



COUNSEL & CAPITAL

Building bridges between Christian donors and ministries

BREAKTHROUGH EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

All Christian leaders have dreams. Perhaps the dream is to launch a major project or to give money more wisely.

But along the way, every ministry gets “stuck.” Inevitably, problems arise and obstacles appear. Perhaps the problem is obvious, like securing adequate funding or finding the right people. Perhaps the problem is less evident, and it’s difficult to determine why progress isn’t being made.

When organizations get “stuck,” the dream can stall or slip away. Sometimes, the dream slowly dies.

Happily, Scripture offers a solution. There is a strategy to getting “unstuck,” and it is found in the account of David and his dream to build the Temple in I Chronicles 28 & 29.

This passage lays out, in sequence, the six steps to successfully turn a dream into reality.

Step One: Creating an Inspiring Vision

The first step in accomplishing any initiative is identifying the vision. Many Christian leaders do this very well – there are many people with many admirable and worthy goals. Such was the case with David and his desire to build a Temple.

David’s vision was inspiring, a crucial component of a good vision statement. Inspiring ideas attract supporters and capital. Part of inspiring vision is that, if achieved, it will be impactful. In the case of the Temple, it had an enormous influence on generations of people for thousands of years. People naturally want to take part in dreams that are important and impactful.

David’s vision was also clear and succinct – he expressed it in just one sentence. Everyone who heard his vision statement knew exactly what his dream was. It was also measurable – everyone who heard it knew exactly when his dream would be accomplished.

A vision that is inspiring, impactful, clear, succinct, and measurable is the critical first step of turning a dream into reality.

Step Two: Developing a Credible Plan

The second step is planning. Of the six steps, this is perhaps the hardest, and is one which many ministry leaders do poorly. The work of generating a credible plan is all too often undervalued and thus ignored. An inspiring vision creates excitement at the beginning, but a vision without a plan can quickly create confusion or chaos.

Some believe planning is inconsistent with trusting God. But Scripture is full of references related to planning. Even David, “a man after God’s own heart,” presented Solomon with breathtakingly detailed and thorough plans for the building of the Temple.

In fact, Scripture suggests David’s plans included instructions, designations, and specifications for everything from the Temple itself down to the dishes and lamps. This made his plan measurable, addressing the questions of who, what, when, where, and how much.

David also said that all of this, “I have in writing.” Putting plans on paper and in writing is critical – it keeps everyone on the same page, and every part of the plan in one place. This made his plan responsive, so that it could be referenced, reconsidered, and updated as problems arose or progress was made.

A detailed and comprehensive plan, though challenging, creates credibility, clarity, and confidence.

Step Three: Selecting the Right Leader

Though it seems simple and straightforward, proper leadership is critical for accomplishing any major initiative.

The right leader for a project must have good character, and must not only have knowledge, but wisdom too. Both David and Solomon clearly fit this bill.

Whoever is in charge is responsible for at least four major tasks – setting priorities, staying focused, selecting people, and sustaining performance. Failure to execute any these actions well and a dream can be doomed from the beginning.

Also, there must be only one person in control. Success is easily and quickly undermined if there is confusion regarding who is in charge. In the building of the Temple, David was the single point of leadership until he appointed Solomon to take over.

Also, that one person must have the authority necessary to successfully execute a project. No one doubted King Solomon’s authority to build the Temple. However, it is often the case in earthly endeavors that authority is bifurcated, confused, or explicitly given to one person while actually practiced by another. With ministries, such a problem can arise between a board and its CEO, and between a CEO and staff.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the leader must be the *right* leader. Sometimes, the person with the dream isn't the proper person to lead the execution of the dream. This can be an incredibly difficult proposition for some people who struggle to hand the reins to someone else who may be more suited or qualified to lead certain projects. It requires wisdom, humility, and obedience. Even David, who wanted to lead the project, was disqualified by the Lord, who ultimately chose Solomon to take over the building of the Temple.

Selecting the right leader is not always as easy as it seems. But improper or poorly chosen leadership can cause confusion, disagreement, delay, and sometimes, futility.

Step Four: Calling for Initial Funding

Every dream or project requires money. Seeking initial funding is a step that is often skipped, and almost always to the detriment of a dream. But there are significant benefits to soliciting a seed gift first.

Requesting support first from a small cadre, perhaps of family and friends, often provides valuable practice and feedback. And the first gift creates a sense of momentum – it is often easier to raise the last dollar than the first. This is because people invariably have more confidence to join an endeavor that has already engendered some support as it provides credibility.

A seed gift also creates both a sense of importance and encouragement. David no doubt understood this when he said, "I am giving all of my own private treasures of gold and silver to help in the constructions." David led by example, which surely made the next step easier.

Step Five: Going Public

The fifth step is to broadly communicate the message, starting with the same sequence David did: he publically shared his vision, plan, the project leader and his own financial contribution.

David summoned the public – the leaders, commanders, officials, warriors, and other men – and launched into a lengthy description of the major elements of his dream: he explained what he wanted to do, how he was to do it, who was going to lead the project, and that a seed gift existed. Then, and only then did he ask, "Who will follow my example?"

And what happened? "[They] all gave willingly."

Frequently, ministries go straight from sharing a vision or a dream to trying to raise funds and asking for support. Skipping the other steps, or failing to communicate them, can be an enormous mistake.

When David discussed the elements of the project, he was honest and transparent. He discussed not just what was good and exciting, but potential problems and weaknesses too, telling everyone present that his son Solomon was young and inexperienced. Ministries often go to great lengths to hide their weak points or inevitable problems. But to the public, and potential donors, honesty and transparency creates a sense of trustworthiness and confidence.

David shared his project verbally, but he also kept extensive written records. When presenting anything important to others, say it *and* write it – leaving a written summary allows listeners to review what was said and remember what might have been forgotten.

David communicated comprehensively and transparently, and the community was energized, generous, and filled with joy. His communication skills, and the sequence he followed, were instrumental in building community and completing his dream.

Step Six: Sharing Credit

After completing a major initiative, it is easy, and human, to forget to give God the credit. The excitement of the accomplishment can diminish humility, and turn people away from He who deserves the praise and the glory.

When the Temple was finished, David prayed to God, “Everything we have has come from you, and we give you only what you first gave us. . . It all belongs to you.”

Intentional thanks and praise to God reflects the proper relationship between man and his Creator. Humility and respect are demonstrated by giving, not taking, credit. And this should be shown first to God, but also to everyone who helped and participated in the project along the way.

Show gratitude early and often, and be specific and intentional when thanking others. Create a culture of credit for the work that is accomplished, and watch your dream thrive.

The building of the Temple was an enormous and extraordinary undertaking. Its impact on people was and still is significant. The sequence David used to realize his dream is the same sequence that can be applied to any dream, no matter its size or scope.

We believe the six step process outlined in Scripture is a special insight orchestrated by special men for a most special project. If we ignore it, we do so at our own peril. If we follow it, we do God’s work in God’s way.