project Assignment:

The church, or perhaps church leaders, may assign a team the responsibility of planning a specific ministry project. Someone who is on staff of a Convention may assign this type of responsibility to someone who works under him. Here is what a Project Assignment does:

- ◆ Provides a Purpose Statement for the project.
- ◆ Identifies the problem, need, or opportunity the team is to address.
- ◆ Describes what the team is being asked to do (about the problem, need or opportunity).
- ◆ Tells the Project Team what they are supposed to do, but not how they are supposed to do it.
- ◆ You may need to name similar ministries or activities that are outside their scope of ministry and tell the project team what is not included.
- ◆ States who must approve any changes to the Assignment.
- ◆ Says who must give final approval to their project/plan. The congregation in church business meeting? The pastor? The Executive Director?
- ◆ States the deadline.
- ◆ Lists indicators of successful ministry. How will they know if they have done this well?
- ◆ Says when the project is considered complete.

Getting Started in the Planning Process

Who Writes the Ministry Project Assignment?

In the business world, the Project Manager usually writes the first draft of the Charter, as assigned by his supervisor. Then, it is modified with input from all the stakeholders. In a local church, most members would not have the experience to formulate a document like this. So, generally, the pastor needs to write this document with input from church leaders. Remember, Baptist churches make decisions together, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and led by the Holy Spirit. In most churches, this means the Project Assignment is approved by the congregation. The advantage to this approach is that everyone understands the expectations, knows which lane the team is to stay in, and the project team feels a sense of accountability.

In an Association or Convention, the Director may ask someone on the staff to develop this document and bring it to him for discussion and approval.

Again, it should be noted that most of the projects in a church, association, or convention involve events or creating processes. Thus, most of the projects in which we are involved are less complex than creating a new product, developing new software, or designing a new passenger jet. This simplicity is the genius of Great Commission. In the ministry context, the plan for doing the project will probably evolve a little over time, but the Project Assignment will not.

The Ministry Project Assignment document will prove incredibly helpful when a team member goes rogue. If someone wants to hijack the vision or get into another team's lane, the project leader can point to the document and say, "Remember, this is what the church has asked us to do."

The Importance of a Clear Purpose Statement

When You Know the Why, You Know the What

A group of local churches sponsored a baccalaureate service for the graduating high school seniors. A baccalaureate is, by definition, a worship service. However, a lot of people didn't understand that. People knew this was one of the events associated with graduation, but they didn't really know what this big word meant. Even some of the pastors perceived it as an opportunity to showcase the students more than as a worship service. The service lost its focus on God. We eventually adopted a purpose statement for this annual service which the pastors used in planning the service. We also printed this purpose statement on the program to help those in attendance better understand the nature of the event they were attending.

Getting Started in the Planning Process

The purpose of this worship service is to express gratitude to God for His aid in bringing students to this important milestone in life, to express appreciation for those God has used to help the students along the way, and to express dependence upon Him for the future.

When we had our annual church-wide prayer emphasis to start the new year, we included its purpose statement on our printed materials:

Month of Prayer is a time for us as a church family to engage in vigorous prayer, asking God to mature us spiritually, to lead us in ministry, and to empower our witness.

Why do this? Because in our fallen human nature, we tend to make things about ourselves. We will turn a prayer meeting into a fellowship and feast gathering. So, we have to emphasize the true purpose of each ministry. A clearly written, concise purpose statement, that is prominently displayed and often repeated, helps us do that.

A Warning: If you, as the leader of the project, stick to the purpose statement and hold everyone accountable to follow it, there will be times when your team will perceive you as inflexible and stubborn. This is where carefully explaining the Project Assignment when enlisting team members can be very helpful.

Know Who Your Stakeholders Are

Stakeholders are those people who are either engaged in the project or affected by it. Members of the Project Team are Stakeholders. The pastor is a stakeholder. In an Association or Convention, the Director is Stakeholder. Any leader in the church or organization that authorized the project is a stakeholder. People involved in other ministries, but ministries which are impacted by this project, are stakeholders. And broadly speaking, the congregation is a stakeholder. Sometimes, we report to a Stakeholder as our supervisor to secure approval for a project we would like to undertake. These are all legitimate stakeholders.

There are some congregations which has a “church boss” or coalitions within the church, each with its own leaders; these people all think they are stakeholders. They may feel the project threatens their power in the church. Though these aren’t legitimate stakeholders, you still need to be aware and take them into account.

We need to seek input from stakeholders. Sometimes, we need to keep stakeholders informed. Sometimes, we need to seek assistance from a stakeholder. The goal is for all stakeholders to feel ownership of the project and to support it.

Ministry Project Teams

Project Teams

The first question is: Do we really need a team for this project? If one person can do the job just as well in the time allotted, you don't need a team. Enlist a reliable person to undertake this kind of project.

However, you will need a team if:

- ◆ Multiple skill sets are needed.
- ◆ You need a variety of personalities.
- ◆ There is more work to be done than one person could complete before the deadline.
- ◆ You need to provide representation to various stakeholders, age groups, or ministries within the church, that they may feel their voices have been heard.

Acts 11:19-26

A team of two was needed in Acts 11. The Christians had scattered from Jerusalem due to persecution. Some of those scattered ended up in Antioch. Greek-speaking Jews there were very responsive to the gospel and came to Christ in large numbers. In such large numbers, in fact, the Apostles sent Barnabas to investigate and make sure it was the true gospel to which they were responding. When Barnabas arrived, it all checked out. He was very excited and encouraged them. Barnabas saw an opportunity and a need. There needed to be a lot of follow-up. So what did Barnabas do next? Verse 25 says, "So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul." Barnabas knew the job was too big for one man. This two-man team spent a whole year in Antioch teaching the new believers. This was the first place in the world the term "Christian" was used to describe followers of Jesus. In chapter 13, Antioch would become the missionary-sending center of the early church.

What is a Ministry Project Team?

A team is a group of people with diverse roles working on the same project. The project has been assigned to the team, but they plan together how to fulfill its assignment and to meet their deadline. Team members complete each step in their project plan until the work is complete, after which the team is disbanded.

Ministry Project Teams

A Team of Diverse People: Blending Complimentary Skills

When selecting your team members, you are like a casting director for a film. You are looking for the right person for each part. To change metaphors, the goal is to get everyone on the bus. You don't want anyone trying to hijack the bus. And you want everyone in the right seat on the bus. So, you assemble a diverse team.

Blend idea people with doers – having all dreamers and no doers makes for great meetings and no results. Don't pick people just like yourself – it will be more comfortable, but it will not provide the full array of the skills needed. Consider the kinds of people you might need:

Creators – Dream things up

Organizers – Plan things out

Pluggers – See things through

Promoters – Talk things up

Managers – Keep things flowing

Analyzers – Figure things out

Inspectors – Check things out

Peacemakers – Work things out

Mobilizers – Send folks out

Relaters – Love on folks

Servers – Help folks out

Motivators – Spur folks on

Discerners – See through things

Specializers – Can do things

Team Leaders – Make things happen

Enlisting Your Team:

Enlisting your team members needs to be done deliberately and well. Here are some suggestions for doing so:

- ◆ Tell each person why he or she was chosen for the team.
- ◆ Talk about the cause of the gospel, not programs. You need more than for someone to fill a hole or to check a box. They will be part of a great cause.
- ◆ Give the person a copy of the Ministry Team Assignment. Go over the document part by part and explain it. If you merely ask them to read it, many people will skim over it and, to your surprise, will miss something that was plainly worded.
- ◆ Give the person time to pray it over and the right to say no.
- ◆ Set a date certain when you will re-contact the person for an answer.
- ◆ Have prayer.

Ministry Project Teams

Teams in the Church

Churches don't always need to use a team, but when they do, it must be done right. Here are key facts about church teams:

- ◆ A team is not a committee. A committee makes decisions others will live with. Teams plan their own work and then do that work. Sometimes, a committee is needed.
- ◆ A team is collaborative. This means every member helps make the plans.
- ◆ Teams involve every member in having a clearly defined piece of the work. The pie of the project is divided into slices and each team member gets a piece of the work to do.
- ◆ Teams **MUST** have **REGULAR** meetings!

Project Leaders Working with the Project Team:

Teams need leaders who will lead -- who start the ball rolling and keep things going. Further, you, as Project Leader, are nurturing the team through a collaborative effort.

- ◆ Success depends on enlisting the right team members. Since teams have freedom, people who take initiative are essential; the system won't carry them.
- ◆ Working collaboratively is different -- different than the relationship between bosses and employees or a "lone wolf" structure.
- ◆ Project Leaders should work hard at involving team members in the planning. It is not a good idea to ask people to be part of a planning team but not let them be involved in developing the plan. If the minister is going to make all the decisions and do all the planning, it would be better to simply enlist church members to perform the individual tasks needed for each event. A Project Leader should avoid getting bogged down in doing an aspect of the work. Your role is to keep the team working together.
- ◆ Project Leaders should make the meetings a safe time for giving one's opinions and suggestions. You should set the pace in this. Protect from harsh criticism those who venture out with an idea and draw out those who are reluctant to speak.

Ministers and Teams

A student minister once asked me who was the leader of the youth ministry, the Student Minister or the Youth Ministry Team. Who leads who? The answer is: Lead, follow, or get out of the way!

Properly, the minister is the leader. However, he is not an unaccountable leader. Nor is he the su-

Ministry Project Teams

supervisor and they merely hired hands. The church has established a team because the job is too big for one person.

The correct way to lead in this situation is to plan together. The minister leads by coming to the planning meetings with ideas and some options. However, the team members do not exist to rubber stamp his ideas. Instead, they help plan the work they will do. In this context, you are working collaboratively. If there is a chairman or a lay team leader, then this person needs to be someone with whom you communicate often.

Planning to Plan

Chart the Course

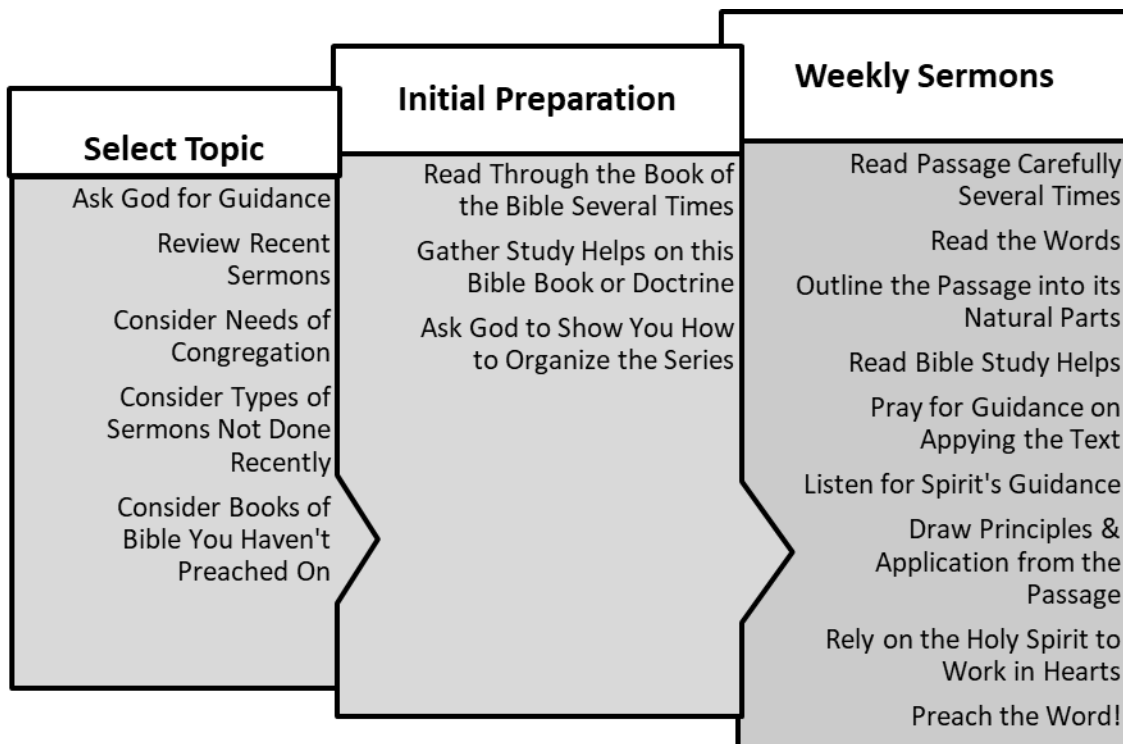
A To-Do List: Most of the time, for the events and processes we develop in a local church, all that is needed in planning the work is a simple list which includes the tasks involved, names the responsible persons, and contains the deadlines for each part of the plan.

However, as we look more complex project plans, we can gain some insights into planning simpler projects more effectively.

Work Breakdown Structure:

In Project Management, teams use a Work Breakdown Structure. The project diagrams for this can be expanded for such endeavors as developing new software or designing a new airliner. A diagram breaks the project down into its major steps and then lists a work package of the smaller tasks that make up each step. There are Summary Headings at the top of the chart for each major step in the project. Under each summary heading is a detailed list, naming each task involved in fulfilling that part of the project.

Below is a simple, sample Work Breakdown Structure for developing a new sermon series:



Planning to Plan

What We Learn from the Planning of Complex Projects

A look at the books and materials on how to plan complex projects can help us better think about planning more simple projects. Here are some things it helps learn:

Some tasks must be completed before others can be started. You must lay the foundation of a house before starting work on the walls. You must invite the guest speaker and confirm the date before you begin promoting the event. In planning, it is important to determine the order in which the parts of the project must be done.

It is important to know how long each step in the project will take. And it is important to know which steps can be taken at the same time and which can overlap in the work schedule. For example, the electrical work and the plumbing can be done at the same time. However, neither can be done before the house is framed up and both must be done before the sheetrock is hung on the walls.

There are two ways of looking at the Work Breakdown Structure: In a timeline and in established signposts.



Planning to Plan

In the second of these, signposts tell you which steps must be undertaken before beginning work on the next step. For example, one reason many church plants fail is because the church planter runs “stop signs” in the “rush to launch.”

A Work Breakdown Structure is often shown in a “Gantt Chart” which may look like this:

January	February	March	April	May	June
Set the Dates for Vacation Bible School					
	Discuss Possible Workers				
		Enlist Workers			
		Order Materials			
			Train Workers		
					Have Bible School

This chart is helpful in that it shows both the timeframe and the tasks to be completed. It also shows how some tasks may overlap in timing. There are the big parts and the sub-parts. You keep breaking the project down into subparts as long as it is helpful to you and the tasks can be scheduled.

CMP and PERT

Though the order of steps in the mile-marker is helpful in communicating the order in which steps should be taken and in illustrating how one step leads to the next, it does not show how some steps in the process can be carried out at the same time as other steps, “in parallel.”

Also, while a bar chart shows how some steps may be undertaken in parallel and is helpful in scheduling, it doesn’t illustrate that the steps are connected.

There is a third kind of chart called a Network Activity Diagram.

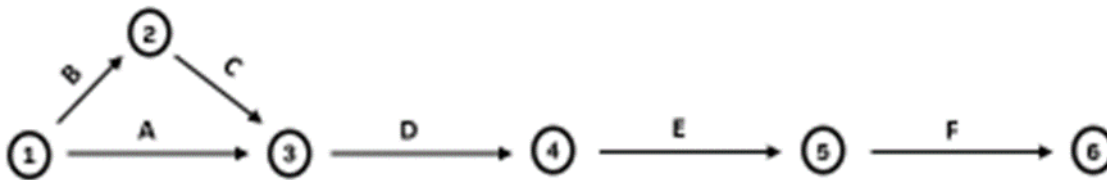
The terms used by Project Management professionals are Critical Path Method (CPM) and Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT).

1. List the basic steps which must be taken in the order they must be done.
2. If a step can be taken in parallel with another step, put it on the same line with that step.
3. When you have listed all the steps to be taken, which cannot be done in parallel, or simultaneously, then this is called your “Critical Path.”

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4. Calculate how long each step in the critical path will require. You can add up these times up for a total project time. Allow for a margin of error or “slack time.”
5. Sometimes, it is necessary to schedule backwards. A simple example is when planning for a Christmas event. You know when everything is due (Christmas), take the project time and work your way back on the calendar to know when to start the project.
6. Other times, there is not a built-in deadline. So, you plan the project going forward.

Example: Below is an example for when a church is considering whether they need to move to a new location. The arrows represent action and activity. The circles represent “milestones” or completion of an activity.



Activity A: Study kinds of ministries we do (or don’t do) in the present building.

What can we not do? What should we be able to do?

Activity B: Gather accurate numbers for current attendance

Activity C: Estimate capacities for worship and each age group

Note: Activity B and Activity C each take less time than Activity A

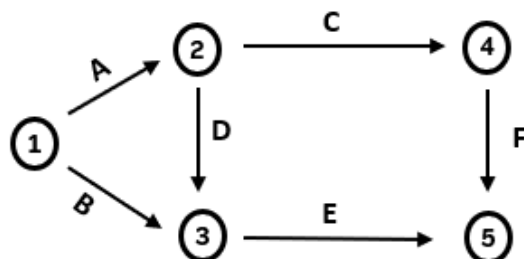
Activity D: Decide: Can we do the ministries at this place which God has called us to?

And can we reach our growth potential in this place?

Activity E: Present recommendation to church for a vote to find new place to worship and gather

Activity F: Find new place to worship and gather

These charts can be made to look many ways to show the process you will need for your project. You may draw some parts of your chart which look like the two examples below:



Planning to Plan

How do you estimate how long an activity will take?

Using your preliminary data, look at three benchmarks:

1. Your most optimistic or best-case estimate
2. The estimate of the most likely outcome
3. The most pessimistic or worst-case estimate
4. Add up the estimates and, then divide by 3. This is your standard average estimate.

Optionally, you can use the PERT approach for a weighted estimate. In this formula, you multiply the Most Likely Outcome times 4, adding up the three (Most Optimistic X 1, Most Likely X 4, and Most Pessimistic X 1) then divide by 6.

This formula can be used for estimating time needed and for estimating costs.

When estimating time and costs, you will need to include a buffer for contingencies that may arise.

Use Your Experts

Also when estimating, use your subject matter experts: members on your team, suppliers who do this for a living, denominational leaders, ministers you know who have done this in their churches, etc.

Keep Good Records

You will find yourself in future projects looking up how you did similar steps the last time. If you record how much things cost and how long tasks took to do, you will find that to be more accurate information than the best memory!

The OODA Loop

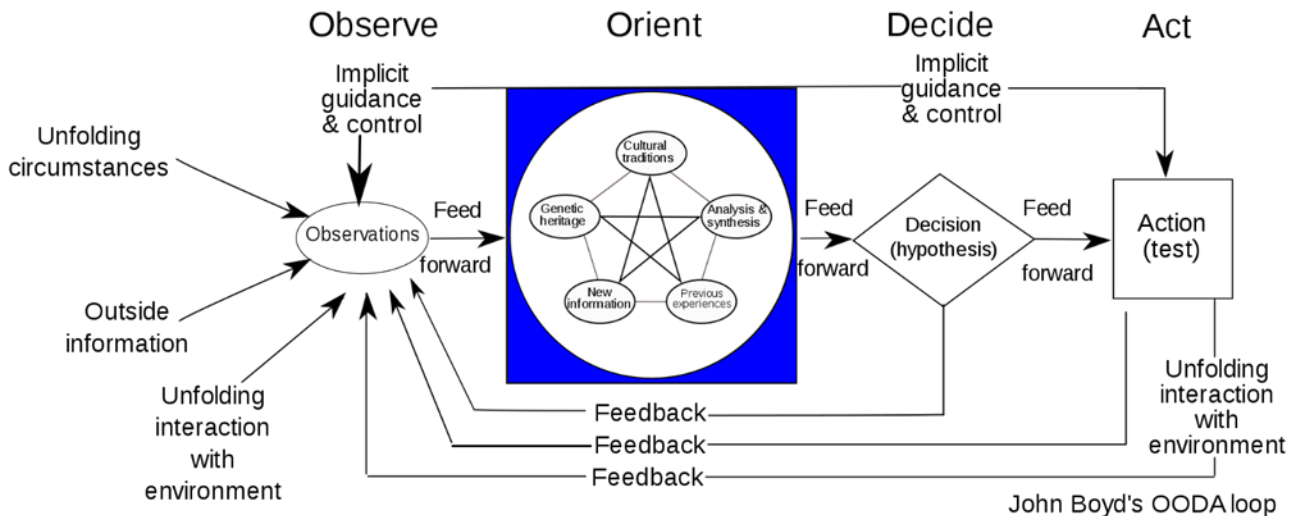


Diagram by Patrick Edwin Moran, From Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository

This diagram illustrates concepts developed by former fighter pilot and trainer, John Boyd, to describe how people process decisions. Some people are under the impression that he is suggesting this process, but Boyd was explaining that this is, in fact, how people process decisions.

There are four basic steps: Observe, Orient, Decide, and Act.

Observe

Implicit Guidance & Control: An unconscious, "learned automatic response."

Unfolding Circumstances: Even as we are observing, circumstances are evolving.

Outside Information: Intelligence briefings, Air Traffic Control, or observations from an outside consultant, etc.

Unfolding Interaction with Environment: Throughout the entire process, you are responding to the situation and to the actions of others – and, also, others are responding to us. Thus, our observations will be continually updated.

Orient

Orientation is answering the question: What is it that I am seeing? One might compare this step to this situation: You are driving down the road and you can see shiny reflections ahead. You think you might be seeing cars or trucks. Is it a wreck? As you get closer, you can see flashing emergency lights. There are police and other first responders ahead. Will the situation require traffic to stop and wait while they take care of the emergency? You take your foot off the accelerator to slow

The OODA Loop

down. You continue to be alert as you get closer. What exactly am I seeing ahead? What do I need to do now to drive safely? You are drawing on your experience as a driver, on your driver education, and on possible directions from law enforcement to guide you.

There are multiple factors which determine how we will perceive and interpret our observations:

- ◇ **Cultural Traditions:** The first influence of which we should be aware is the influence our culture has on us. For example, what we grew up with is what we think is normal. It may have been abnormal or sub-normal, but it feels normal to us.
- ◇ **Genetic Heritage:** This will reflect our personality type. Are we task oriented or people persons? Are we introverts or extroverts? Are we aggressive or are we more likely to withdraw from conflict?
- ◇ **Previous Experience:** We will tend to go back to what has worked for us before.
- ◇ **New Information:** New information can come to us at any part in the loop and may give us reason to reconsider our project plan in part or in whole.
- ◇ **Analysis and Synthesis:** This is taking all of our observations and all of the factors listed above and considering them together.

John Boyd was writing from a secular perspective for secular purposes. Therefore, I would add some other considerations for planning ministry projects:

- ◇ **A Biblical Worldview:** The Bible tells us the truth about God, about ourselves, and about the world around us. As we think biblically, we better understand how there are moral absolutes, that God is good, and how we cannot trust our deceitful hearts. Life is supposed to be based on the Bible.
- ◇ **Spiritual Discernment:** Discernment is the ability to detect what is true and what is false and what is from the Lord and what is from evil spirits. The Holy Spirit gives us insight into unspoken, unseen realities.
- ◇ **Godly Counsel:** Denominational leaders and outside consultants can provide objective observations on our present reality. Sometimes an experienced pastor who has been through a similar situation can provide this kind of advice. Such people are not emotionally involved in any power struggles we may have or have the emotional attachments we have to our traditions. The book of Proverbs advises us to listen to such counsel (Proverbs 15:22; 19:20; 20:18).

The OODA Loop

Decide

Even as you are deciding, you are creating a list of possible responses to the need or opportunity. You develop a hypothesis. You won't have perfect information, nor can you form a perfect plan. However, you can't wait forever. You must decide on the best plan with the best available information.

Again, there are ways in which Christians are better equipped in the planning process. We have the indwelling Holy Spirit to lead us. Thus, it is important that we consciously choose to rely on the Holy Spirit and seek His guidance.

Act

Even as we act, we are testing our plan to see if it's working. We are watching the impact of our actions on the situation and the responses of others. We are learning. We are adjusting our plan.

The Christian is relying on the Holy Spirit to work in people and in the situation. We are consciously trusting God to do things only God can do. We are watching to see where God is moving and to move with Him.

The Planning Process

Resources: Needed and Available

A Ministry Project Team needs to know if they have all the resources needed to do what the church has asked them to do. This includes money, people, expertise, everything.

- ◆ How much will this cost? Is this budgeted? Do we need to ask the church for some money to carry out this project?
- ◆ Who do we need to get involved from within our church to help us?
- ◆ Will we need outside help to accomplish this project? Someone from the Association or Convention or, perhaps, a pastor from another church who has done this before?
- ◆ How much money do we need to do this, if any?
- ◆ Is there something we need, but don't have? Do we need to find a way to make do without it?
- ◆ What cannot be done in human power? What is it we are trusting the Holy Spirit to do?
 - ◇ For example, we can sow the gospel and we can water the seed, but God gives the harvest.
 - ◇ If we are trusting God to act, how will we express that trust to God?

Ask the Question: What could go wrong?

Consider the possible things that could go wrong. What if the speaker cancels? What if the price goes up for some piece of equipment we need? What if the local high school schedules an event at the last moment, creating a conflict for us? Some possible problems are more likely than others. Determine the more likely ones and develop a plan for each one.

It Takes a Leader

Having a plan is not enough; the plan itself won't do the work for you. A project needs a champion – someone who won't let up until the work is complete. The Project Leader is the responsible person. His job is to make sure team members do their jobs. He keeps everyone working together in harmony. He has report sessions to make sure each work assignment has been completed and the project is running on schedule. He helps the team make adjustments when a problem arises. He ensures that team remember the "why," focusing on their purpose as they work toward the goal.

Sometimes, a team or committee is asked to select their own leader. This is a terrible idea! The wrong person will push himself forward or a person who doesn't really want the role will be drafted by the group. The person who isn't a natural leader will fail to call meetings or won't keep things on track. The person who pushes himself forward will often become the dictator of the group instead of the facilitator. It is best to always name the leader.

The Planning Process

Monitor Progress

The team's To-Do List helps the team stay on track. Regular meetings with report back sessions assist with this. The meetings don't necessarily have to be long. Short "stand up meetings" often all that is needed for updates and reports. However, if you meet in the hall between Sunday School and the worship service and make a team decision without a team member present, you have just told that absent member that he or she is not a valued member of the team.

Always have a written agenda for the meetings. Send these to the team members in advance. That way, they will come to the meetings better prepared.

At the end of the meeting, agree on what has been decided in the meeting. Summarize it in words. After the meeting, send an email or text message listing the decisions and assignments made in the meeting.

Listen

During the planning process, you need to know what all the stakeholders are thinking. You need to know what will pass in a vote in church business meeting. You need to know which parts of the plan may need to be adjusted to gain support. You need to know what unexpected problems are developing. So, you create ways to gather this information and to provide opportunities for members to give feedback. You want them to feel safe in giving their observations and opinions.

On one project, church members wouldn't speak up in business meetings. The church had some divisive meetings in the past and the group wanted to never experience that again; so they were quiet. However, we needed to know what the congregation was thinking. The problem was resolved when we created a Listening Committee to speak with members individually. They felt comfortable talking privately to trusted members and we found out what we needed to know.

Persuasion

Persuasion

Sometimes, a Ministry Project Team must make recommendations to the congregation regarding a difficult decision. The team has carefully studied the problem and considered every available option, and determined the best course to take. However, it is not a decision many in the church will want to make. How will you persuade them? There are three reasons people will follow a plan:

- ◆ They greatly trust the leader
- ◆ They are caught up in emotion
- ◆ They are persuaded by the logic

The pastor may not have been pastor at this church long enough to have earned this high level of trust. And in some congregations, no amount of time would ever be enough.

Sometimes, a pastor with a strong personality can impose his will. However, if the people don't embrace his philosophy with sincere agreement in heart and mind, they will quickly change back when he moves on to another church.

If people are caught up in a moment of emotion, they may just as quickly change their minds. Further consideration brings second thoughts. You will think the matter had been decided. And they, on their part, will resent you for having manipulated their feelings.

The best approach is to make multiple presentations. Show how the team considered all the options but had to rule out the other options. Allow for questions. Just as the team may have needed time to come to their conclusion, church members may time to give the report due consideration.

As you prepare your report, anticipate those people who may work to undermine the recommendation. Answer their objections fully before their questions are even asked.

When you can show how the decision you are recommending is consistent with the founding vision of the church, that is helpful. When you can show how the recommendation is consistent with the biblical principles that have guided the church, that is vital.

Remember, many church members are more sentimental than spiritual. Many think more selfishly than strategically. All you can do is give them good reasons to make the right decision. Go with the goers; be pray-ers for the stay-ers.

Persuasion

Promotion

We live in a busy world. Sometimes it is hard to break through all the clutter. Our own church members will tell us, “I wish I had known about this or that event” – when we have announced it, sent mail to them about it, tweeted it, and posted it on Facebook. People are all so overwhelmed with incoming information, we can end up tuning everything out.

There is a limit to what we can do. However, we can promote broadly, invite personally, and remind relationally.

Promote Broadly: In all the possible ways we can announce and promote events publicly, we are saying, “Whoever will may come.” These ways include print, social media, mail, email, etc.

Invite Personally: There is the story of the man who fell in love and wrote the girl of his dreams a letter every day. She ended up marrying the postal carrier. Personal invitations are more powerful than impersonal invitations.

Remind Relationally: The most effective promotion is when a friend says something along the lines of, “You are going to be there for the big event, aren’t you?” Reminders from people with whom we have an existing relationship says we are truly wanted.

Go Live!

Go Live

At the end of the project planning is the event, the product, the invention, the building. You have planned toward this day. Now, it's happening in real life. We should never allow a project to veer off track so the goal is never achieved.

The first service at a new location or the first Sunday with a new pastor are often days with an especially large crowd. You would want to make certain you give this service some extra promotion, so no one fails to get word. You may want to be ready with extra chairs if they are needed. You will want your greeters to prepare for the extra numbers and to help any guest speakers find the pastor, should they arrive late. You will also want a plan should the crowd be disappointingly small. Fussing at those present wouldn't set the right tone. So, what will you say to set the right tone, should that happen?

Evaluate

After the completion of a project, the team has one final job to do: evaluate. Produce a written evaluation for future reference. Ask yourselves:

- ◆ Did we fulfill our purpose? Did we solve the problem? Meet the need? Take advantage of the opportunity?
- ◆ How well did we do? What could we have done better?
- ◆ Were there any surprises, good or bad? Could we have better anticipated the problems?
- ◆ What worked especially well?
- ◆ How did we do as a team? Did everyone work well together?
- ◆ In the planning sessions, did everyone feel comfortable to speak up?
- ◆ Did everyone get their assignments done on time?
- ◆ Did we budget well and plan for all the needed resources?
- ◆ How could we do it better next time?

What if it Works? What's Next?

What if we just had a successful event? First, we need to celebrate it. But the next thing we need to do is ask ourselves what we could do as a next step to take advantage of the opportunity. If, in the project, we have met some people who are showing an interest in the gospel, could we invite them to a social function where we could get to know each other? Could we start a class for peo-

Go Live!

ple interested in exploring the Christian message? The same thing is true after a successful evangelistic event. We then need to help those who responded to grow into deeply devoted disciples.

Celebrate

The team that accomplishes its goals should celebrate their achievement. Before the team disbands, have a celebration dinner. You may be able to give team members a small gift related to the project. Certainly, you should thank each team member for their specific, individual contributions. Make them feel like winners!

Sustain Ongoing Projects

After the development of a Strategic Plan, for example, one of the real struggles is to get it implemented. Often, these carefully studied plans are adopted by the church with great enthusiasm, but the report ends up gathering dust on a shelf somewhere. Once we establish our plan for selecting deacons, we need to see to it that we follow that plan each time we select deacons. There is nothing more demoralizing than working long and hard and not seeing results. Often a Ministry Project Team has exhausted themselves getting to this point. That is why the plan must include details, deadlines, and accountable persons. The Project Team may need to pass the baton to others at this point. It will be crucial that anyone to whom the baton is passed understands and accepts the assigned role. However, without a clear plan and responsible persons, nothing happens.

Resources

Biblical Project Management: Rebuilding the Wall Around Jerusalem by Kendrick Burgess.

© 2019, Elm Hill

There are numerous Christian books on leadership and management based on the book of Nehemiah. Burgess is a project manager and, in a very detailed way, shows how Nehemiah modeled principles for good project management.

Wired for Influence: Skills to Lead Others by Tim Elmore. © 2002, LifeWay

This is an eight session training book/workbook created for young adults. It is excellent, but is out of print. You can, however, find it used online. It is written from a Christian perspective.

Faith Planning: Invite God to Do the Impossible by Bruce Cook. © 1983, Victor Books

Also written from a Christian perspective, providing some good insights on planning by faith as God leads. This is another book you will need to purchase used.

A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide) – The Standard for Project Management

This book is considered the industry standard on Project Management in the business world. However, it is more far more involved than most ministry projects require. It is updated every four to five years.

Fundamentals of Project Management – Fifth Edition by Joseph Heagney © 2012, 2016, American Management Association. A very readable guide.

The Fast Forward MBA in Project Management: The Comprehensive, Easy-to-Read Handbook for Beginners and Pros – Sixth Edition by Eric Verzuh © 2021, John Wiley and Sons

Essential Managers Project Management by Peter Hobbs © 2008, 2019, Penguin Random House. This is a DK Book with colorful images, charts, and diagrams. This is also a secular book, but a good, basic introduction.

Find more resources like this booklet at: www.smalltownbaptist.net