

THE FIRST MONDAY REPORT

Thoughts on Fund Raising for Campus Ministry

Lutheran Campus Ministry Advancement
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St. Paul, MN 55108

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“Strategic Planning at a Glance”

Let’s acknowledge up front that it’s summer. Vacation days are fleeting. The academic year is upon us. And we may still need to do some quick strategic planning that will at least direct the bow of the canoe before it hits the white water.

Let’s also acknowledge that we live in a time when quick fixes abound. We grab any magazine off the shelf that promises 10 easy ways to lose extra weight or find a love interest while walking the dog. Books “for dummies” abound, and we hold out hope that the “One Minute Manager” will finally get us organized. We line up for fast food, we “Google” for fast information, and we can’t wait to get off the plane before using our cell phones.

So I’m thinking that there must be a market for strategic planning at a glance. Often it’s an arduous process that takes months to accomplish. It requires committees and subcommittees working on drafts and redrafts. Strategic planning needs goal statements, but not before we’ve honed our mission statements, which spawn vision statements that need to be continually examined in light of our contextual (SWOT) analysis. And we haven’t even mentioned the budget-building process or the necessity of attending to action plans and appropriate evaluation. What we need, perhaps, is a brief format for doing ministry planning that will allow us to put on one page the results of all of this brain-wrenching activity.

One of you, my good colleagues, mentioned an online resource called the “One Day Business Plan.”¹ I checked it out. It said that the Plan can be used to “summarize your business proposition when time is of the essence.” It described itself as a “suitable road map for a more comprehensive plan.” (At least it suggested that a larger process would be useful). Then I clicked on the printable *PDF* version of the worksheet, and found myself intrigued. Would it be helpful, I mused, to suggest a format for a One Page Strategic Plan that would invite campus ministries to condense all of their hard work and reflection into one concise document? What follows is such an attempt.

¹ <http://www.smbtn.com/onedaybusinessplan/>

THE ONE PAGE STRATEGIC PLAN

MISSION: Who are you as an organization? What are your core values? What is your key identity?

VISION: Where do you want to be in five years as an organization?

STRATEGIES: Specifically, how will you accomplish this vision?

- Goals:
- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.

LEADERSHIP: Who is in charge? How makes decisions? What roles do staff members play?

INTERPRETATION: Who needs to know about your vision? How will they find out?

COST: How does the budget reflect the goals you have set? What changes might this budget imply?

EVALUATION: Are your objectives measurable and how will you know when you have achieved them?

Let me make a few comments about each of these sections.

First, the **mission statement** needs to express the heart and soul of your ministry in very heartfelt and soul felt ways. You may want to stand back and examine your core values to see if everyone agrees that these are things you would live or die for, such as the centrality of worship, the vitality of evangelism, or the importance of hospitality. On your best days as an organization, what makes you tick? What gives you energy? Can you say that in a compelling, succinct way? What happens when this is forgotten or pushed aside in favor of other things that seem like priorities at the time? The mission statement should be brief enough and memorable enough so that all staff and board members can recite it easily. Mission statements need to be active; they are rather useless if written and then shelved. I know one group that recites the mission statement at the beginning of every monthly meeting—kind of like a pledge of allegiance. It may sound a bit corny, but it keeps the mission in the forefront.

Second, the **vision statement** reflects the determination to move the organization to a new point somewhere in the future. It affirms and builds on the present, but it is not content to remain there. It is energized by new possibilities and opportunities. It lifts heads and hearts; it beckons. It acknowledges the need for growth and change in the light of perceived challenges. It is not somebody's best guess; however, it is creatively crafted on the basis of realistic observations and information.

Third, **goals** are the stepping stones of a strategic plan. They are incremental, do-able movements that allow the organization to proceed. They are often laid out in some sequential format that draws the planning forward. If you are going to walk on water, you need to know where the rocks are. And if you're going to accomplish your vision, you need to know which goals, if completed successfully, will get you there. If you can see the pattern of the goals you are planning and can develop a timeline for accomplishing them, you will find that your vision becomes much more attainable and less left to chance.

Leadership for your strategic plan is of paramount importance. Often the decisions and process of implementation fall into the lap of the (unsuspecting?) staff person. The board thinks that its work is done when the framework of the plan is set in place. The staff person assumes the responsibility and the board is glad to let them. But in a healthy ministry environment, careful decisions are made about roles and tasks. Board members may be asked to serve specifically because of interests or experience they bring to the plan. Staff may be hired for certain duties. Volunteers may supplement the process. Chaos creeps in when it is unclear who is responsible for what. Key leaders and accountable staff guide the strategic plan as it moves forward.

Fifth, **interpretation** of the strategic plan is important at many levels. It involves the wider constituency in the process and informs them of the vision of the ministry. They care about the ministry and want to know of its current vitality and future direction. If there is significant change going on in the ministry, more frequent communication needs to occur with your friends and supporters. An annual mailing or newsletter is not enough. You will need to be more intentional about informing others, using such means as written materials, phone, email, visits, invitations to events, and directions to your Web site. Certainly students need to know about the strategic plan. They are not simply "consumers" of the present ministry; they care about the future as well. Regular communication among key leaders is also important, so that everyone

responsible for working on the strategic plan knows how it is progressing. Interpretation needs to happen both externally and internally and with varying levels of information depending on the audience.

Sixth, count the **cost** of implementing your strategic plan. Big ticket items, such as building renovation and adding professional staff, are obvious expenses and require considerable attention. However, smaller ticket items are also important to making the plan viable and need to be rolled into the projected budget. These may include computers, software (especially for data management), signage and publicity expenses, extra office assistance, travel to meetings, and hospitality costs. While a good strategic plan may be calculated to save money at some junctures, it will likely cost more money to implement than it saves. Don't get caught in the middle of an exciting vision by having to say, "I guess we really can't afford that!"

Finally, prepare to **evaluate** your strategic plan at several key points. In the beginning make sure that your goals are achievable and measurable. That simply means how you will know when and if you have accomplished your goals. Measurable objectives let you know about your progress. Instead of leaving Chicago with your car pointed westward and hoping to arrive in San Francisco, you plan the trip with a certain map in mind. You cross the Mississippi at Davenport, Iowa on I-80. You go through Omaha, stop for dinner at your favorite restaurant in Denver, and arrive at the Bay according to schedule. If you see the lights of Las Vegas, you will have to make some course corrections, alter the time of arrival, make some phone calls to waiting relatives, etc. The reason why granting institutions harp so much on "measurable outcomes" is that they want to insure that you get where you are going. They know that a wandering organization often gets sidetracked and fails to arrive at its intended destination. Evaluating and checking appropriate measurements at key points helps everyone know that the ministry is still pursuing its vision realistically and intentionally.

The not so tacit assumption in all of this is that you will need to do quite a bit of background work and reflection in order to roll out the One Page Plan. In the end, the short form is possible only because you and your board have done the requisite thinking and planning to advance the vision for your ministry. The One Page Plan can be a helpful digest of your planning. It can become a "suitable road map for a more comprehensive plan." It allows the leadership to have a précis of organizational decisions close at hand, rather than having them capriciously located in file drawers and individual memories.

Galen Hora
Assistant Director for Campus Ministry Resources