

5 Questions for Ministry Planning

Question 5 - When Do You Grow?

A successful ministry is a growing ministry, but growing before you are ready can cause issues. So, how do you prepare for growth? Check out the talking points below.

To prepare for growth, consider these five areas:

1. Start Small.

Consider having a soft opening by inviting just a few people to attend your ministry when you first open. This will give you the ability to evaluate what is going well and what needs to change while things are manageable.

2. Make It Scalable

Once you figure out what is working now, ask yourself if the same system would work if you were twice as big? Three times? 100 times? If it's a no, then ask yourself why. Start looking for solutions.

3. Share Responsibilities

Growing means letting go of control. This can be hard, but it is necessary. Take a good look at what responsibilities you should keep and which ones you need to give away. Be sure to set some guardrails before you empower others (See [Question 3 - Where Are The Guardrails.](#)) Make sure that those you empower know that you are there for support. Growing ministries means growing teams.

4. Empower Recruiters

Growing ministries often require more volunteers. Equip your team members to help you recruit by explaining what roles are needed and what competencies are needed for each one. Then ask them to invite people in to learn more. (See [Question 2 - Who Do You Need](#))

5. Have Faith

Keep Jesus at the center of all you do. Remember that this ministry is His. Have faith that He will be beside you as you go, grow, and learn. Pray. Pray. Pray.

5 Questions for Ministry Planning Question 5 - Scalability

5 Tips for Scaling Your Ministry

1. Find A Mentor

Nothing will help you prepare for what is ahead more than someone who has already been down the road. Find a mentor, and when you are ready, mentor others.

2. Plan For What You Want To Be, Not What You Are Now

It can be tempting to plan for what seems easiest to accomplish. But planning for the status quo will give you, yep, the status quo. If you have big dreams, then plan big. Spend some time thinking about where it is that you want your ministry to go. Then look at what steps you may need to take to get there. Start planning for the next right step. Before you know it, you will be on your way. (And if you have questions as you go, you guessed it, ask your mentor for advice.)

3. Use A SWOT Analysis

SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Using this tried and true analytical tool can help you identify where problems may arise as you scale. It can also help you discover solutions that may be hiding. SWOT Analysis Templates are available online.

4. Evaluate Your Systems

Remember that scaling your ministry means that more people will have leadership roles. So, make sure your systems are clear and easy to use. A good rule when evaluating systems is to ask yourself, "If I were brand new, would I understand these procedures?"

5. Protect Your Culture

Remember all those core values we talked about in Question 3. Well, here they are again. Make sure your leaders understand and can communicate your organizational core values and culture. Staying true to your culture will keep you on track for your mission.

BONUS - PRAY, PRAY, PRAY - Leadership is tough, and unpredictable, and exciting, and impactful, but most importantly, it is an opportunity for you to grow your reliance on Christ. So, keep investing in your relationship with Him. Keep inviting Him in. And keep Him at the center of all you do.

5 Questions for Ministry Planning

Question 5 - Scaling Case Study

Preparing for growth can be the difference between ministries that grow and ministries that go (away). But what happens if you find your ministry growing before you are ready? Here's how one church handled it.

Case Study:

A growing suburban church had been running a one-on-one buddy ministry for children who have disabilities for several years. Things had been going well. So well, in fact, that community members began posting about it on social media, which led to more families wanting to be part of the program. This was wonderful, except for one thing. This ministry wasn't ready for that.

Problem:

Increasing the number of children in the buddy ministry meant that more volunteers needed to be added to the team, which increased the weekly scheduling responsibilities of the volunteer leaders. Also, the more buddies who were added, the fewer kids were able to come to each class due to class space.

Thinking Through:

Once leaders realized they had problems, they decided to look for solutions through a SWOT Analysis. This tool evaluates strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. (Example on next page).

Solution:

Based on what they discovered, they chose to concentrate on two opportunities.

First, they developed a two-tier system of assistance. Instead of providing a buddy for every child whose family requested help regardless of the level of need, they began to evaluate how much assistance a child actually needs before enrolling in the program. Children who had high needs were placed with buddy teams, and children who had lower needs were helped in other ways:

1. Training the general classroom teacher with positive behavioral techniques.
2. Buddy boxes were put in classrooms.
3. Invisible buddies (specially trained volunteers who float around from room to room) were added to the schedule. This helped meet the needs of most of the children without adding extra weekly responsibilities to leaders. This also cut down on the number of people in each room, which allowed space for more children.

Second, the decision was made that when a new child entered the one-on-one program, a buddy team leader would be chosen for his team. The team leader would take on the responsibility of scheduling coverage for their specific child. This spread the responsibility of scheduling volunteers into a more manageable model.

5 Questions for Ministry Planning

Question 5 - Case Study SWOT Analysis

Buddy Ministry - SWOT Analysis	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current system works well for those served. • Great retention of volunteers. • Enrolled families are happy. • Great reputation in the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current system is labor intensive for leaders. • New recruiting is time intensive. • Some families don't want to come on a predictable schedule. • People are invited before ministry is ready to serve them.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change system to two tier needs. • Empower team leaders and recruiters. • Add more subs or invisible buddies to the team. Increase cross training. • Find out what other area churches have special needs ministry for referrals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents may be upset if their child is not put in the program. • Team leaders may not follow through. • Volunteers can still cancel at the last minute. • We may still have more tier 1 needs than we can accommodate.