



Developing Your Strategic Plan

Step 1: Assembling the Team

What is a Strategic Plan: A strategic plan is a process to help a Church or a Youth Ministry make decisions and take actions that guide its future as well as answer the fundamental questions about what it does, and why it does it.

Why: People often ask why should they develop a strategic plan for a youth ministry. I have heard people make arguments that it is not necessary for a variety of reasons. I would argue it is essential to any youth ministry. The process helps you to define who you are as a youth ministry and what it is that you do. Most congregations and pastors do not understand youth ministry and they often feel that the youth director's job is anything they might not feel like doing. I have known youth pastors who were asked to maintain the church lawn, youth pastors who were required to be parking lot attendants and youth pastors who were not allowed to teach but only plan activities. This process helps youth directors and youth ministries define their role within the church community in more healthy way.

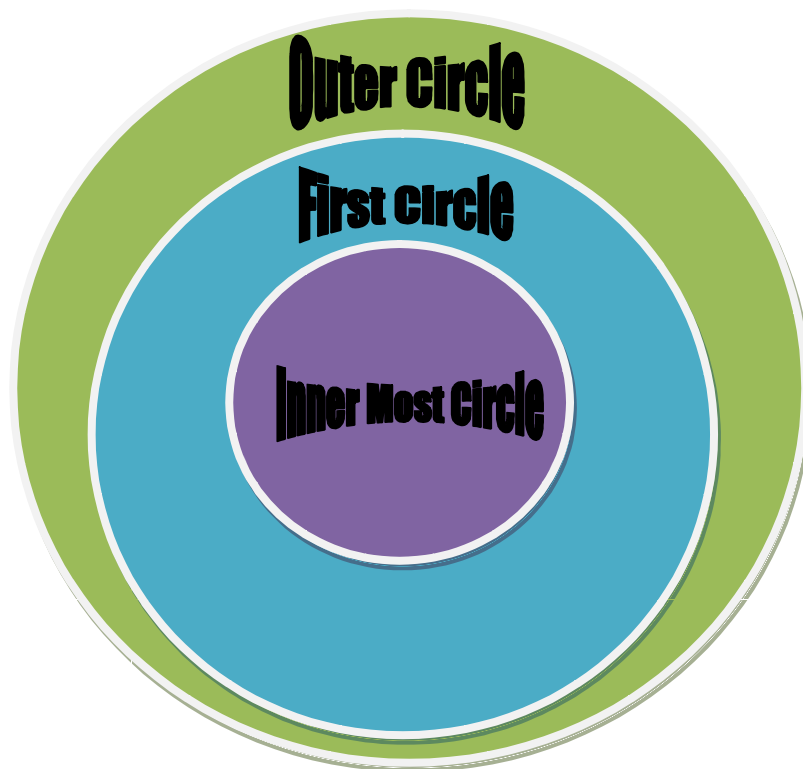
Identify your resources: In order to put together your strategic plan you need to first put together your strategic planning team. It is important to create a diverse and highly skilled team. The following exercise will help you to both categorize sources of information as well as identify potential members of your committee.

Outer Circle: The outer circle is best utilized when gathering information. The people or organizations in this space may or may not have a vested interest in your organization or may not even be aware your organization exists. Your exposure to this group will probably be very limited. For example, your local school district is in the outer circle; they may or may not care about your youth ministry, however, they care greatly about your students. Schools often have a good picture of many of the problems students and families face and can be invaluable sources of information. Another example might be a local business that youth frequent. The best way to

utilize these groups is **to gather information** from them, through surveys, interviews, and questionnaires.

First Circle: This circle contains the people that might not be involved in your ministry directly but have some sort of vested interest in your ministry. For example, parents or former students would be in the first circle. The best way to utilize this circle is twofold; the first way is to ask select members to **join you in the planning process**. It is important to cultivate a diverse, skillful group. The second way to utilize this group is to **gather information** from them. The information you attempt to gather from this group will be different than the outer circle. This information will likely be more pointed and hopefully more intimate.

Inner Most Circle: This circle contains people who have the most intimate knowledge of the ministry. You want to rely heavily upon this circle (without neglecting the outer circles) because members from this circle will make up the **bulk of your strategic planning team**.



Qualities of Good Strategic Planning Team Member:

As you consider members of your strategic planning team, it is important think about the qualities that will make a good team member. You should consider some of the following, however, by no means is this list exhaustive or in any particular order:

- Live a life of prayer and discipleship following Jesus Christ
- Trustworthy
- Thoughtful
- Skilled in a specific area: for example finance, risk management, marketing, etc.
- A good reputation in the community
- Good communicator
- An understanding of the current youth ministry
- A vision for the future
- Integrity
- An understanding of the church and the youth ministry

Final questions to answer before beginning the plan:

Now that you have identified potential members of your strategic planning team, find out who is willing to serve on the committee. Remember to fully explain the commitment that is involved in the strategic planning process. Don't be surprised if your committee does not gel right away it usually takes a few meetings to get everyone on the same page. One of the resources that I recommend is "Creating Effective Teams: A Guide for Members and Leaders" by Sarah Wheeler. This text offers some very helpful strategy on the best way to build teams. As you begin, be sure you are able to answer the following questions.

- Who is responsible for the plan?
- Who will be involved in the plan?
- What is the scope of the plan?
- What information do you currently have?
- How much time do you have to devote to the plan?
- What issues are driving the need for the plan?
- What is the best method to accomplish your goal? Monthly meeting, weekend event?

Look for the next installment, Step 2: Reviewing your Mission Statement