



7 REASONS CHURCHES NEED A STRATEGIC PLAN

In his book *Strategy 2000*, author Aubrey Malphurs dedicates a whole chapter to the difference a strategic plan can make in your ministry. I've taken this opportunity to summarize seven of his ten reasons why a carefully thought-through strategy is so important to your ministry.

1. A strategic plan will help your church accomplish its mission. You may have the greatest mission in the world, but if you have no way to accomplish your mission, then essentially you and the others on your team are wasting your time. A strategic plan is the vehicle that enables the ministry to accomplish its mission or overall goal. For example, a strategic plan to make fully devoted followers of Jesus will move people from where they are spiritually (lost, immature) to where God wants them to be spiritually (mature disciples). A good strategic plan will help put feet to your theology.

2. A strategic plan facilitates understanding. If you were to take a quick tour of all the churches across Illinois, you would discover that they all have one thing in common—programs, and lots of them. In older churches, the

programs inside the facility have much in common with the paint on the outside of the facility—there are layers and layers of them, one on top of the other. A strategic plan is the thread that runs through all the programs and not only ties them together but communicates the spiritual purpose of each. The strategic plan communicates to your people what they have to do to get where they want to go. If a program no longer contributes to the strategy or in some way detracts from it, then it is dropped.

3. A strategic plan provides a sense of momentum and progress. When a church implements a high-impact plan and communicates it clearly to its people, then they can respond in a positive manner. People who become involved will sense that there is movement, that they are going somewhere spiritually, and that they are not simply sitting and soaking. This awareness is vital and promotes a sense of momentum.

4. A strategic plan embraces positive change. In the last few years, we have all boarded a roller coaster called change and have discovered that not only is there no way off but there is also no

end in sight. Change is happening regardless of what we do to prevent it, and it can either help the church or hurt it. A well-developed strategic plan helps us deal more effectively with change. A good strategic plan regularly conducts community audits to recognize, observe, and

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evaluate the changes that are taking place in the ministry neighborhood. When the church knows where its going, it can evaluate change and determine whether it will help or harm the church in its journey to accomplishing its goal.

5. A strategic plan will help the church realize a preferred future. When we fail to plan and strategize for the future, we leave our church and ministry vulnerable to a variety of circumstances. When a church knows where it is going and has carefully thought through and developed a strategy to get there, it will most likely arrive there. However, the opposite is true as well. Not to strategize is almost a guarantee that except for the grace of God, a ministry will not see its preferred future. It is comparable to a cruise ship adrift at sea that moves not according to a predetermined course but at the whims of the wind and the tides that swirl all around it.

6. A strategic plan enhances a church's success. The process of strategizing involves regularly conducting

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SPECIAL NOTICE

Certificate in Church Leadership Series will resume in 2005

RESOURCES

Resource Books by Aubrey Malphurs on Strategic Planning

- **Strategy 2000**, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI., 1996, \$11.99.
- **Pouring New Wine into Old Wineskins**, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI., 1993, \$12.99.
- **Values-Driven Leadership**, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI., 1996, \$16.99.
- **Developing a Vision for Ministry in the 21st Century**, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI., 1992, \$16.99.
- **Church Next: What the Church Will Look Like in the 21st Century**, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI., 2003, \$11.99.

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internal audits on how the church is progressing toward its mission and external audits on what is taking place in the church's community. This helps the church to make needed adjustments and changes to remain relevant and in contact with its community as well as on the cutting edge. However, failure to strategize means that the ministry does not make the necessary adjustments to stay current and realize its vision. In time, this affects the very survival of that ministry as so many plateaued and dying churches have discovered too late.

7. A strategic plan maximizes ministry energy. Every Sunday, numerous plateaued and declining churches go through the motions of church. The people faithfully show up and sit through Sunday school and church. They place an offering in the plate and then go home thinking, "I've done my thing for God." A few may even be involved in the actual, ongoing ministry of the church. However, a high-impact strategic plan serves to harness all that wasted energy. It directs and redirects the church's efforts into action steps or programs and ministries that actually make a difference. It moves the ministry in a new direction and supplies fresh energy for the organization. It also serves to re-energize those who may have abandoned hope in the church's former direction or lack thereof over the years.

Gary J. Blanchard

Strategic Planning Opportunity for Evangelism

One of the best evangelism opportunities in recent years will occur in late February with the release of the full-length Hollywood movie, *The Passion of The Christ*. The movie captures the last 12 hours of the life of Jesus and is a vivid portrayal of His trial, condemnation, and brutal execution.

The movie has already garnered much press from critics and prominent ministry leaders who have previewed the film. Praise has come from Jack Hayford, Ted Haggard, Lee Strobel, and Greg Laurie. Billy Graham says this movie will be the "Jesus film" of this century. The film will be discussed around the water cooler, during lunch breaks, and wherever people gather to express opinions. ***How will you and your church respond?***

I recently met with key leaders from Outreach Marketing who have worked diligently to make this one of the best outreach opportunities ever. Materials include handouts, sermon series, and evangelism tools and ideas. Some churches are renting whole theatres to reach their cities.

Outreach Marketing will be mailing promotional materials to all churches by the end of December. If you have not received information by mid-January, call them at 800.991.6011 or visit their special website www.ThePassionOutreach.com. Plan now to make this Easter season one of your best ever! *GJB*

