Steps to Measure and Monitor Your Church Ministry Teams

When was the last time someone asked you, “How is your ministry going?” The most common answer people give to that question is something like ‘fine’, ‘busy’, or ‘growing’. Those answers are OK, but they really don’t provide much insight. Often the answers we give to that question are really answering how we feel about our ministries or how we feel we are doing as ministry leaders. When digging into why we give those answers, I discovered it is partly because many of us don’t really know how our ministries are doing. Few church leaders actually measure and monitor the performance of their church or their ministry team.

Performance Matters

The work of ministry is the most important job in the world, with immediate *and* eternal significance. If we believe this so strongly about a job, then that job deserves our very best. The challenge we face is that we can’t really know what our best is without clear objectives and measurements. Only by knowing those things can we identify how we improve. If you want to accurately answer the question ‘how is your ministry going’, you need three things: *define ‘good’*, *monitor and evaluate*, and *execute change*.

Define Good

A key cause of poor performance is poorly set expectations. Setting expectations for performance must happen at the individual level through a job description and at the ministry team level through a mission statement and business plan. Job descriptions should include three sections: purpose of the role, activities and tasks directly responsible for, and how to measure success, both objectively and subjectively.

A ministry team must have an idea what they are trying to accomplish within the context of the church’s mission. If the team is new to mission statements and business plans, I recommend starting with the resources at [Building Champions]. This organization provides great guidance for how to create your mission and a simple business plan to move you forward.

Monitor and Evaluate

Now that you have clear goals, it is time to monitor how you are doing at reaching them. I suggest three types of metrics for each ministry team or leadership role.

- Track some *hard numbers*. How many baptisms did we do this year? What percentage of attendees are in small groups? How many people in our church gave money each month in the last year? These are the types of things you put on a graph and publish to the team.
- Trust your *intuition*. The graphs are great, but they only tell part of the story. How you feel about the ministry, or how others feel about it, is equally important. Is the team

getting along well, or is there tension? How would you rate the level of collaboration in your team?

- Get an *assessment*. There is great value in getting an unbiased assessment of your ministry, based on an objective standard of excellence. We all have blind spots, and a third party can help us see things from a new perspective. It is common in an assessment to discover things we didn't even consider important are the lynchpin to taking the ministry to the next level. Church Community Builder offers assessments of four key leadership roles: Volunteer Coordinator, Connections Pastor, Leader of Finance and Generosity, and Executive Pastor.

Execute Change

You have set clear expectations for performance, and you have your assessment results and your metrics trending on a nice colorful graph … now what? The purpose of all this is to identify what's working and what's not. Now you can begin to try new things and see if results improve, stay the same, or get worse. When using metrics to drive behavior change, we examine the data in three sequential steps.

1. **What?** What is the data telling us? What is included in this data? How was it calculated? As an example: 'We had 560 people on Sunday'. Does that mean in the main worship service? What about kids, or youth, or volunteers? Before we can make a judgement about the data, we must understand what the number represents.
2. **So what?** What does the data mean? Is that more or less than last week or last year? How does it compare to our goals? This is the time you make a personal judgement about what you see. The focus is on finding meaningful improvements. Often we resist analyzing the data, because it might include negative feedback for people or ministries. If we skip this step, we miss the opportunity to get better. Once we know what the data shows, it's time to give the feedback to the stakeholders. While this is difficult, you are really close to experiencing the payoff of the whole process. Here are a few tips on the power of being direct from Rob Cizek.
3. **Now what?** What are you going to do differently tomorrow, next week, and next month? Is this a behavior you can change on your own, or do you need to demonstrate some expert change management in the team or across the church to make it happen? How long will it take to make the change? Then, how long until you expect results? This is where you can experiment with new strategies. Make sure the metrics you're tracking will tell you if the new approach is working.

Your Next Move

There is a lot involved in tracking and improving performance in your ministry team. It would be logical to start at the beginning and revisit job descriptions and mission statements. However, I recommend you start with metrics. Start tracking the data you think is important. You may not get the metrics just right, but they will likely be close. Then, you can watch the trend while you are working on the business plan and job descriptions. In addition, starting with metrics tends to reveal the quality of our data, which is likely to become a metric in itself. It won't be easy, but the work is important enough to make the effort. Next time someone asks how your ministry is going, you can ask yourself if they are making small talk or if they really want to know. If they want to know, tell them to pull up a chair and settle in, because you ***really*** do know the answer.

> Read more from Dave.