

The Missional Church: Budgets and Scorecards

David Mays

Part I. Categories and Priorities

Families and institutions establish budgets to ensure a wise and sustainable distribution of resources. Budget categories are established particularly for areas that might naturally be neglected (such as charitable giving) or overspent (such as entertainment).

Churches establish a "missions" budget--and sometimes do special fund-raising--to ensure a healthy investment of resources to reach and disciple people with little access to Christian resources.

In the past, such people were thought of as being in other countries. Increasingly the needs of our own communities are being included.

Churches have traditionally sent trained missionaries to other countries, languages, and cultures. Missional churches are justifiably dissatisfied with sending a few people to "do missions" while the great majority simply "do church." They aim to replace the "silo" of missions and send all believers, like missionaries, into both local and global communities. Instead of a small minority doing "missions," everyone should be serving in "mission." Further, the sending is not only to proclaim and evangelize but to minister and serve in the name of Jesus.

Issues that arise out of this paradigm change have to do with setting priorities, budgeting, and tracking progress. If all outreach and service activities are lumped together, it raises the question of how to ensure that less visible but strategic ministries and people out of reach of the Gospel receive an appropriate share of the resources. On the one hand, it might be argued that it doesn't matter because it's all "mission." But on the other hand, if there are no guidelines, then the most visible need, the most powerful person, or the loudest voice directs funding, personnel, and support. If a church desires to faithfully steward its resources and maximize its impact in the world, some kind of categorization and prioritization would seem helpful.

If categories were to be assigned within "mission," how would you decide what might they be? Here are some questions to consider?

1. Does this opportunity require church financial investment or can we simply send volunteers or use our facility?
2. Does this opportunity require church leaders to plan, organize, recruit, and lead or can we encourage individuals to volunteer on their own?
3. Does this opportunity serve primarily
 - a. people like us nearby
 - b. people unlike us nearby, or
 - c. people unlike us far away?
4. Does this opportunity occur in an area rich in churches and Christian resources or among people with a dearth of churches and Christian resources?

1. Fixed Assets and Portable Assets

Our tendency is to think of church resources in terms of dollars. Money is a portable asset, as is prayer.

It can easily be deployed anywhere in the world. However, we also have substantial fixed assets, primarily our facilities and most of our people. For the most part they can be deployed only locally.

In order to maximize and balance the use of our resources, it helps to think of using *fixed* resources locally and *portable* assets farther away. Therefore, as much as possible, we could deploy our people as volunteers in every kind of local situation and ministry, supported as needed by minimal funds. The more we deploy people locally and use dollars globally, the greater our potential impact. Alternatively, the more dollars we spend locally, the less we can accomplish globally.

2. Institutional or Individual Initiative

An institutional initiative could be represented by something like adopting a sister city, adopting an unreached people group, providing facilities for a community recreation league, sponsoring a home for battered women, or partnering with a local school,.

An individual initiative could be represented by someone who takes an overseas job with a multi-national company, someone who applies to serve overseas with a mission organization, someone who independently goes on a mission trip, a person who volunteers at the local rescue mission, an individual who serves on the board of a mission organization, or someone who shows the love of Jesus to his colleagues, coworkers, and neighbors.

The more church leaders can build an atmosphere of everyone reaching out in their sphere of influence and volunteering in the community, the greater the potential impact. Church leaders have limited capacity for planning, organizing, leading, and supervising outside initiatives.

Institutional initiatives will almost always require church staff support and funding. Personal involvement that requires no church funding is almost unlimited in the number of possible opportunities and the amount of good that can be accomplished. In addition volunteers may often provide personal funds to support ministry.

3. People *like us*. People *unlike us nearby*. People *unlike us far away*

The world can be roughly divided in these three categories. The reason for considering these categories is that often one is neglected by a local church. Some churches have focused on global missions while neglecting local evangelism and service. Some churches have focused on helping people in their community while ignoring the larger world. In the past couple of decades many churches have become increasingly unaware of the growing marginalized people in their own communities: ethnic minorities, the physically challenged, inner city poor, and many other subgroups.

In considering these categories, a church can ask, "Are we blind to one of these categories or giving it less attention that it deserves?" The further away and the more unlike us, the more difficult and expensive it is for us to minister to them. The closer and more like us, the more we can train and deploy our own people at minimal cost. A huge opportunity for the missional church is to send people into their own homes, workplaces, neighborhoods and communities as Jesus' ambassadors at virtually no cost to the church while continuing to maintain a substantial ministry abroad.

Priorities:

With these factors in mind we can develop a set of priority statements culminating in a set of goals and

a tracking system.

Here are some sample priority statements:

- We will proactively mentor and equip our people to serve as Jesus' ambassadors where they live and work.
- We will mentor and equip our people to understand, love, and serve various categories of people unlike us.
- We will deploy our people as ambassadors and volunteers in our community and city, encouraging them to minister at their own expense and provide personal funding to support their ministry as they feel led.
- We will carefully select and establish a few church initiatives to benefit both the community and the larger world for Christ.
- We will encourage, train, and support qualified individuals from our church to serve cross-culturally in strategic and needy areas of the world, including our city.
- We will monitor our efforts and resources to ensure that we are appropriately serving our own culture, our community, and the world.

Coming next:

Part II. Mission Budgets and Goals:

