

How to Develop Missions Goals and Strategies

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When we set out on a journey, we have a destination in mind. We contact a travel agent or at least consult a map, in order to reach our destination in the most efficient manner possible. We determine the stages of the trip, where we will stop and how long it will take to arrive. We make reservations. We calculate the cost. If we go by car, we service it beforehand. All of this is normal procedure.

Yet, when it comes to establishing and reaching goals in mission work, we tend to ignore many of the necessary strategy steps required for realizing them. Congregations should work with their missionaries and with the emerging national church to establish goals and develop strategies for each of its mission works. Failure to develop goals and strategies results in wasted time and resources, in inconsistent plans of attack and frustration, both at home and on the field, over the objectives to be met.

Let us therefore consider how to establish both goals and strategies for a typical church-planting mission effort, realizing that these plans must always be developed in partnership with missionaries and the growing church on the field.

Goals

- If you have already started a congregation, determine where it is now in maturity. Is it still in the initial stage of converting and adding members? Does it include equipping members to serve as elders, deacons, evangelists, and teachers? Is it accepting its financial responsibilities? Is it, in turn, establishing other congregations?
- Determine where the mission congregation should be in size, in ministry, and in nature five years, ten years and twenty-five years from now. Ask your missionaries and the new congregation to set appropriate goals for each area.

Strategies

- Once the goals have been set, you are ready to help the mission church to develop strategies for accomplishing these goals.
- Observe various strategies in use on mission fields, especially those within the realm of the philosophy and goals established by the church.
- Bring in specialists in missions and church planting strategies, to share with you their expertise. These should include, whenever possible, respected veteran missionaries from the field in question.
- Plan a retreat to brainstorm strategies that might help you reach your goals.
- Narrow down the proposed strategies to the two or three that appear to be the most practical. Restricting the church to one strategy may be too limiting, since everything hinges on the success of a single strategy. Too many strategies at the same time may blur the missionaries' focus.
- Remember that no one strategy will always succeed, even in the same situation. There are many factors to consider, which means that flexibility in methods is necessary.
- Make sure that those on the field have input into your policy and strategy. Do not force them to fit perfectly into a mold created somewhere else and imposed on them. They must have "elbow room" within the general strategy for their own field.
- Each specific field needs to have its own "game plan." This should include what is to be accomplished, by whom and in what manner.

- Set up your strategy in phases and not in a concrete schedule. A tentative calendar is fine, but no one can determine in advance precisely how far along that particular work will be in five or ten years.
- Establish a line of authority and responsibility for putting strategies into practice on the field. Which matters will the home church decide? Which matters will be decided by both the home church and those on the field? Which matters will only those on the field determine?
- Reporting and relationship to the elders and the committee at the home church need to be spelled out as strategies are put into effect.
- Determine how modifications are to be made in field strategies, as situations there change. Decide how often the strategy for a particular field should be reviewed.

The following matters should be included in a strategy:

- Identification of the specific geographical region.
- An overview of the history of the area.
- A review of the culture and language (or languages).
- A summary of the economic and political situation.
- A survey of the religious beliefs and practices.
- A definition of the type or types of work to be done there, remembering that regardless of the program, evangelism, church planting and equipping new converts are paramount.
- A list of the ideal number and types of personnel, both American and national, needed to reach the goal.
- A brief job description for each person involved in the task.
- A method for recruiting replacements and adding new personnel.
- A budgetary calculation for the project.
- A tentative time frame, through phases, for the program.
- A method for monitoring progress on the field and for arbitrating differences that may arise.

Finally, attention must be given to prayer and fasting on behalf of this work. This is often done before the fact, but is easily overlooked as an ongoing need for the mission. Above all, we must be receptive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The mission is the Lord's and it is He who directs our path.

Remember that world outreach is a partnership with our Lord, with the home church, with its missionaries and with the fledgling congregation on the field.