
Is Your Church Strategy Really Yours or Just an Illusion?

The illusion of a strategy is worse than not having a strategy. For the person who wants to lose weight, the illusion of a diet/exercise plan is worse than not having one. Because when you don't have one, you at least know you don't have one. For the person attempting to save for retirement, the illusion of a retirement plan is worse than not having one. Because when you think you have a plan but really don't, you'll get to a certain age before you discover you did not save sufficiently.

In the same way, **the illusion of a ministry strategy is worse than not having one.**

The illusion of a ministry strategy is like a mirage that gives people a false sense of hope about the direction of the ministry. It provides an erroneous belief that a wise course has been set. Not having a strategy and knowing it is far better than thinking you have one when you don't. At least then you know the reality and are likely much more open to developing one.

A ministry strategy is how a church accomplishes her mission on the broadest level. The mission is the “what”; the strategy is the “how.” An overarching ministry strategy is how all the programs and ministries are designed to work together to help fulfill the mission of the church. Because I am often asked—two books I recommend on ministry strategy are [Simple Church](#) (yes, that is a shameless plug) and [Church Unique](#) by Will Mancini.

Based on consultations and conversations with church leaders, perhaps **the most common illusions of ministry strategy are *rearranging* and *photocopying*:**

1) Rearranging

Here is a common occurrence: A church leadership wordsmiths a new vision/mission statement, puts the statement on a dry-erase board, and commits not to leave the room until “all our programs fit into this statement.” While they give the impression they are beginning with their strategy, they are really beginning with their programs. Thus, everything they already do is rearranged and categorized based on “the new vision.”

Merely taking all your existing programs, events, and activities and placing them under new language or baptizing them with new nomenclature gives the illusion of a strategy without necessarily thinking through *how* people will move throughout the life of your church. **The illusion of the strategy helps the team call themselves strategic without developing the discipline and focus necessary to really possess a strategy that guides the church in a direction.**

2) Photocopying

Another common occurrence: A church leader visits a church or reads about one, loves a program they have implemented, their mission statement, or an initiative they are passionate about. He searches their website, learns everything he can about the program or initiative, and

imports it into his church without thinking critically about his church culture or the strategy he has articulated to his people. Over time, **the church becomes a discombobulated collection of photocopied programs. Each one looks strategic when it stands alone, giving the illusion of a strategy.** But when all are meshed together in one local church body, the church can move in a plethora of directions, revealing the lack of an overarching discipleship process/strategy.

Both rearranging and photocopying are common practices because they are easy. All it takes is a white board and a few hours with some folks who have read a book. **Developing ministry strategy is much more difficult - and much more impactful.**

Read more from Eric [here](#).

Want to learn how to develop genuine ministry strategy? [Connect with an Auxano Navigator and start a conversation with our team.](#)