

LEVEL FOUR TRAJECTORIES



Steward Leaders Marshal Resources effectively

Marshaling means gathering, organizing, and directing resources toward a goal. It's not just collecting—it's aligning and activating what's available for a specific purpose.

- Steward leaders align resources with God's mission.
- They organize time, talent, and treasure for kingdom impact.
- They steward people and possessions with intentionality.

From the book, "The Steward Leader"

For all my work at from avoiding offering formulas and methodologies in these trajectories, I must not fail in this final section. It is so tempting here to talk about processes for helping your organization be greener or ways to improve the use of your land, buildings, and money. When we start talking about *stuff*, it is easy to get specific and tactical. However, even here - and I could say *especially* here we need to continue to rely on the discerning work of the Holy Spirit to guide us into processes and policies unique to our specific community and its mission.

What I can say is that if the Holy Spirit is leading the process, it will be holistic and transformative. That means it will include the stewarding of your organization's time, talents, and resources. It will not be selective or politically correct. It will likely impact

every person in your organization, and it will require you to think in new ways, ask different questions and consider alternatives that may never have been on your radar screen.

When steward leaders look across their organizations, study their budgets, review their policy manuals, walk their properties and check their garbage, they are led through this process of thinking differently.

Stewarding time.

It should start with a new assessment of your organization's stewarding of time. Ask yourself how well you lead your ministry regarding time **(by ministry, it is anywhere God has placed you in society)**. Does your community convey a sense of being both free in respect to time and joyfully obedient in its use of time, for the work of the kingdom? Do your human-resource policies reflect this balance in how employee time is managed, rewarded, and valued? Where is time wasted, and where does the community demonstrate an unhealthy bondage to time?

Some leaders may undertake a "time audit" of their organizations to help answer these questions. For communities in bondage to time, this can be a threatening process. However, until people are set free, institutions and their systems remain in bondage. And if only individuals are set free, they will never be able to operate at their true potential if the systems that govern them continually throw old shackles back on them. Both individuals and institutional systems must be freed if an organization is to use its time effectively for the work of the kingdom.

Steward leaders take seriously their responsibility to be stewards of the way their organization uses time and the way time is understood and valued. And they use strategic planning as a tool of their stewardship. Few leaders would say that they have ample time for their people to achieve the goals they have set for themselves or time to accomplish the mission of the organization. Few if any employees would say they have plenty of time

to do everything required of them. We all take pride in our overwhelming busyness. Yet it is a false and deceiving pride. The tyranny of time drives many good pastors from the ministry and many good leaders from the head office. We set unrealistic goals within too short a time frame and rely on too few resources to accomplish too large a task. We do this believing that somehow this makes us look like we have great faith compared to those with more modest objectives. When we fail or burn ourselves out in the process of "succeeding," we look back and wonder where we went wrong. Some blame God for not showing up. Others blame themselves for underperforming or overpromising. In the end, it is often just a matter of poor stewarding of the institution's time, which can be traced to poor planning.

Good planning begins by honestly looking at how we're using our time—making sure it's balanced, purposeful, and honoring to God. Frantic and anxious activity belies poor planning. Yet many hold up such behavior as a badge of honor. I know leaders who expect their top people to work at a pace that can result only in an imbalance in their life at every level. These hard-driving leaders somehow believe that God will honor and bless a schedule that leaves precious little time for family, spiritual growth, physical care and rest. They work their people as if time was their enemy, and it inevitably becomes so.

Leaders who are not free with respect to time, who carry a sense of ownership of their organization and who tie ministry success to their reputations will invariably lack balance in their life, treat time like a great thief and drive their people to do the same. They may be able to point to a list of accomplishments, but the cost to their people is enormous.

Steward leaders develop strategic plans in a context of what is achievable given a God-pleasing use of time. They pray earnestly to keep pride and selfish ambition out of their planning. If there was ever a time for a leader to say the prayer, "It's not mine; it's yours," it is during the strategic planning process. Often, effective leaders push their

organizations to dream bigger, set their sights higher and dare to risk and step out in faith when they plan for the future. This is fine and appropriate as long as the leader is truly a *steward* leader who is free in his or her relationship to the organization and its future, and who challenges his or her people as an act of pure obedience. Such a leader will always seek to set goals and take risks within a commitment to a God-pleasing use of time. However, if the heart of the steward leader shifts to owner leader, the strategic planning process can be used to raise the reputation of the leader, who has tied self-image to the outward success of the ministry.

How do you steward the time of your organization, and does your planning bear witness to a God-pleasing view of time?

Stewarding talents.

Steward leaders will employ that same freedom in their use of the skills and talents of their people. I mentioned the concept of enabling an *unfolding* of your people as whole persons. Here this idea develops in how the steward leader plans to use the best skills of every person in his employ.

The steward leader also helps people excel in ways that transcend their own beliefs about their capabilities. If you have ever experienced significant growth as a result of great leadership, you know that steward leaders stretch us, challenge us and make us better at what we do. They help us discover new talents and develop our abilities to the highest level possible. They put us in situations where we can rely most often on our most reliable and effective abilities, and in doing so we find not only success but also satisfaction. All this is a stewarding of our people's talents. It is a process of continually encouraging their unfolding.

Here again the steward leader can use effective strategic planning as a tool in the efficient use of people's best skills, matched to their best application. By its very nature,

strategic planning seeks to match the best resources of an organization to the most important issues that will determine its long-term vitality and growth. In writing plans we ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of ministries to develop goals that build on the former and overcome the latter. When we write objectives to address our goals, we assign them to the people uniquely skilled to achieve them, and we provide the resources for those people to be successful.

Marshaling the right people to do the right jobs with the right resources to achieve the right goals at the right time is one of the highest callings of the steward leader. And for that reason, effective strategic planning is one of the highest forms of organizational stewardship.

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