



Greater Sydney Conference

## **How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, And Create Movement**

*Church Unique*

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**Your Church is Unique** - Each church has a unique God-given thumb print.

- If you copy someone else's vision, who will accomplish the one God has for you?
- Too often churches conform to the shape of an external mold or model rather than reach their full potential.

### **Traps:**

#### **Ministry Treadmills**

- We get caught on the ministry treadmill. The sheer immediacy of each next event or ministry demand prevents leaders from taking the time required for discerning the culture and defining the DNA of the church.
- Today's demands can choke out needed dialogue for tomorrow. When this occurs, our multiplied activity prevents us from living with a clearer identity.
- It would be useful for the pastor to find even one day a month to pray and think about the DNA of the church and what it would take to move forward with God-given plan.

"Devotion to the process of discovering the vision is the most important component of all the activities associated with God's vision" – George Barna

#### **Competency Trap**

- As ministry leaders experience success over time, that very success can become a liability.

“The gold medals of yesterday’s accomplishments become the iron teeth around the leader’s ankle.”

- A subtle presumption develops ‘I know how to do this thing’ that eclipses active listening and reflective observation. Presumption prevents the breakthrough to self-knowledge that would otherwise open the door to new levels of leadership.

### **Needs-Based Slippery Slope**

- Leaders set their cruise control to ‘react’. Thoughtful leadership becomes unnecessary because there is always a persistent parade of needs to be answered.
- The vision of the church is reduced to making people happy.
- The reality is that such a church is probably missing out on fulfilling its unique calling and role in the community by trying to be all things to all members. Sliding down the needs-bases slope is perhaps the most ‘spiritual’ way of avoiding the hard work of self-discovery. This church works best in a crisis as it is then they have some clarity, following the crisis it then slides back into its lethargy.

### **Culture Whirlpools**

- Life is no longer perceived through a viewfinder of still pictures that advance with each generation, but through a kaleidoscope that is turning daily.
- Churches can get addicted to the cultural ‘buzz’ or get ‘stuck’ and in both cases miss their unique calling.

### **Conference Maze**

- In the conference maze, leaders rely solely on training events to instil direction and vision for their church. Many pastors in the last two decades have built a model of ministry by just borrowing one, and in doing so they create a ‘glass jar’ church.
- Don’t just plug in a programme at the expense of doing the work of self-understanding. Focus on the process over the product.
- Process requires a lot of relationship, creativity and energy, whereas a product requires only a credit card.

“I’m not against studying best practices; I’m just against not thinking in the process!”

## Denominational Rut

- Denominations by and large still continue to resource congregations with little appreciation for local uniqueness. Despite good motivation, they get stuck maintaining the structures of yesteryear.

“I would urge denominations to come alongside their best churches to help them express a unique DNA within their unique denominational heritage.”

Table 1.1. “Thinkholes” Summary

Thinkholes	How We Neglect Uniqueness	The “Thinking” Problem	Thinkhole Practices
Ministry treadmill	Busyness eliminates time for reflection	No time to think	Add more programs
Competency trap	Presumption decreases appetite for learning	No need to think	Work harder
Needs-based slippery slope	Consumerism removes the need for discernment	Needs are all we think about	Make people happy
Cultural whirlpool: BuzzChurch	Innovation short-circuits self-awareness	Addicted to new thinking	Be cutting-edge
Cultural whirlpool: StuckChurch	Change outpaces the discipline for learning	Too tired to think	Glorify the past
The conference maze	Success increases the temptation to copycat	Let’s borrow their thinking	Model best practice
Denominational rut	Resources disregard local uniqueness	No one helps us think	Protect theology

## Getting Stuck With Strategic Planning

Sometimes the strategic plan may actually obscure the concept of Church Unique and fail to guide the church to a better future.

- It is often difficult to know how the contents of a strategic planning document should intersect with the realities of existing church life. Most strategic plans are too cumbersome to be useful.
- The question with strategic planning is: Are we talking about the organization to people, or talking to people about the organization?
- Planning documents need simplicity and clarity. What will a leader/church member think when they see this. What do they need to know and will they easily find it?

- Avoid an overload of data. The difference between most church strategic plans and what is actually needed is like using a large multi-fold map and a destination map from 'Mapquest'. Both are accurate but one is simple, clear and easy to understand.
- Too much information shreds the big picture into so many small pieces that the vision is hopelessly lost. More information equals less clarity. We have 'knowledge fatigue'. People do not need more information they need more meaning from the right information.
- Leaders of today must learn how to deliver meaning by distilling what they say.
- Analysis is important however not everyone needs to know it. Analysis does not lead to synthesis.
- In most church settings the details of the strategic plan eclipse the big idea or the all-encompassing vision that people have not yet captured.

"Too much information may, in fact, have a cancelling effect – that is, multiple ideas or concepts can actually compete with each other for the listeners' attention and retention... and with every individual thought you introduce, you diminish the effectiveness of the prior ideas you may have presented." Andy Stanley.

- In regard to the Mission, Vision, Purpose Statement: Only one will be remembered which makes only one necessary. By having all three of these terribly long, redundant statements, we severely diminish the opportunity for anyone to carry and communicate the vision contagiously.

"The fastest way to get out of a hole is to stop digging."

- In a context where a team work environment is not in place the strategic plan itself becomes a silo builder that reinforces the concrete walls between ministry areas.

"Churches must work as a football team rather than a golf team."

"I have wondered if our evangelical fervor to change the world is not driven in some part by the inability to change ourselves." Gordon MacDonald.

Table 2.1. Strategic Planning Fallacies Summary

The Fallacy of:	The Wrong Assumption	The Strategic Plan Backfires as a:	The Real Need
Complexity	More information will provide clearer direction	Vision shredder	Clarity
Accountability	More goals will help us work better together	Silo builder	Synergy
Predictability	The near future will resemble the recent past	Leadership blinder	Adaptability

## Clarity

“Clarity is the preoccupation of the effective leader. If you do nothing else as a leader, be clear.” *Marcus Buckingham*

Clarity Makes:

- Uniqueness Undeniable
- Direction Unquestionable
- Enthusiasm Transferable
- Work Meaningful
- Synergy Possible
- Success Definable
- Focus Sustainable
- Leadership Credible
- Uncertainty Approachable

Clarity Gaps – p 57

## The Vision Frame

### Mandate

A clear and concise statement that defines what the church is ultimately supposed to be doing.

- Needs to be shaped around Jesus Mandate – Seek and Save/Great Commission.
- When it comes to growth challenges, leaders jump too quickly to the branches: parking lots, seating capacity, finances, staff etc. But when God's people are deeply stirred with redemptive passion, the church becomes an unstoppable force, hurdling other barriers with ease. The question then becomes: What is

stopping your people from strengthening their redemptive heartbeat?

- If your clear and concise mandate does not wave an unmistakable evangelistic banner, nothing else will.
- What do you do that focuses your church externally?

“The church is only the church when it exists for others.” – *Dietrich Bonhoffer*

“Apply a disproportionately greater emphasis on evangelism at the beginning of the day in order to have a balanced church at the end.”  
– *Bill Hybels*

In constructing the mandate, Start with A – where people are and then B – where your church is taking them.

### **Motives**

Why are we doing it

“You won’t do ministry that really matters until you define what matters.” – *Aubrey Malphurs*

- Motives are the shared convictions that guide the actions and reveal the strengths of the church. Motives are filters for decision making and springboards for daily action.
- A church without motives is like a river without banks.

### **Map**

How are we doing it? The Map demonstrates how the church will accomplish its mandate on the broadest level.

- The map provides a pattern of how ministry fits together for fulfilling the mission.
- Make it a simple design

“Churches with a simple process for reaching and maturing people are expanding the kingdom... Conversely, churches without a process or with a complicated process for making disciples are floundering. As a whole, cluttered and complex churches are not alive.” – *Thom Rainer*

- Remember: Programs don't attract people; people attract people.

Table 14.2. Benefits of the *Map*

Church Without a Strategy (More Is More; Wal-Mart Approach)	Church with Strategy (Less Is More; Starbucks Approach)
Churches are stuck thinking that more programs means more ministry	The <i>Map</i> shows how to accomplish the mission with a few right ministries
Churches are deceived by the myth that people want more choices	The <i>Map</i> clarifies a simple pathway of involvement
Churches inadvertently think that time at church equals spiritual maturity	The <i>Map</i> limits and stewards time “at church” to release people to “be the church”
Churches can't say no to their people's ideas even when the ideas are ineffective	The <i>Map</i> filters which ideas fit best and which ones don't fit
Churches allow an immature knowledge-centered spirituality to dictate program offerings	The <i>Map</i> presents and guides people through a balanced process of discipleship
Churches make religious consumers	Churches make Christ followers

## Marks

Marks let us know when we are successful. They are a set of attributes in an individual's life that define or reflect accomplishment of the church's mandate.

“The true measurement of a church is not ‘how many’ but ‘how loving,’ not ‘how relevant; but ‘how real’” – Robert Lewis

- Your mission is what you measure.
- Every church feels the gravitational pull to measure only the ABC's (attendance, buildings and cash). The problem is that you can be very successful with the ABC's but be a circus.
- What kind of Christian is Your Church Designed to Produce?

Reasons why churches have not focused on growing people

1. Vision and planning models have not emphasized it.
2. We are so busy teaching we don't realize it's missing.
3. Few churches or Christians have a clear and measurable definition of spiritual progress
4. We have defined discipleship as ‘head knowledge’ rather than complete transformation
5. We have chosen to teach people in random, rather than systematic ways.
6. Once a team sees the need for a shared set of ‘Marks’ it can be extremely difficult to forge.
7. Some pastors resist accountability.

Essentials of Vision

- Do I clarify my biblical basis and show how God’s heart is pleased?
- Do I build an emotional connection based on shared history?
- Do I frame the larger need and speak to the fear of loss?
- Do I outline a better world in which people will want to live?
- Do I create urgency and induce action?
- Do I enlarge faith and challenge the imagination with God-sized goals?
- Graphically illustrate the vision
- Tell the stories

## Keeping Vision Viral

**Clear**  
**Concise**  
**Compelling**     =   **Contagious**  
**Catalytic**  
**Contextual**

## Steps to Alignment

Confusion - Communication – Coordination – Collaboration

Table 18.1. Summary of the Stages of Alignment

	Established Church (More Than 15 Years)	Entrepreneurial Church (Under 15 Years)
Alignment Pain	Trying to refocus scattered ministry initiatives	Not realizing that misalignment is occurring through “success”
Desired Dynamic	Refocus by moving from stage zero to stage three	Stay focused at stage three as ministry is multiplied
Stage zero	Confusion	Dissipation
Stage one	Communication	Oscillation
Stage two	Coordination	Expansion
Stage three	Collaboration	Acceleration

- Meet Long In The Upper Room

Figure 19.2. The Attunement Grid

Clarity	Yes	<i>Passenger</i>	<i>Crew</i>
	No	<i>Stowaway</i>	<i>Pirate</i>
		No	Yes
		Contribution	

“All I want is a simple, purpose-driven, organic and externally focused church on one hundred acres.” – *The pastors' unspoken desire*

**Prayer:**

Lord, show us Yourself as we have never seen You before. We know Your peace, so show us our piece, our place behind You as we follow Your Lead. How can we serve You, how can we incarnate Your presence to those You miss the most all around us? Show us Yourself, Lor, that we might be free to become who we were born to be. In doing so, may Your church be unleashed.