SWOT Assessment & Strategic Planning Overview

Most of us will have a point in the year where we will need to put together some sort of plan for the next year, whether it’s simply a budget proposal, or a proposal of ministry plans for the upcoming year. How do you discern the direction God would have you take over this next year? Here are some tools and steps that may be helpful as you assess where your ministry is at, and how to plan a strategy for the future. This could be run as a series of meetings, or on a single planning day.

## Step 1: Team Prayer & Assessment

1. Get feedback from the stakeholders in your ministry (kids, parents, volunteers, etc.). This could be through a survey, one-on-one or group conversations, or a combination of both.
2. Assemble your core group of leaders (paid, volunteer, or a combination). Bringing together individuals that can express their opinions both kindly and freely is important.
3. Create space for initial prayer to reflect on the ministry. Both personally and corporately, listen to what Jesus might be saying, and invite Him to guide the planning session.
4. Does your church have a philosophy of ministry that guides it? Is there one contextualized to your Children’s Ministry? If so, review this document with the group so everyone assessing the ministry based on the same objectives.

* If you do not have a ministry philosophy, agree on 5 values or end-goals that you would desire to be true of your kids’ ministry. Consider creating a formal **philosophy of ministry (see toolbox)** later.

1. Use a tool such as a **SWOT Analysis (see toolbox)** to assess your ministry. You could do a SWOT for each area in your kids’ ministry (i.e. volunteers, weekend ministry, etc.), on each core values (i.e. belong, believe, become), or simply on the overall ministry.
   * The goal is to have a better understanding of where the ministry is at right now, and what might lie ahead in the future.
2. Invite Jesus to speak to you on what has just been discussed. Ask him:
   * What excites you?
   * Triggers you?
   * Makes you nervous?
   * What might you sense Jesus leading the ministry towards based on the information in the assessment?

After prayer, have the group share these things with each other.

## Step 2: Strategic Planning

1. Determine timeline for the strategic plan you would like to create (1-year, 3-year, etc.)
2. If creating a year-long/short-term strategy:

* Review the notes & SWOT worksheets from your ministry assessment. What does Jesus continue to draw your attention to? Are there other things that have come to your attention since the ministry assessment?
* Determine a framework to create your strategy around. This could be the same framework you used for your assessment (i.e. ministry areas or core values).
* You want to accomplish your strategy, so don’t create too many goals! Choose 3-5 key areas, and 3 desired outcomes for each area over the next year. For each desired outcome, list the goals to achieve the outcome.
* Goals should be *SMART*: Specific Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely
* **Example from Ministry Goals Sample (see toolbox):**

*Key Area:* Discipling Volunteers

*Desired Outcome #1:* Volunteers would feel a sense of community and ownership in our kids’ ministry.

* *Goal #1:* Leaders will be invited to a volunteer brunch in February 2025.
* *Goal #2:* Each kids’ ministry area has two volunteer huddles through the year, that can provide resourcing and community building.

1. If creating a multi-year/long-term strategy*:* start with the final year of your plan, then work backwards year-by-year.
2. Invite feedback on the strategy from church leadership and core leaders. Is the plan on-point? Does it align with the church’s overall vision and strategy? Are there things that have been missed, or new ideas generated from discussion? Adjust the plan as needed.
3. Once your strategic plan has been approved and initiated, review it regularly. Feel free to adjust and adapt when needed. A suggestion would be to review this every other month with your ministry supervisor.
4. If an outcome or goal isn’t achieved, ask: was it the right goal? Does it need more time to be achieved? Did something else take priority?

**Tools for Assessment and Strategy**: Philosophy of Ministry sample, SWOT Worksheet, Strategic Planning Sample