

The Manager in Ministry

Thelemic Planning: The Action Cycle

By Walt Brock

To cut or not to cut—that is the question before me! I have a huge pile of hickory wood harvested years ago from my wife’s family’s home-
stead in Tennessee, and I have finally finished the plans for building a
new hutch for our dining room with that wood. I have the wood, I have
the plans, but I have been putting off starting the project. Why? Actu-
ally, I know very well why I have not started the project. The reason
has nothing to do with the work; for it is my hobby, and I really enjoy
the labor of love. I am putting it off because once I start making saw-
dust by ripping the boards to width and cutting them off to length, I
have committed to a plan that cannot be substantially changed. And
there is fear in that, for the wood from the old farmstead cannot be re-
placed; so the plan had better work, or I will be left with a lot of really
good firewood. The essence of that fear goes right to the heart of one
of the giant challenges of thelemic planning . . . to start or not to start!

Starting will ever be one of the great challenges of leading and manag-
ing a ministry for the Lord Jesus Christ. Once we start, we are not
making sawdust and risking firewood instead of furniture; we are using
time and God’s resources and risking discouragement and doubt
among our followers instead of faith and accomplishment. Starting will
always be one of the big obstacles we must overcome in accomplish-
ing our mission through the implementation of our thelemic plans for
fulfilling our ministry stewardship. If we are ever going to finish, we
must first start the action and then keep it going to the accomplishment
of the God-called mission. That is why we have entitled this phase of
the whole process the Action Cycle.

I doubt that we have a policy manual or training booklet here at Iron-
wood that does not have in it a diagram of the Ironwood Action Cycle.
As a matter of fact, you can find it most often in our internal planning
documents on the title page or even the front cover. Nothing has been
more fundamental to the accomplishment of our mission than the un-
derstanding and implementation of our action cycle. This last summer
we had our thirty-third summer staff training session, and I cannot

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Issue 15

*Don't forget
the works of God!*

Psalm 78:7

That they might set their hope
in God, and not forget the
works of God, but keep his
commandments.

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remember a year that we did not teach the Action Cycle within the first two or three days of the summer staff's arrival. Understanding the dynamics of this little diagram helps me understand the essence of what to do next.

To understand the context of this article, you should go back to Issue 12 and read the article on operational planning, which is planning what comes next. The focus of that article was planning the next year; the focus of this one is planning what comes tomorrow and maybe next week. This planning involves action—actually cutting some wood, putting things in motion, and keeping them going in the right direction—over and over again. The Action Cycle can be as short as a few hours, the next day, a week, and maybe at most a couple of months. The key is to identify the length of your cycle. At summer camp we work on three primary cycles—one day, one week, and one summer of camp. Keeping each cycle in mind keeps our focus on the next action necessary to accomplish our mission.

Although the adjustments that we make at daily staff meetings are never referred to as Action Cycle adjustments, we use the Action Cycle all the time at these meetings. At weekly meetings, we focus on the next camp coming in and will make adjustments resulting in slightly different action being taken during that next week. At the end of summer, we use evaluations that set the stage for the needed adjustments to improve our goal accomplishment and our mission fulfillment for the next summer.

The Action Cycle really starts after all the planning has been done and after a list of goals and objectives has been generated. Up to this point, the work of planning has been the focus. Now we start. A quick plan for the accomplishment of a goal is developed. We then organize ourselves to accomplish the plan. Then we begin the action of fulfillment. Usually what comes next is a report that something is not going according to the plan; that is where we make adjustments to as much as possible get back on target. We do this daily, on the run, and as we go about our assigned actions. After the whole cycle is finished, we evaluate for the purpose of adjusting the plans before the next cycle begins (no use making the same mistakes again). We do this weekly to improve our performance next week. After the summer has ended, we evaluate the whole summer and begin the planning process for the next cycle—for us next summer (each year we

should get it a little better than the last one). One item you must remember about evaluation is that it is more involved than just making adjustments to the plan for next year. The crucial aspect of evaluation is that you evaluate how well you accomplished the mission as well as how well you accomplished the plan. Maybe everything went according to the plan—just like clockwork, but in the end the mission was not accomplished. In that case, radically changing the plans may be necessary.

Here is the Action Cycle in a nutshell (diagram is on page 11):

- Based on your mission, make a plan to accomplish a goal.
- Organize people, resources, and schedules.
- Communicate to each staff member his part.
- When you say “START,” everyone begins his part of the action.
- Make and communicate adjustments as soon as they are identified.
- Continue the action and adjusting until the cycle is completed.
- Evaluate the cycle.
- Start over with the next cycle of planning, organizing, acting, adjusting, acting, and evaluating.

One last thing—you can never get tired of starting the cycle over and over again no matter how many times you have done it. The mission is not accomplished without the whole cycle being repeated. This is the essence of management—continuing to improve the process of planning for the cycle based on goal accomplishment. The job of leadership is to look at the evaluation in light of mission accomplishment and shake things up to allow the team to create a better plan for its fulfillment during the next cycle. Finishing the plan (accomplishing the mission) depends on starting; starting depends on overcoming the fear of firewood. Go start! ■■

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

2 Timothy 1:7

Contentment in My Calling

By Aaron Goldsmith

Have you ever come home at night and said one of the following:

- “I am underpaid, overworked, and underappreciated.”
- “My boss doesn’t understand what our business is all about . . . , if I were the boss, I would _____.”
- “I deserved that promotion: Joe isn’t qualified. I am a lot smarter than he is.”
- “I need more money and benefits . . . they are not paying me what I am worth. If they would pay me _____, just look at how much more I could give for pastor’s salary or to support missionaries.”
- “I am qualified to be the boss. Look at my qualifications—why, I graduated from college summa cum laude, and no one else here has that qualification.”
- “I am bored with this job . . . it is well below my ability.”

I am sure that all of us at some time thought or made those statements. A recent US job survey indicated that job satisfaction rates continue to fall. Research by the Conference Board has found that fewer than 50% of Americans are satisfied with their current jobs, and over 30% of those surveyed expect to change careers in the next three years. Many have put legs to those frustrations: projections indicate that current college graduates will change careers from three to five times during their work life of forty years—once every eight to thirteen years. Their resumes will show broad-based experience with no depth and a continual “starting over.” While reviewing these applicants for hiring, a prospective employer will discover that they have a record of discontentment at each place of employment.

Unfortunately, those of us in full-time ministry are not immune to any of the above. Having served on search committees for pastors, assistant pastors, and Christian school teachers and administrators, my own experience has proven that it is sadly evident that we have this problem in ministry. During one of the senior-level classes that I teach, my students write a personal paper on how they can be content in the place where God has called them. We discuss that a lack of contentment is not a recent phenomena but has been around since the Garden of Eden. More importantly, how does our Lord provide us the answers to resolving these issues so that we are better servants and witnesses for Him? The students are required to read Richard Steele’s *The Religious Tradesman* (a modern English version by Randall Caldwell, Vision Harvest Press © 2005, ISBN 0965133222), where the businessperson’s call and responsibilities are discussed. The topics and principles that Steele wrote about **260 years** ago are still applicable today. I would like to share with you these timeless biblical truths that provide for us the Lord’s guidelines regarding being effective servants in our place of calling.

Steele defines contentment as **cheerful satisfaction with the place and calling of God**. As the apostle Paul says in Philippians 4:11, “I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” As you study

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Half-baked Ideas

Gadgets

Ask yourself the following questions the next time you consider buying a gadget.

Do my gadgets save me time? Is all the time taken to read manuals, call support, upgrade, and replace lost data worth it?

What features do I use now? The latest additional feature is rarely used as much as advertised.

Does anybody else I know have the gadget I am considering? Friend tech support is the best kind. That means if you are the first to get the new gadget, be prepared to be the tech support for your friends.

Will paper work just as well? Paper always boots up and is completely wireless.

What is the annual cost of my gadget? Add up the cost of the gadget, accessories, extended warranty, etc. and divide by two. Experience shows that most gadgets do not last longer than two years. Think back through your gadget history—have you used one for longer than three years?

Does it simplify my life?

Does it help me spend more time with my spouse?

Does it allow me to manage my interruptions?

What is Plan B?

E-mail comments to manager@ironwood.org.

Board Meeting First Aid

By Brian Smoker

All managers in ministry sooner or later will be called upon to attend a board meeting. Some may attend regularly as ex officio officers, while others may attend sporadically only as the meeting agenda requires. Though in the context of our ministries we may not refer to our meetings as board meetings; our deacons meetings, school board meetings, and camp committee meetings ultimately serve the same function as the typical, not-for-profit board meeting.

With this in mind, it is important that we review the top three questions non-profit managers ask concerning board meetings according to National Center for Non Profit Boards, an organization dedicated to supporting non profits around the country. By reviewing these most common questions and comparing them to the meetings that you attend, you will be provided with a small first aid kit to ensure the health of your meetings.

How often should a board meet?

A National Center for Non Profit Boards survey reported that the most common answer according to their study was nine times annually. The highest cited number of meetings annually was twelve. In a similar study, *Harvard Business Review* stated that the most common number among non-profit organizations was seven annual meetings.

It is important to remember that neither of these studies sought to explore whether objectives were being met in the meetings but rather the number of times meetings were held annually. Bottom line: How often you meet should reflect the amount of work that needs to be accomplished and how effective your meetings can be.

What should be included in the meeting minutes? Though the “guts” of the meeting can be

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Scripture and see Paul's life, it becomes evident that contentment is learned and is not something we automatically gain once we are saved. Rather, it is something we will have to work on continuously until we are taken home to Glory.

Steele says, “Christian contentment arises from an appropriate sense of God's dominion over us, as our Lord and Owner who therefore may do with His own as He pleases. It expresses a humble trust in God as Father, whose wisdom and goodness directs by His grace everything He does toward us, in both the common things in life as well as the more pleasurable and profitable ones.”

We are to find contentment in the smallest inconveniences, the good and beautiful things that our Lord places in our lives, and finally, in trials and disappointments that come our way. The Lord works in our lives for our betterment and for His eternal purposes. There were circumstances early in my career that I did not exactly like or would have chosen, but with the passing of time (twenty to thirty years) as I reflect back, I begin to understand that being in God's will is a day-to-day walk; and someday, in hindsight, we will see His will 20/20. Job says in Job 1:21, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Steele warns us of four vices that will rob us of contentment but can, through our Lord's strength, be avoided.

- **Ambition**—this can occur when we think that we are better than our calling. We should seek to improve our calling; but in seeking and improving our calling, we have another responsibility—to please and honor our Creator God.
- **Envy**—this occurs when we want the talents and/or the prosperity of others. We want the easy life, and that desire focuses our thoughts on others' success symbols, whatever they may be—a house, furniture, a car, extravagant vacations.
- **Covetousness**—the insatiable desire for wealth. I often hear people say, “If I were wealthy, look at what I could give to the church so that the pastor, the missionaries, and our Christian school teachers could be paid more.” Think about that response for a second. Why does the Creator God, Who owns Heaven and all the earth, need our increased wealth to meet the needs of His children. I am reminded from the Psalms that all our God desires of us is a contrite heart.
- **Depression**—the sense of hopelessness when things do not go the way we think or feel they should. Have you ever been depressed when you thought the Lord was leading you to a certain ministry, but through a set of circumstances that you did not like, that ministry door was closed?

If we fall prey to these vices, we may change jobs only to discover that we are now experiencing the same discontent as before. Proverbs 27:8 warns, “As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place.”

Steele provides four antidotes for these vices:

- **The Bible commands us to be content.** Hebrews 13:5 says, “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” The study of God's Word is critical for our day-to-day

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living. As you lay your head down each night, what can you say that you learned that day about your Creator God from His Word?

- **God's will is not for us to be discontent.** Ours is not a God of retribution but of mercy, grace, and love. He knows best how we fit into His plan for His own glory.
- **As a Christian, we have the resources to be delivered from all discontentments.** We have the unsearchable riches of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and we have the unsearchable promises of the Scripture.
- **There is no condition of our life, however low or difficult it may be, whereby God should not be honored in it and by it.** Demonstration of our patience, diligence, and integrity is a witness of our faith to the unsaved and an encouragement to the saints.

Steele concludes with four paths to contentment:

- **Keep an eternal perspective**—we get so involved in our day-to-day activities that oftentimes we lose our eternal perspective on life. Our focus is on today's issues, and we often will miss what our Lord wants us to do in His vineyard while we are busy doing what we want to do.
- **Stay humble**—our pride and impatience comes from our ungratefulness for God's mercy and grace upon our soul. It is easy to become focused on what great things we can do for God rather than the great God we serve.
- **Seek moderation**—Steele says, "Nature and grace are contented with little, but pride and humor with nothing." Something to think about: multitudes of wealthy people are the unhappiest people in the world.
- **Trust in God**—we should place our happiness in our Lord's hand. God is the creator of universe and maker of all. We must, as we said earlier, learn to be content. This contentment is a mirror of one's faith.

As we go about our daily lives, our choice to be content provides encouragement to fellow believers and is a witness to unbelievers of God's working in our lives. ■

Recruiting Help Without the Aid of Tangible Benefits

By Ron Perry

In a typical church setting, the majority of the ministry is done by volunteers within the church family. They are people who have committed to a task, not because of the cash incentives, the benefit package, or the status that it will give them, but out of a desire to serve the Lord. We often value these people immensely but struggle to find others like them. For some of us, we may even feel it is nearly impossible to recruit competent help without cash incentives, benefits, or other tangible

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Board Meeting First Aid

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formatted in many different ways from one organization to the next, several specific items should, and in some instances legally must, be included in the meeting minutes. They are as follows.

- Date and time of meeting
- Who was in attendance, who was absent, and who was excused
- That a quorum was in existence
- Any results decided by vote
- The name of any abstainer or dissenter
- Time the meeting ended

Some organizations are required by their bylaws to include in their minutes the chairman's signature, future action to be taken, and motions made. These are helpful categories of information and should be considered as long as the organization is recording relevant data and not clutter.

How do boards spend their time while engaged in meetings?

In a 2000 survey conducted by Stanford University, 33% of boards were spending "considerable amount of time" on policy questions. In the same survey, 32% of boards said that they were spending "considerable amount of time" on planning for the future, and only a "fair amount of time" on policy questions. Combine those two statistics, and 65% of boards spend most of their time on either policy questions or future planning. The above statistic was confirmed later in the survey when 62% of boards responded that they never devote time to minor management issues.

I hope that these three key questions will help your organization run effective meetings. Like any other task, only meetings that are well planned can be effective. Through effective meetings, our ministries can continue to grow, expand, and shine the light of the gospel to the world around us. ■

E-mail comments to manager@ironwood.org.

Team Builder

Five Words that Describe

Have you ever found yourself reading books about team building and beginning to wonder if every team has a rain forest in their backyard or an extra two hundred feet of rope just sitting around? This team builder is designed to help build teams that don't do well getting out of their seat.

This would best be done over a five-day training or in-service time. Write each person's name on a sheet of paper and post it on the wall of the room where you'll be doing most of your sessions. Each time you meet together, give each team member a full sheet of paper and have him write a word that he would like to describe himself. Attach it to the wall under his name. After everyone has put his first word up, take some time to define how each word would be applied to various areas.

For example, we had twenty-four staff members when we did this exercise, and we used a spreadsheet to list everyone's name. Our first round included the words *willing, faithful, effective, discerning, consistent, thankful, dependable, teachable, real, caring, selfless, and kind*. We had several people that used the same word; *faithful* was the most popular one. During the second round we had the words *organized, hopeful, steadfast, and compassionate*.

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items. However, in I Kings 5 we see a scenario that demonstrates that it is possible to recruit competent assistance for the work of the Lord. Though this text may have some tangible benefits mentioned, the principles are priceless and can be valuable to each of us in ministry. I challenge you to grab your Bible and notice these few principles seen in I Kings 5.

The context is that Solomon, David's son, is appealing to David's old friend and faithful supporter King Hiram to help him build the temple. We can almost sense his hesitancy as he contacts a man whom he might not have known well personally but who did know his father well. Another aspect of this story is that Solomon is not asking for some small thing. He is asking for the wood and the labor to build the temple. What an amazing request! So, how did he do it?

- **Solomon emphasizes that the timing is right** (v. 4). He begins by sharing with Hiram that the time was right as a result of what God had been doing in and around the kingdom.

Sometimes to just say, "I need your help. Can you help me?" is incomplete. It is helpful for the people being asked to know that the events surrounding the request seem to indicate that the time is right for their help!

- **Solomon emphasizes that he has purposed to do what God wants done** (v. 5). He is not only sharing that this is the will of God but also declaring that He wants to do God's will too!

It can be encouraging to someone who is going to commit to an endeavor with us to know not only that this endeavor is the will of God but also that we are going to strive to purpose to do God's will too.

- **Solomon makes a specific request** (v. 6).

Sometimes general requests fall on deaf ears. Sometimes we may feel hesitant even asking for volunteer help and resort to thinking that says, "Well, I'll just let God lay it on his heart." There is great benefit to making a personal, specific request and letting someone know how he can be a part of what God is doing.

- Hiram sends word back that goes like this, **"I have considered"** (v. 8). This implies that Hiram had taken some time to think about Solomon's request.

Sometimes in our busy world of quick e-mails, cell phones, and instant messages, we lose the value of giving a request thought. Sometimes as a manager, I personally find that I fail to give some people time to consider my request and give me back a good, thought-through answer. There is great value to thinking ahead and making requests of people in such a timeframe that they can actually give well-thought-out responses.

Well, what was the outcome? King Hiram agreed to help! He sent back a well-described plan and even made a request in return that King Solomon granted. The materials were brought, the manpower was given, and a temple was built. As I sit back and contemplate the words in I Kings 5, I cannot seem to get out of my mind that it is still easier to

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recruit people if I offer them tangible benefits to get them to commit. But there is a simple truth in verse seven that I must not overlook. It says there that King Hiram “rejoiced greatly.” In other words, King Hiram received a benefit that came long before any talk of tangible items—the joy of being part of God’s work! Sometimes I forget that the joy of being part of God’s work is far greater than any tangible items that could be given. With that in mind, it gives us managers a little extra incentive to actually request volunteers for God’s work. Why? Because the joy of being part of God’s work is the greatest paycheck out there.

I hope I never forget that there is nothing wrong with emphasizing God’s benefit package as I recruit help. I just need to remember that the benefit package is not always tangible. It is something that no other line of work can offer; it is purely set aside and unique to those who serve God—the joy of being part of God’s work! ■

The Overflow of Discipleship: A Functional Team

By Brian Smoker

On February 13, 2007, my hometown of Golden, Colorado, was ecstatic. Golden, a town full of football fans, was acting like the Broncos had just won the Super Bowl. Every radio station, every talk show, and every newspaper was busy reporting breaking news about the NFL. However, the town of Golden was not ecstatic because of what the Broncos had done during their previous football season, but rather they were ecstatic because of the damage that had just been created within the Broncos main AFC rivals, the San Diego Chargers.

After a surprising post-season loss to New England, the Chargers fell into a “dysfunctional situation” with the end result climaxing in the firing of head coach Marty Schottenheimer within a month after the Super Bowl. What made Bronco fans so happy was the fact that the Chargers were THE team to be reckoned with in the AFC, having posted a 14-2 season along with the best record in football for the last three years in the entire NFL under Coach Schottenheimer. In fact, this was such a surprise firing that you would have to go back eighty years to find a head coach who did not return to the same team after fourteen wins in a season!

For the next week, Bronco fans continued their excitement as news poured in from San Diego. The defensive coordinator, offensive coordinator, two offensive assistants, and even the tight ends coach and line-backers coach would join the fray by leaving the Chargers for the 49ers as the fallout continued. Things became so desperate in San Diego that running backs coach, (that’s right—the running backs coach!) who had never been a coordinator was promoted to be in charge of the offensive. But even he would only sign a one-year agreement due to lack of team stability.

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Team Builder

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After each round, talk about the words and what they mean to each work area. For instance, what does it mean to be organized in your area? Practical things like what your desk looks like at the end of the day and daily removing the mail from your inbox comes out as a characteristic of being organized. As a group, you begin to set the bar of expectation fairly high for all members of the group. Your team will list words that you as a manager hope to see them follow through on.

After everyone has chosen his five words and shared them with the group, have each person come up with a memory tool for remembering his five words. For my words, I created the acrostic CORE which stands for *consistent, organized, reverent, and enthusiastic*. Bring these words back up later in the year and ask your team which word they need to work on the most and which word they believe they have best evidenced.

After going through this exercise, you will notice that you have quietly set goals for the year—goals that are ambitious and hard to reach, goals that will build your team. ■

E-mail comments to manager@ironwood.org.

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I am thankful that managers in ministry do not have to coach dysfunctional teams. In 1 Corinthians 12, Scripture lays out an outline for how ministries are to function. First, the Holy Spirit equips the people within a ministry with the spiritual gifts that both they and the ministry need (vv. 5–11). Second, in Christ, all members of the body are useful (vv. 15–23). Finally, God has set the tasks for the members of the body (vv. 28–31).

Isn't it interesting that in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul gives instructions in chapter 12 concerning talents and gifts? Then in chapter 13 Paul furthers that instruction by teaching concerning Christian love? Managers in ministry are not CEOs like unbelieving business leaders. Rather, they are under-shepherds who need to be led by the chief shepherd in disciplining their flock. For the manager in ministry, his greatest responsibility to God is discipleship of others. Each ministry already has the exact workers

that the Holy Spirit can enable, who in Christ are useful, and through God can perform great tasks. Our task as managers in ministry is to disciple those around us toward godliness. If we fail in discipleship, we fail in ministry and quickly create a dysfunctional team.

Have you noticed lately that successful ministries have a large crop of ministry leaders who have been developed within that ministry by other experienced ministry leaders in the organization? Perhaps this crop has even been saved, disciplined, and is now serving in that ministry. What a testimony to the power of God and His Word!

The biblical example taught by Paul is the exact opposite to the San Diego Chargers who have now fallen past dysfunction into further trouble by having to rely on inexperienced staff to lead the team. Perhaps 2007 will be a great year to be a Denver Bronco fan after all! ■

Beyond Orientation: A Practical List By Sam Brock

Chances are that sometime in the next twelve months you will go through the process of helping a person get oriented to a new job. You do not want to forget the major fact that this new co-worker creates a need for everyone to get used to the new guy: orientation is actually for the entire team. Once you get past the basics of an individual's orientation—here's your desk, phone, and job description—extend your orientation to the entire team by including some of these ideas at the beginning of team meetings; the orientation will help teach the new guy and remind the veteran. Give your team a chance to contribute to the orientation.

- Ask the question, "Why did you join this ministry?"
- Review the history of your ministry's start and how God has blessed over the years.
- Share the stories behind physical objects (buildings, cars, chairs, windmills) important to your ministry.
- Give a seasonal overview of the calendar and when the crunch times are.
- Mention mistakes your team has learned from.
- Share simple things that are easily forgotten—e.g., all people have problems and not everything can be important.

- Share the customs and traditions of your team.
 - Breaks—how or if you take them and what you do on breaks.
 - Work hours—when the work day starts and ends.
 - Events—how you celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, or momentous occasions.
 - Ministry jargon—words that only your team knows. (At Ironwood that includes SRD, 10:37, whiff its, floating holidays, ten minutes, and orange shirts—they all have a deeper meaning that you would definitely need to know if you were on staff.)

This next list was generated by a group of seasoned veterans of our ministry who wished for a more comprehensive orientation, an "orientation for dummies"—things no one told us but we wished we knew.

- The how and where of the thermostat.
- Where are all the light switches?
- Behind-the-scenes tour—what are all these doors?
- Storage spots—what is stashed where?
- Whom do I ask for help for different needs?

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- Where are first aid kits?
- Where are restrooms on property?
- Staff biography pages—who are my new co-workers?
- Peace and quiet spots—where can I get away from the phone?
- What driving shortcuts and tips will help me get around town?
- Are there any people to beware of?
- What customs did the ministry quit?
- What is some of this ministry's trivia?
- What is this ministry's humor like?
- What makes my boss nervous?
- What are the health issues and prayer requests of my team?
- Stuff about the town we live in—e.g., what is the best restaurant? Where is the best place for a haircut? ■■

The Efficiency of Quality

By Andrew Pust

Conservation is the byword of today. Maintenance catalogs are filled with bold print and bright colors designed to draw your attention to the latest, energy-saving devices. Trying to figure out which ideas, if any, are worth implementing can be time consuming and discouraging. What we are really talking about is efficiency. We all would like to be able to spend less and get more for it. The problem we face is that becoming efficient often costs more than the utilities and upkeep of what we currently have.

If efficiency were just about saving money, it would still get some attention; but more is at stake than money. What if greater efficiency meant that three people could adequately care for a facility that currently requires four? What could your organization accomplish if they could use one of your people in another important role and did not have to hire additional staff? If you did not have to replace five or ten light bulbs everyday, what would you be able to do with that time? If you learned a new skill such as basic A/C and refrigeration repair (which can potentially save your ministry hundreds of dollars a year in repair costs), where would you find the time to actually use that ability?

Yes, efficiency is also about time. Anything that requires less time now to take care of than before gives me the ability to do more somewhere else. Time and money are two commodities that we talk frequently about saving, but really we cannot “save” either of them. We can only use them more efficiently by improving the quality of the supplies and equipment that we use and by improving our skills and abilities.

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Communication Tips

By Andrew Pust

*A Review of “Communication”
(Issue 9)*

Remember that people are not mind readers. If you have information that would be helpful to someone else, you must tell him.

Teaching is different from telling. If we want others to understand and remember important or helpful information, we must teach them. Expect teaching to require repetition.

Develop communication at the prevention level. Visit your colleagues in their work space when you are not responding to a reported problem. Explain what normal is.

Listen completely before you start to repair anything. Jumping to conclusions without listening to all the facts can compound the problem and cost more in both time and money.

Be honest. Do not use excuses to avoid dealing with imagined or legitimate problems. Give solutions and teach reasons. If a long range plan is needed, develop the plan and let everyone involved know what you will be doing about it and when.

Show compassion. Your colleagues turn to you for help because you are supposed to help them.

See the first tip. Do not assume that the other twenty-five people you work with know that twelve people have already reported the same problem in the last three minutes that you knew about two hours ago. **Communication starts with you!**

E-mail comments to manager@ironwood.org.

Troubleshooting Tips

By Andrew Pust

A Review of "The Art of Troubleshooting" (Issue 10)

A good troubleshooter always follows procedure, is willing to learn something new, asks lots of questions of those who already know, and is not afraid to call a professional when necessary. Following are some tips for troubleshooters.

Look, listen, and touch. The majority of problems that we face can be diagnosed without any other tools than our own senses. Think carefully and touch cautiously—if you are not sure if it is safe, keep your fingers away!

Don't jump to conclusions. Use the information that accompanies a reported problem as a guide rather than as a shortcut. It is your responsibility to properly diagnose and correct the problem. Beware of letting a similar problem and its solution from three days ago cloud your thinking.

Start at the beginning. It is usually the obvious that escapes our notice and is often the culprit.

Develop a troubleshooting guide. This tells you where the beginning is, and step two and three and so on. If you follow the guide and prove the correct condition at each step before moving ahead, it will be very difficult to give an incorrect diagnosis.

Admit when you do not know what else to do. There is a time when you must call someone who knows or risk greater cost and possible injury.

managerinministry

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Consider the following things in your pursuit of efficiency.

- **Create a list of immediate savings solutions.** Limit the list to five and focus on those. Sometimes it is the seemingly insignificant things that cost us the most.
- **Go slow.** Do not just tear it all down and start over. All the same, get started. Efficiency is a cumulative process. Start with the item that will make the largest improvement immediately, or start with the improvement you can afford, even if it is not the one you would really like to do.
- **Understand the big picture.** Take time to understand the impact that different components have on each other. For instance, old light fixtures not only use more electricity than modern fixtures, they also generate more heat, which in an air-conditioned space means more work for the air conditioner.
- **Determine payback time.** Find out how long, if ever, it will take for an upgrade to pay for itself. Decide if it even needs to pay for itself. Some things are valuable enough just in being reliable that the payback is not an issue at all.
- **Be a team player.** Every department should have the goal of helping the team fulfill its mission. Be willing to spend funds from your budget that will result in savings for someone else.
- **Do not upgrade your ministry out of the ministry.** The idea of efficient quality means there is a balance point between cost and quality. Figure out where that point is and honor it.
- **Plan carefully before building something new.** The additional cost of efficiency is more easily absorbed in the course of new construction than after the building is completed.
- **Replace dead equipment with something better.** This will mean some research so that you can compare the improved benefits with the difference in cost and make an informed decision. Remember that just because it costs more does not mean it will be better.
- **Teach your colleagues how to help.** Even in this modern day of automation, efficiency is not always convenient. Encourage your team to take the responsibility to properly shut down rooms they are leaving. All the little things left on will eventually add up. ■

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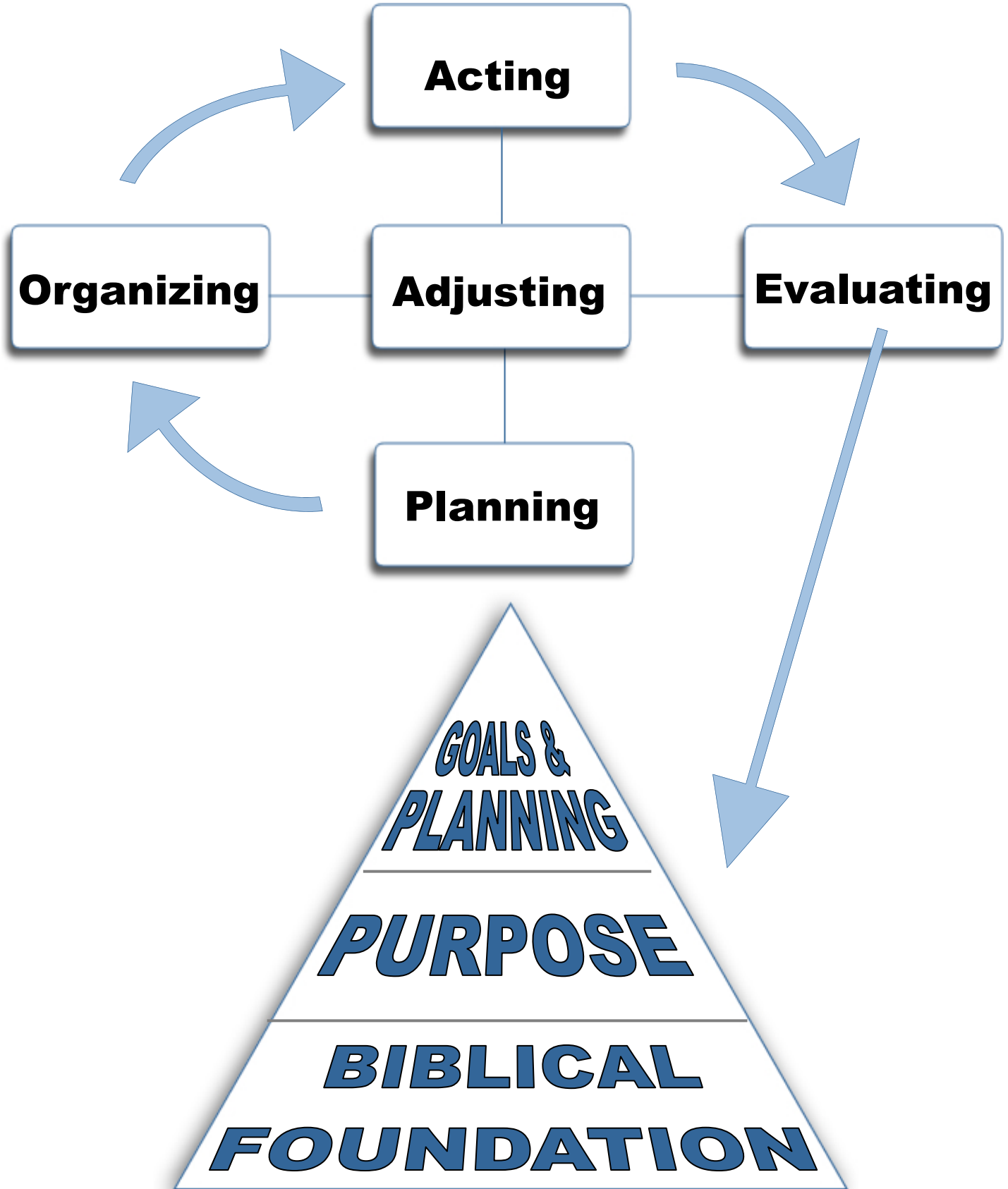
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The Action Cycle



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go: and when he
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