**SIX EXERCISES TO DETERMINE YOUR PRIORITIES**

The key to time management is priority management. Focusing on a few priorities allows you to experience the counterintuitive biblical principle of “less is more.” Not only does focusing on less allow you to experience less stress and more joy and meaning in your work and life, but you are more productive because “focus expands.” The more time you spend on a strength, skill, or gift the better you become at it. The more you focus on an initiative, activity or responsibility the more impact you see.

If you know what the “needle movers” are in your ministry and concentrate your time on those priorities, you will actually accomplish more meaningful results because you are focusing on that which is truly important.

So, how do you determine what the “needle movers” are in your church or ministry? Below are six exercises you can use to prioritize budgets, programs, activities, opportunities, requests, responsibilities, and to do lists.

**Exercise #1: The Importance Scale**

An exercise for prioritizing options, activities, events and programs according to their mission critical importance by using the following 1-4 scale:

1. **Extremely Important to the Mission**
2. **Very Important to the Mission**
3. **Somewhat Important to the Mission**
4. **Not At All Important to the Mission**

**Exercise #2: Impact/Risk Analysis**

An exercise for prioritizing options, activities, events and programs according to their level of impact on the mission, objectives, goals and strategies of the church and their level of risk by using the following scale:

* **High Impact/Low Risk**
* **High Impact/Medium Risk**
* **High Impact/ High Risk**
* **Medium Impact/Low Risk**
* **Medium Impact/Medium Risk**
* **Medium Impact/High Risk**
* **Low Impact/Low Risk**
* **Low Impact/Medium Risk**
* **Low Impact/High Risk**

**Exercise #3: Cost/Time/Impact Analysis**

An exercise for prioritizing options, activities, events and programs according to their impact on the mission, objectives, goals and strategies of the church using the scale of High, Medium and Low and the criteria of cost and time and the weighting of dollars and hours.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Weighting** | **Impact** |
| Cost | $: | H, M, L |
| Time of Minister | Hours: | H, M, L |
| Time of Support Staff | Hours: | H, M, L |
| Time of Volunteers | Hours: | H, M, L |
| Time of Participants | Hours: | H, M, L |

**Exercise #4: Strategic Alignment Analysis**

An exercise for prioritizing options, activities, events and programs according to their strategic alignment with the church’s Objectives, Goals and/or Strategies.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Strategic Alignment** | **Scoring Value** | **Score** |
| Church Objectives | 0: Aligns with None  3: Aligns with One  6: Aligns with Two  9: Aligns with Three or More |  |
| Church Goals | 0: Aligns with None  3: Aligns with One  6: Aligns with Two  9: Aligns with Three or More |  |
| Church Strategies | 0: Aligns with None  3: Aligns with One  6: Aligns with Two  9: Aligns with Three or More |  |

**Exercise #5: The Priority Triangle**

A system for prioritizing activities, ministries, initiatives and budgets into three priority levels, Must Do, Should Do, and Nice To Do items (Adapted from the Model-netics Priority Pyramid from Main Event Management).

**WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “MUST DO?”**

The specific activities, ministries, initiatives and budgets that make up your **“Must Do’s”** are essential for meeting the church’s and ministry’s mission, vision, objectives and goals. Must Do’s are “mission critical” in that they are required for ministry success and survival and therefore should be considered as priority. These items are the 20% of what you do that create 80% of your results, make the biggest difference and generate the highest and most immediate impact. Must Do items represent the base of the pyramid and should occupy at least 50-60% of your time and resources.

**WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “SHOULD DO?”**

The specific activities, ministries, initiatives and budgets that make up your **“Should Do’s”** can be undertaken if the “Must Do’s” are under control. These are not essential to achieving your objectives, at least currently or in the short term. Should Do’s may move the needle but not to the same degree as Must Do’s. Should Do’s may help you reach your objectives but they can be deferred. These items should take up a smaller proportion of time and budget and in many instances will eventually move to your Must Do list. Should Do items represent the middle tier of the triangle and should occupy no more than 20-40% of your time and resources.

**WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “NICE TO DO?”**

The specific activities, ministries, initiatives and budgets that make up your **“Nice to Do’s”** can be undertaken only if the “Must Do’s” and “Should Do’s” are under control. Typically there is little significant payoff for these items though they may have a “warm and fuzzy” factor to them, help fuel your passion and renew your energy. They may “add value” to what you are doing and enhance people’s experience but are non-essential. They are optional or can be left alone indefinitely as they don’t significantly help you reach your objectives. Nice to Do items represent the point of the pyramid and should occupy no more than 10-20% of your time and resources.

**Exercise #5: The 80/20 Rule**

A prioritization exercise to determine the 20% of your activities that produce 80% of your results.

1. List the 20% of your programs and ministries that provide 80% of your key measurement results.
2. What programs and ministries from your remaining 80% can be reduced, combined or eliminated to free up more time and resources to invest in the 20% of your initiatives providing the most impact?

**Exercise #6: The 50% Rule**

A prioritization exercise to identify that which is core to the mission.

1. If you had only time to implement half of your current initiatives which would you choose?
2. If you only had half of your current budget which of your current initiatives would you eliminate?
3. If you only had half of your current volunteers and staff which of your current initiatives would you pursue?