

APRIL/MAY TOOL

By Todd McMichen, Consultant

"Moving the kingdom forward in refreshing ways."

toddmcMichen.com

205.223.7803

toddmcMichen.com



Springtime Is Leadership Generosity Time

When most pastors think of generosity tasks in the spring there is a quick rush to shore up giving in May because the summer giving slump is coming. Additionally, ministry expenses can be high due to activities like VBS, Camps, and Mission Trips. However, I find this focus to be low hanging fruit. Let's give some thought to three possible leadership level opportunities to grow generous disciples every spring.

1. VOLUNTEER CELEBRATION - I like to think in terms of ministry seasons when I do staff planning. Some churches view their ministry season coinciding with the school year from August-May while others view it as their calendar year. So when you get to May you have either completed one semester or an entire year of ministry investment from your volunteers.

They need a refilling experience, not a training event. This is a great time to get them together to throw a party. Celebrate the ministry wins, tell stories, give awards, distribute gifts, and pour into your volunteers until the goodness overflows.

You can even leave them with one simple takeaway for the summer like praying for a specific ministry advancement opportunity or bringing a friend to the next volunteer training launch you will host in the fall. Bottom line, live generously toward your volunteers. They are your biggest resource outside of the Holy Spirit.

2. STAKEHOLDERS EVENT - Nonprofit leaders are keenly aware of the power that end of the year giving holds, but did you know that spring is another generosity window? I like to encourage churches to conduct two **Stakeholder Events** a year, one in the spring and the other in the fall.

Let me unpack this for you quickly:

Why is this a powerful generosity season? Because we have survived the first quarter of the year and are on the other side of tax day. Also, many corporations will have paid annual bonuses which can be significant. Givers have taken a deep breath and know where they have margin to give above and beyond gifts.

Who do you invite? A stakeholder is a general term I use to indicate someone who has invested beyond that of a regular attendee, small group participant, and even a periodic volunteer on a ministry team. I am thinking about volunteer team leaders, long time members, deacons, elders, trustees, key donors, small group leaders, and any young aspiring stakeholders that need exposure to new levels of leadership.

What does the event look like? Think of an investors celebration with a report along with a future vision preview. I would provide a nice meal or dessert with inspiring decorations.

Thanks - I would always begin with a meaningful “thank you” for their investment.

Report - A vision report that includes an update on ministry progress. This could include figures like numbers of guests, new members, attendance, and finances. You can also host testimonies that reflect recent transformation and specific ministry updates with important details noting progress or completion of activities.

Vision - Based on the activity of God just reported, reveal what is next. Help them see with clarity and confidence where God is taking you. If the vision is extremely clear you can launch a designated above and beyond giving fund to resource specific ministry actions beyond the budget.

Ask - You want your stakeholders to grow to give above a tithe. Most will already be at this level demonstrating it by giving to designated funds within the church as well as outside nonprofits. The key is they want their above and beyond dollars to move vision forward. They are not as motivated by paying off the debt or giving more to the church budget with these above and beyond gifts.

However, they are typically motivated by next generation ministries, local outreach, global missions, and capital improvements. I would create one designated fund for these type visionary items, provide a specific list with costs, along with clear giving instructions. Example items could be repainting the Children’s Ministry space or funding a job placement partnership with a local nonprofit ministry.

Conclude - Worship and prayer can be a powerful part of the evening as well. Finally, a printed vision report summarizing the highlights of the night along with a clear giving action step for your above and beyond fund is a great bonus.

3. STAFF PLANNING - May is a great time to get your staff together to do some planning. This timing is especially important before you head your different ways over the summer with busy personal and ministry schedules. Also, if your church practices a calendar budget year you will initiate the budget planning season late summer and I want to help get your team ready for what is ahead.

Here is what your staff planning day can seek to accomplish:

Share The Wins - Your team has worked hard and seen eternal results. Make sure you spend time sharing. Additionally, you may have walked through some challenges.

Despite the hardship, resonating around how God is at work can reframe your perspective and recharge your energy.

Review The Numbers - Honest evaluation is very important. We tend to be more subjective in discussing how church events look or ministry health feels. Certainly, you want things to look and feel great, however these conclusions can be highly driven by our unique personalities. I encourage church leaders to have a basic dashboard of numbers that help indicate the facts. Every season isn't a growth season, so every number may not be headed up and to the right. This does not necessarily mean we are performing poorly as leaders.

The numbers can actually get really fun when you have previously stated discipleship oriented focal points and actions with the entire staff rallying around the planning. These unifying efforts can help people perform better and evaluate things more objectively as a unit. When numbers only focus on attendance in select areas of ministry it can tend to isolate staff. Strive for some targets to unify all leaders.

These discipleship oriented focal points are different from attendance goals most churches regularly track. For instance, rising out of a previously articulated clear vision for the year you can establish specific tasks that drive calendar and budget planning.

Example of a yearly focus point:

"We will begin to grow a generous culture that becomes unstoppable in the future."

Examples of tasks associated with the goal that can be measured:

- (1) As a staff we will craft a **Generosity Theology**, conduct a sermon series, and launch a devotional guide for families.
- (2) We will distribute a scorecard and growth plan for our people to rank the **Generosity Theology** personal applications. Naming principles where they have confidence while also identifying where they want to grow this year.
- (3) We will organize a **Generosity Day** for all ages, small groups, and ministries to give generously to different areas of passion around the church and community.

Recast The Vision - Most often, I find this piece missing among church leaders. We have slogans, values, and mission statements, but struggle with a well articulated vision that can unite and drive ministry planning. Every year the church should live out the Great Commission and the Great Commandment according to its unique context.

Additionally, the church leadership needs to name two to three areas of developmental focus. You simply can not move everything forward at the same pace every year. Some

ministry mountains are too high. Some ministry opportunities are too urgent. Others need a certain sequence.

Clearly stating a unified vision direction for the year that is specific enough to direct calendar programming and budget planning needs to be the goal. Here are some sample vision areas for a given year.

- ***“We will begin to grow a generous culture that becomes unstoppable in the future.”***
- ***“This year we will focus on preparing our leadership and congregation to launch our first church plant.”***
- ***“This year we will seek to create a leadership pipeline that benefits all ministries, volunteers, and leaders.”***
- ***“This year we will establish priority ministry partnerships locally, nationally, and globally.”***

So spend some time getting specific with yearly vision.

Dream About The Future Year - In the same spirit of a yearly vision and not everything can have the same level of focus at the same time, you can prioritize vision items for future years. For instance the four bullet points above can be organized in advance as vision points for four consecutive years. During your May Staff Planning Event review both your current vision progress and remind of future vision direction.

Touch Base About The Summer and Fall Plans - Of course, you want to circle the wagons around the summer schedule and fall activities. This is a great time to do some future budget and calendar planning for the big upcoming items.

So give some thought to these three opportunities. Seek to practice the one that feels the easiest to you. You will not have time to start them all in the same year, but make a note of what you would like to add to your schedule in future years. Springtime only comes once a year so lead well.