

Purpose-Driven Performance

By Les Taylor

CHARLES KURALT ONCE SAID, “The question ought not to be, “*How old are you?*” but “*What have you done?*” and “*What can you do?*”

In the last issue of *Christian Management Report* we discussed the Power of Perspective, and the importance of developing and maintaining perspective in your life and in your ministry.

With a clear understanding of our Mission, Vision and Values, we should be ready to live and act with purpose and focus. Purpose-driven performance requires that we plan, set goals and make strategic decisions for life and ministry.

START WITH STRATEGY

Purpose-driven performance begins with strategy, or planning for future action. Plans serve to focus our attention and our activities. Seeing what could be is important, but making specific plans to make our vision a reality is what really counts. In the words of French author/aviator Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, “A rock pile ceases to be a rock pile the moment a single man contemplates it, bearing within himself the image of a cathedral.” Strategy requires deliberate thinking. Strategy answers the questions about how we intend to put skin on the skeleton of our vision.

Strategy also provides focus for performance and production. Seeing the difference between where your ministry is now and where it could be will remain only a dream unless or until you make deliberate plans to change the status quo.

Let me add a word of warning. Developing strategies for changing the status quo will shake some people up. In fact, the mere mention of change makes most people very uncomfortable. Studies show that people will change only if the alternative is worse.

Other studies indicate that what people really want is *stability* in the midst of change. What better way to provide that stability than being able to demonstrate there’s a plan in place, and goals are being set, that will keep the ministry focused and on track in the midst of change.

SET S.M.A.R.T. GOALS

Strategy involves developing the “big picture” plans for determining how you’ll bring your vision to fruition. Goals set a specific course of action for how your plans will be accomplished. An anonymous author once said: “Goals serve as a stimulus to life. They tend to tap our deeper resources and draw out of life its best. Where there are no goals, neither will there be significant accomplishments.”

I believe that when it comes to our personal life, and certainly to the life and vibrancy of our ministry, goal setting proves to be the single greatest catalyst for accomplishment.

Goals are nothing more than measurable objectives. They differ from strategy in terms of specificity. Strategy paints the big picture; goals supply the detail. In order for goals to be effective, they must be SMART. By that I mean: 1) Specific; 2) Measurable; 3) Aligned with strategy and perspective; 4) Realistic; and 5) Time Sensitive. Goals must have a starting point and a finish line.

MAKE STRATEGIC DECISIONS

Actions, or what I like to call strategic decisions, demonstrate the seriousness of our intentions. Moving your ministry from where it is now to where you want it to be will involve overcoming inertia and *doing* the things that need to be done. Purpose driven performance is about *doing*, not dreaming.

Committing to action serves us well. Action brings about *learning and growth*. Action requires *courage* and thus bolsters self-confidence. Taking action *leads to solutions*. More often than not, we learn as we go. In fact, we grow when we *go*. Making strategic decisions builds confidence in those who are following us. And, most importantly, taking action demonstrates faith.

By definition faith is: "Being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1, NIV). If we believe God has blessed us with ministry opportunity, why would we not do the things that must be done to bring our vision to fruition? To do otherwise proves a lack of faith.

Purpose-driven performance means we walk our talk. We develop perspective by clarifying our belief system. Our performance should be directed by our beliefs. Belief manifests itself in behavior. What a simple but a powerful concept for improving performance and productivity.

Kuralt was on the right track. How old we are isn't the issue. The more important questions are: "What have you done?" and "What can you do?"

Three-part Series: Moving an organization from activity to achievement requires a grasp of three principles implemented through six steps. This is the second of three articles, dealing with the second principle: "defining performance." Part one published in the February 2005 issue of Christian Management Report addressed the first principle: "clarifying perspective" and the last article will address: "maintaining alignment."

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