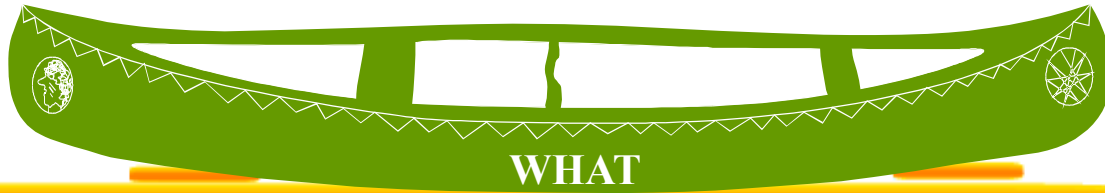


WHEN
"Are we there yet?"



Memorable Mission
Bumper Sticker

THE STRATEGIC ADVENTURE

Good strategic planning requires considerable thought, deliberation, and decision-making. For many people it seems to be a lot of head work, with little room for creativity, visioning, and the growing of new metaphors to guide the process. This exercise provides a more “right brain” experience in strategic planning. It is meant to supplement and enhance all of the reasoned activity that surrounds the development of a strategic plan for the ministry. Here’s how it works.

Allow one hour to complete this exercise. Provide each participant with a copy of The Bus. **For the next 10 minutes**, ask them to remember or imagine a recent trip they may have taken. Have them think through the various aspects of the trip as indicated on The Bus. Have them talk in general about trip planning, experiences they may have had, and what they enjoyed once they reached their goal. Then, instruct them think about strategic planning in terms of an adventure and ask them each to respond to the following. **Take 20 minutes for this part of the exercise.**

1. **MISSION STATEMENT** Write a name on the side of the bus that will tell the casual observer something about the purpose of the trip. If the sign said Outback Explorations for Seniors or Highland Baseball Club, you would have a sense of **why** the group exists. This is the mission statement of your ministry. Everyone onboard should know why you’re together as you begin your journey. Casual onlookers should be able to tell what you’re about when they see your bus go by.
2. **CENTERING STATEMENT** Write a bumper sticker “**memorable mission**” statement or phrase that can be easily remembered by those who see it even briefly.
3. **CONSTITUENTS** Write a few words about **who** is onboard. These are the constituents of the ministry, sometimes referred to as “stakeholders.” The “who” includes all those who share the mission, including the board and staff. You might want to enter into some discussion about who isn’t onboard or who is sitting too far in the back of the bus that you would like to move forward. An important sub-question is, “Who is driving the bus?” Is it a staff person, such as the campus pastor, or the board chair? The driver is responsible for knowing the purpose of the trip, how to get there and how to guide the bus through the expected terrain ahead. Who is the driver of your bus? And who is the keeper of the map, the navigational chart of your adventure?
4. **VISION** Describe **where** you are going on the trip. This is the vision piece of the strategic plan. Imagine where you want your organization to be five or ten years from now. Choose a destination that is both possible and daring. Let this vision stretch your sense of adventure as a group. If you have only traveled safe distances from home thus far, imagine what it would be like to be somewhere exotic or memorable. What if you were bold enough to build a new facility, add a new major program, or expand your staff to provide more services? The vision should be compelling enough to excite lots of folks to get on the bus and join you.
5. **PURPOSE** What will you do when you arrive? How will your organization be different? What will be the primary marks of living into this new vision? When people sign on for this trip, you promise them that as you live into your vision several things will happen. What are they? More frequent worship? More intentional evangelism? Service-learning opportunities? A deeper cross-cultural experience? If people don’t get to do what they signed on to do, how will you keep them on the bus?
6. **GOALS** Be specific about **how** you are going to get to where you want to go. Develop a planning roadmap. Work out the details of which direction to go, which fork in the road to take, and which detours to avoid. This is the goal setting part of the journey. It involves the specific planning of how to get from one point to another. Perhaps the executive committee of the board serves as the navigator to keep the trip moving according to plan. Are you prepared for emergencies? If the bus breaks down and your adventure is threatened, who is responsible for repairs and for preventive maintenance in the future?
7. **WHEN** Develop a timeline that will give the group a sense of **when** you plan to arrive and how you will negotiate stops along the way. “Are we there yet?” is not just a question for squirming children. Everyone on the bus wants to know that timing has been worked into the plan.
8. **HOW MUCH** Answer the question about **how much** the trip will cost before you set out. Even great visions need a budget. Plan how you are going to make this incredible journey a realistic possibility, given current financial resources and anticipated support.

Once each participant has responded to all eight aspects of The Bus, invite them to share their responses with the larger group. Build consensus around each part of the strategic plan so that everyone agrees on the direction and purpose of the journey of your organization. **Take 30 minutes for this part.** Compare and contrast the results of this exercise with other strategic work that you have done. Celebrate what emerges. Enjoy!