Considerations for New Tech Ventures

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If your ministry decides to take on a new tech venture you should consider five things;

- ☐ **Purpose**
- ☐ **Preview**
- ☐ **Plan**
- ☐ **Payment**
- ☐ **People**

This is a simplified version of the concept but it has been sufficient in most cases.

Some ministry's attitude towards implementing new technologies is, to pray and leave the rest to God. However, that is not necessarily wisdom. God honors prayer when we apply wisdom along with our prayers.

This model will help you think through important conversations you need to have as a group in your church. Answer the questions honestly. If you are still confident about making the move it is highly likely you will do well.

Purpose

First and most important. Identify the purpose for implementing this new technology. You are asking the question, WHY? If you cannot justify the purpose and convince at least a few others with decision-making responsibilities, you probably should pause or stop altogether.

A good start-off question is, **"What problem or weakness will this technology solve?"** This is the primary purpose of technology–to solve a problem or improve a process (read the blog post, Technology Definition on MinistryTechSpace.com). Purpose drives motivation and clarifies the vision for the new technology. When you have a strong consensus on the purpose, you can navigate challenges ahead together. Once you clarify the purpose, you are ready to talk about "Preview."

Preview

I titled this phase "preview" to find another word that starts with the letter 'p.' Preview means research and demos. The goal is to get as much knowledge about the technology as possible. In a sense, you are getting a preview of the solution before you continue to the next phase.

Do as much research as possible on the technology and try to do so separately from what a company may present to you. Remember that speaking with companies selling goods and services will always sound like you are making a good decision. That is the job of sales and marketing. Your role is to be a wise consumer and do your homework the best that you can. These days with an immense wealth of good information online you can almost certainly find some information.

On the other hand, some platforms do not have content available online and you will need to schedule a demo. If this is your situation be prepared.

- Go back to the 'why?' question and purpose. Use this to frame the questions you will ask at the demo.
- Write down questions that are important to you before the demo.
- Pay close attention during the demo and take notes.
- Pay the most attention to the features that will address your needs and are included in the offering. Sometimes solutions have tiers or packages that vary in cost and available features.
- Watch out for promises of features coming in the future. The Sales team's job is to impress you and make the sale. Only commit to a product that has the key features already included. A future feature cannot help you solve a today problem that you are attempting to solve.

Plan

You must have a plan. The depth and breadth of your plan will be influenced by the size and cost of implementation. Regardless of size, these are some fundamentals plan that you should have in place.

Time

Plan for the time it will take to implement the technology completely.

- How will it disrupt your overall ministry operations?
- Are your workers the ones committing time to the project or will it be done by someone else?
- What is your contingency plan if the project takes longer than expected?
- How much time will be needed to train your workers and congregation on the new technology?

Communication

We hear all the time that communication is key to a good relationship. It is also key to successfully implementing something new in the life of your ministry.

- Plan to communicate the plans internally with your core group (leaders, committee members, etc.).
- Plan to communicate the plans to the congregation if they will be affected by the change.
- Plan a communication strategy for communicating with the people or company working on your technology project.

Training

After all is said and done, you should have a training plan in place. You should have this in advance so that training commences immediately after the implementation is completed.

Payment

What we are addressing here is the financing of the technology. Can your ministry afford to maintain this technology for as many years into the future? Now, the believer in me must interject here and say that we are not denying God's ability to provide. However, going back to what I wrote earlier, we must exercise wisdom. Do you remember back in Genesis 41 how Joseph planned for the years ahead? Yes, God gave a vision that Joseph interpreted and had insight into the future. Today, you must evaluate the landscape of your ministry's finances and make a reasonable assessment of what is feasible and doing so even with prayer.

If your ministry is financially sound, this might not be as relevant but still a necessary consideration.

Caution: Be cautious about purchasing technology offers that start at a low and affordable price and then increase exponentially in a year or two. If you decide to take the offer be diligent and good stewards by calculating the cost of the higher price for the next few years and determine it is manageable.

Lastly, here's a hint. It is important to establish a technology budget. Be clear on what that budget will be. If your budget is zero dollars ($0.00) consider technology that will not cost you anything. Work within the constraints of the dollar amount earmarked for technology expenses.

People

Technology does not use itself. You need people who are willing and trained to use the technology in which you invested. There is no better way to see a return on your investment than to see it being used to solve the problems or weaknesses in your ministry.