



How To Resource A Church Plant



Generosity
by LifeWay.

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I've been involved in church planting for thirty years. I planted my first church in 1988. When I got started church planting was a new thing. In the 1990's we saw a proliferation of church plants across the US. Many of them came and went. The good news is as our experience and competency in church planting has increased so has our survival rate. The most comprehensive research to date conducted by my co-author, Ed Stetzer, to *Breaking the Missional Code* suggests that 68% of SBC church plants survive. If that is the case what happened to the other 32% and wouldn't it be awesome to see that survival rate tick up to 80 to 90%!

I'm convinced that many church plants cease to exist or fail because they are underfunded or either they simply run out of funding. I have personally seen numerous church plants go out of business after two to three years with a vital core group simply because they couldn't sustain the needs of the planter. Bottom line the planter just couldn't afford to plant any longer.

Addressing funding issues up front is a first step in eliminating the under resourced church plant. Long before you plant here are three questions you need to address as a church planter.

1. What do you need?

How do you eat an elephant? One bit at a time. In the same way when it comes to funding I like to answer this question by breaking it down into to three parts. You need a start up budget, operational cost, and salary support. By breaking these down it allows me to approach the funding of each one in a very specific manner. Let's take a closer look.

Salary Support – I like to approach salary support like a missionary approaches support. I also recognize that there are individuals and organizations that prefer supporting the planters to the church plant. Personally, in my own experience as a church planter twice starting from scratch has bias me in this perspective. Both times I have found churches, individuals, and organization willing to fund me if I was willing to plant. Each time prior to planting or even moving on the planting field I had two to three years funding committed. Frankly, I can't imagine planting any other way.

Start-up Cost – Secondly, I like to separate my start up cost and come up with a budget that covers anything related to start up. I consider start-up anything expenditure prior to launching the church and beginning to receive a regular offering. This can include equipment, securing a rental space, marketing, core group development and a host of additional things that relate to either one-time cost or will later be absorbed in the operational budget.

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Operational Budget – Finally, I develop an operational budget. The question I’m addressing with our operational budget is “Once the church is launched what is it going to cost us to operate weekly?” Here’s my rationale for operational cost. I don’t want to operational cost to exceed our ability to fund it from our weekly offerings. Keep in mind, at this point start up is paid for, the planter is funded for three years and the only thing left to budget for is operations. Now I want to make sure my weekly offerings and weekly needs are congruent.

2. How much will it cost?

This leads us to the question of cost. How much will it cost? How much money do I need to raise-up? My typical response is “more than you think.” Church planting is a costly endeavor. When it comes to the amount of money you need to plant it depends on a number of factors. They are:

It depends on your vision – In 2000 I was working with the NAMB where we launched an initiative to plant Flag Ship churches in strategic cities across North America. One of those churches we planted was Hope Church in Las Vegas Nevada. At the time we put \$250,000 in the plant, a partner church was to put \$250,000 and their church planter raised-up a number of other key partner churches. Hope Church had a huge vision for planting churches in Las Vegas, the west, and the world. Recently, Vance Pittman informed me that they had just planted their 50th church.

It depends on your context – A few years prior to working with Hope I planted a church on the south side of Atlanta with a budget of \$10,000. Here are some of the key contextual factors:

- My full salary was being pay by an outside source,
- I had a partner church about 10 to 15 miles away that were willing to send a strong core of people to help,
- Our community was growing with a more suburban people group, and
- The local school practically gave us their building.
- The community was friendly toward God and His church.
- There were unchurched Christians in the community.

It depends on the model of church – When it comes to church planting one model doesn’t fit all. The chart on the screen, while not inclusive of all models, demonstrates how the model of your church plant impacts cost and even more specifically the amount of upfront funding needed. The x axis are organic to organizational and the y axis are core to crowd which forms four quadrants. For each of these quadrants I included model and a dollar symbol to represent the amount of funding required. Nothing should surprise you here, but at the same time the model of church you plants needs to be taken into consideration when you plant. The more organization you have and the more you reach the unchurch crowd the more funding you are going to need.



3. Who will pay for it?

Here's the principle you have to get, "the vision you write, you must underwrite." This is not to say you have to pay for it out of your own pocket. You probably couldn't if you were willing to or wanted to. However, you must own the vision and the responsibility for funding it. As a planter or pastor one of your primary roles in the organization is always funding the mission. It's not the responsibility of the denomination, partnering churches, or network it is yours responsibility. With that said let me give you three or four that will help you with your fundraising.

Raise your resources prior to moving on the church-planting field. If you are moving to plant this is your first assignment. Whenever I do an assessment of a church planter there are three questions I asked them: What's your vision, who's on your team, and how much money have you raised? If they can't articulate a vision, don't have anyone going with them or haven't raised any money it's a pretty good indicator to me that they may not be a church planter. It is easier to raise money for your church plant prior to getting on the field. Early on make this your one and only job.

People give to people. Identify the people in your life that could support you. With a well-crafted church planting plan begin to approach them with an ask. Remember that you have not, because you ask not. I begin this process with asking for salary support. I expect people closest to me to believe in me and want to support what I'm doing to advance the kingdom.

Resources are in the Harvest. A common mistake that church planters make is to fail to educate, challenge, and disciple their new church plant in the area of generosity. It has been my experience that a church plant can be very attractive to young business owners, leaders, and entrepreneurs. I have made it my habit to build relationships and invest in these kind of young leaders. This has most often resulted in kingdom fruit. One such leader was an agnostic when I met him. After few years he had made God the highest paid employee in his company by giving that amount to the church above his own personal tithed.

Make it easy for people to give. Finally, make it as easy as possible of people to give. You can do this by providing an assessable platform with clear messaging on your website. Whenever it is appropriate to make an ask give them a way to text a one time gift or better yet to automate and on-going gift. Not only will it increase the amount of money people give to your church plant they will appreciate it.

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