

goal setting

For significant change and growth to take place in our youth groups, it is vital that we take the time to prayerfully plan how we are to best develop our ministry. Discerning God's vision and direction is vital but if we leave it at this level, we may never see God's plan realised.

Why set goals?

Research tells us that 70% of vision statements are never put into action, leaving huge untapped potential in our churches.

Once we have an idea of where God is wanting us to go, the next task is to take the time to plan the steps to seeing that vision become a reality.

Creating a road map

If you think of the vision as the destination point, where God is wanting you as a church to take your youth ministry, then we need to be thinking about creating the road map to try and get us to that destination.

I remember when I was at school we were taught how to orienteer. We spent days in what seemed like the middle of nowhere trying to reach a destination with just a compass and an ordinance survey map. We knew where we were supposed to get to but how we got there was totally down to us. Anyone who has tried this will know that the only starting point is to assess your current location, find it on the map and then try

and find a couple of landmarks to help guide you towards your destination. Once you have travelled some way you have to stop and reassess where you have reached, discover whether you are still heading towards the destination and then find new landmarks to draw you nearer. The reality was that we often veered off the direct route we were trying to take, but, as long as we stopped often enough to double-check the map, we didn't tend to get too lost and always ended up in the right location, eventually!

When we think about developing our work with young people, this is a helpful illustration of why it is important to set goals. If we had

set out on our orienteering exercise with just the destination in mind we would have got completely lost.

Knowing how to get there was vital to our success. When we think of the vision God has given us for our young people, we need to try and work out what is the best route to realising this vision.

Now of course we may veer from this route as circumstances change and as God may lead us, but if we have no route to start with we tend to drift on from one week to the next with little development and growth taking place and we are unlikely to reach the place of seeing the vision become a reality.



Goal setting is like creating a route on a road map to help us reach our destination or vision

Set the signposts

Setting goals is a bit like putting signposts in the ground along the path we want to take. They help us know where we next want to get to. Alternatively, they are the stepping stones which help us navigate across the stream to the other side and this is a helpful picture when it comes to seeing a vision become reality as it reminds us that we can't do it all at once, there needs to be a natural progression and taking the different steps prevents us from burning out and failing.

Setting goals

When thinking about the goals we set, it can be useful to use the mnemonic, SMART:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Realistic
- Timely

Specific

Suppose we have a group of young people who don't know each other very well and don't mix. We may want to see this change. When we think of setting a goal it helps to be specific. 'Our aim is for the young people to know each other better' is fine but it holds no real means of knowing whether that goal is ever achieved! Instead, if we are specific we can know when the goal is reached. So our goal might be to see the young people talking with the people either side of them when they sit in the group each week.

Measurable

The goal is only useful if we can measure it against where we are now. A goal should move us on so we need to check that the goal inspires us to develop and gives us a measure of where we are along the road to achieving the goal.

Attainable

Do we have what we need to achieve the goal? This is where we think through the resources needed, training implications and also whether everyone is in



Goals are like stepping stones to our vision realised

agreement with the goal. These are vital ingredients to consider for the goal to be successfully realised.

Realistic

When putting stepping stones down in a stream the worst thing to do is put them too far apart for you to get across without getting wet! When we consider our goals we need to be realistic in what we are hoping to achieve. Yes, it should stretch us and it should always keep us having to rely on God, but we don't want to set goals which are unreachable and therefore leads to us constantly failing. This quickly leads to a sense of

frustration and disheartenment and is a sure way of seeing the vision abandoned.

Timely

A goal needs to be grounded within a time frame for it to give it a sense of urgency. It also provides a time frame for a natural review of the goal to take place. If we fail to put a date on when we want to see the goal realised, the goal tends to drift with little advancement.

Review and reflect

Once the goals are set it is vital that we take time regularly to review how we are doing with reaching those goals and also to take the time to reflect on what we are trying to do, asking God to show us areas where we need to change or tweak things and, above all, to give Him space to guide us and lead us in the direction He is wanting His kingdom to grow.

With all these things we need to ensure that we always keep a correct perspective. We need to be regularly praying for what we are doing and remember that, at the end of the day, it is God's vision that we are wanting to see realised, and so we need to spend time regularly with Him to ensure that the road we are taking is the way laid out before us by Him and it is in His strength by which we see the impossible made possible.



Goals help us navigate the route of vision