



Practice: Vision Launch



Generosity
by LifeWay

Every year churches invest valuable resources toward the mission. These resources are channeled through a church budget or spending plan that is then communicated to the congregation. Some churches choose to communicate their budget through formal presentations that require approval. Meanwhile, other churches would never present their budget publicly, but they still must communicate their vision and need clearly. How do we exist somewhere in between the land of spreadsheets and the land of impact? How do we discuss church money in a way that produces freedom and confidence?

Let's not limit your budget to a numbers presentation or your vision to a State of the Church message. Instead, let's create a yearly Vision Launch.

Here are some helps in launching a multi-week vision series that integrates church finances and eternal impact.

Precede week one with the necessary leadership approvals and church wide promotion to create momentum and excitement. The more time you invest in preparing the soil, the better the response will be.

Week 1 - Celebrate

Take one week to celebrate the massive impact your church has had on lives over the past year. Retell the story through pictures, testimony, and videos. Be sure that as many ministries as possible can find themselves in the story. Think through the impact in multiple generations, mission trips, local/national disasters, and other unique opportunities your church engaged. Do not hesitate to celebrate the numbers of volunteers, attendees, baptisms, new members, and ministries that have seen solid growth. Numbers represent lives and quantify the results. It helps a giver put a result to their gifts. Include financial numbers as well such as giving, cash reserves, capital invested, and debt reduced. Do not be afraid to show the church surplus or an overflow of resources. This only breeds confidence in how money is handled. Leading with vision, results, and surplus is far preferred over leading with a financial need, stinginess, or lack of impact.

If your church previously cast a yearly vision, be sure to tie the celebration to these visionary achievements. The more you lead with vision clarity and success, the more resources will be released. Annual reports are very powerful tools to distribute during this celebration and to post on your website. Tying ministry results to invested finances is a powerful connection for the giver. It is much preferred to distributing a spreadsheet with budget line items. Spreadsheets tell where money is spent. A highly engaging Annual Report will communicate both the impact the giver has made and provide necessary financial accountability.

Week 2 - Reveal Vision

The confidence your people will gain from the previous week's celebration and success will make this new vision launch all the more powerful. Every church should possess a clearly articulated long-term and short-term vision. Each year provides another chance to articulate both. As year after year passes of successfully completed short-term visions, you will find yourself at the doorstep of your long-term

vision. Long-term visions take large amounts of resources. Those resources do not arrive overnight. They are grown by a short-term vision to raise generous disciples, then another short-term vision to double leaders and volunteers, then another short-term vision to double small group participants, followed by another short-term vision to serve your city and world. These short-term visions build upon each other year after year. All along the way you are growing your disciples, storing cash reserves, and culminating a larger bank of resources for the long-term vision ahead.

Every year the church vision should build upon the past and lead to the future. It should direct the resources in the budget to fulfill the objectives and engage a new set of volunteers, calling them forward. If the vision is clear, church leaders should have the opportunity to call the church to a season of prayer, giving, and volunteerism in support of the dream. If the yearly vision does not motivate action, then you will need to return to the drawing board.

Week 3 - Call To Action

The call to action can take many forms based on the vision and church practices. All that is needed may be an internal response. The vision may be such that the call is to greater levels of personal Bible study or prayer which could result in a person committing to a yearly Bible reading or new prayer plan. However, some churches may have the practice of pledging a budget or kickstarting the vision with a one-day offering. Finally, a clear vision may be a great opportunity to launch a volunteer training ministry in gift and personal passion discovery. Do not limit the action step to budget approval, but expand to personal engagement in vision advancement.

To show integrity to the vision, a year-long calendar can be revealed that would detail the different emphases throughout the year that will help accomplish the vision. Just as spreadsheets do not communicate engagement, neither does a list of church programming events. Rather, consider how you can highlight a few ministry opportunities new and old that will occur during the next year. Four to six is plenty. Demonstrate how your ministries will work together to bring a greater unity and focus. Lead them to be expecting more information as plans develop with an eagerness to engage.

Supporting Elements

New Members Event - Gather the new members over the past year and help them become more oriented to how a vision launch works at your church. Catch them up to speed on the previous vision, how it was supported, and the success it has experienced.

Key Givers Preview - Key leaders and givers like having insider information. They especially like knowing in advance and gaining behind the scenes nuances. This enables them to be more active in their support. They will also be more generous as their confidence grows. Information is very helpful to lead givers.

Communication Plan - This can include letters and e-mails to the members prior to the vision launch series. Utilize the announcements, social media, church website, and all pathways of communicating to leaders. All ministries need to be on board and working together. The more communication is unified and supported, the better. You may also find it helpful to mail the Annual Report along with a

personal giving statement.

Response Card - Response cards are helpful tools. A card can be used to enable a participant to record a personal prayer request that aligns with the vision, or prayer support for the vision. They can provide feedback on where they would like to volunteer and even give. Response cards are great when they are used to empower a person to dream God's dream alongside the church. Not so much when people feel pressured or obligated to support the church need.

Annual Report - The annual report is a visually appealing highlight piece. It should include stories of lives changed, ministry activity highlights, financial numbers of dollars invested, attendance numbers in key ministries, baptisms, and new members. Validate the success of the short-term vision of the current year. It can also be used to unveil the upcoming year's short-term vision and ministry budget plan.