

# CALVIN PLANNING HANDBOOK





# Calvin Planning Handbook

## Introduction

This Handbook is designed to lead you through a process at the end of which you will have a plan.

On the way, you will have identified your

- Values
- Purpose
- Vision
- Goals
- Strategies

You will also have

- An Assessment of your current situation

You will know

- why you want to achieve (Values and Purpose)
- your starting point (Assessment)
- what you want to achieve (Vision)
- how you plan to achieve it (Goals and Strategies)

The only thing required then will be

- Action!

## Why Plan?

This may look daunting and unnecessary. It may also be new and the temptation can be to feel a bit threatened by it.

## Benefits of planning

However, there are obvious advantages in planning:

- Improved decision-making because time has been given to a careful process that has considered many things and involved many people. These are not knee-jerk decisions but decisions based on careful analysis.
- a sense of direction, knowing what God is showing you and where you are heading. Purposefulness rather than simply drifting aimlessly.
- a sense of excitement about the future
- a sense that God has plans for you that He has revealed and that you can anticipate good things happening as a result of having listened and worked the issues through
- unity when everyone understands, and is of one mind about, the direction the church or team is heading in
- much better use of resources and people's time when you know what it is you are trying to achieve.
- much greater chance of success if the issues and problems and practical nuts and bolts have been thought through
- doing something new, not just repeating the status quo

**To fail to plan, is to plan to fail.**

## Other arguments for not planning

The following can be very real reactions people have. Do you think they are genuine reasons for not planning? What might you say in response?

- Fear of failure. What if it doesn't work? We've tried all sort of programmes before and they all fizzle out. Planning will be the same.
  - A history of "good ideas" not producing what was promised does make people cynical about yet another good idea. Prov 13:12 says, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life."

Leaders need to guard against embarking on something that is going to produce nothing and therefore make people that much more cynical. However, planning is a way of seeing hopes fulfilled and of that being a source of new life.

Good planning also reduces the chances of failure because there has been a thorough process of assessing the potential problems etc.

- We've been through a planning exercise before and it achieved nothing. The plan just sat gathering dust.
  - That is a danger and it happens regularly. It is one of the biggest problems with strategic planning. People can be so delighted to have finished the planning process, and so pleased with their plan, that they breathe a sigh of relief and stop at that point. The problem though is not with the plan but with the people. If you want to ensure it doesn't just gather dust, it is up to you.
- Resistance to change. Strategic planning is about change but some people will always resist change.
  - What is the alternative? If nothing changes what will the result be?
- We are not sure we have the ability to make it work. Or, we are not sure our people can do it.

- Maybe the planning process needs to be delegated to someone who can do it. But the leaders must remain committed to it.
  - Other people may need to be coached and nurtured until they have the understanding and skills necessary.
- Time and expense. Strategic planning is a demanding process. It does take time and other resources. If people have any of the above objections, they will also oppose investing these resources into the process.
    - Review the potential benefits. Are they worth the investment?
    - Is there the commitment to applying the required resources to this process?

**Some cautions**

1. Strategic planning will not solve all your problems. You might have to sort out some of your problems before you can develop an effective strategic plan.
2. Strategic planning will not work if the leadership is not committed to it. They won't give it their support. Neither will they commit the organisations resources to it.
3. Strategic planning is a complete waste of those resources if there is not the commitment to then implementing the plan and making it work.
4. You never finish! Strategic planning must be a continuous activity. We live in a fast-changing and uncertain world. The environment is constantly changing. Therefore the plan needs to be adapted regularly.

**Good strategic plans are:**

1. "Owned" by all those with responsibility for implementing them.
2. Creative. They do not simply duplicate the status quo but move the organisation on
3. Simple
4. Flexible – changing in response to changing circumstances

### **What Have We Got Here?**

This handbook contains guidelines and questions to help you discern what God might be saying. There are other forms that you might like to use in conjunction with the handbook.

There is a separate SWOT analysis form designed specifically for churches.

There are two forms on which you can summarise what you have discovered. Please ask for copies. We have:

- A Group identity Form – for recording your Values, Purpose and Vision
- A Planning and Budgeting Form – for recording your Goals and Strategies

You could fill in the forms without using this handbook, however the handbook contains sub-sections with some teaching and some questions for each of the above areas: Values, Purpose, Vision, Goals and Strategies.

The questions are designed to help you identify your own Values etc. in regard to your group or ministry. The idea is to use different ways of looking at it until you feel you are hearing what God is saying and are clarifying your own thinking. When you see important patterns emerging, you are probably discerning what is relevant for you.

Use as many questions as you choose. You can answer them in any order, or all at once if you want to! Just work it through until you see things emerging. If you need extra paper, that is good. Use the questions to tease out your thinking. Feel free to just keep on writing. Listen to God and listen to yourself. You might be surprised by what you hear!

Remember to pray before, and while, answering these questions. Your desire is to hear God's voice.

At the end of these questions is a space to write down your conclusions you have discovered.

### **Please work through the different sub-section in order**

While you might use the questions within any sub-section (e.g. values) in any order you choose, it is important that you work through the sub-sections in the order presented.

There is a very natural progression leading (as mentioned above) through:

- Why you want to achieve (Values and Purpose)
- Your starting point (Assessment)
- What you want to achieve (Vision)
- How you plan to achieve it (Goals and Strategies).

It is pointless trying to identify goals if you don't know what your visions is, and pointless writing a vision statement if you are hazy about your purpose, and so on.

Values → Purpose → Vision → Assessment → Goals → Strategies

For the purposes of a Small Group or Ministry Team it is not necessary to spend vast amounts of time on this. It may be possible to sit down and work through it fairly easily.

There is probably more material here than you will need. Don't work through it slavishly. Pick and choose. Use what is helpful. However, please do work through the different issues (vision, purpose etc) in order as explained below.

Obviously, the more effort that is put in, the more satisfactory the results will be and there may be good reasons for spending more time on some sections because it is important to gain some clarity on those areas. The real desire is to hear God, and that cannot be rushed.

## **Who Should be Involved?**

You decide.

It is essentially a matter for leadership to discern and set direction. It is also quicker and more straight forward with fewer people.

On the other hand, you want your group members to own the plan and that is helped if they feel that have had some input. It is possible for the leader to discern the vision etc but there is also the real danger that others won't feel part of it and won't have any passion for it.

On balance, it is better to take the extra time and effort for it to be a group thing. It might take a long time but you will end up with much more support and "ownership".

Please remember that your Department Leader will be able to work alongside you if you would appreciate that help.

# Calvin's Values , Purpose and Vision

Any group that is a part of a bigger organisation, obviously needs to work within the character of that organisation. The purpose of a smaller group will be one component of the bigger purposes. The values should be closely related. These fundamental aspects of the nature of the organisation are part of the DNA that defines that organisation and should be seen to run through every part of it.

Every department, small group etc. needs to embody the values of the whole church and be part of working towards the vision of the whole church. No group is independent of the bigger picture and we would have to ask questions of any group that was not contributing to that bigger picture.

Below are our Values and Purpose as they stand at present.

## Calvin's Values

One statement of our Values is:

Biblical

- **Biblical**
- **Purposeful**
- **Growing** - individually (to maturity), corporately (to maturity and in numbers)
- **In the world** - visible, effectively meeting real needs, loving and accepting
- **Not of the world** - distinctive, holy
- **Missionary-minded** - putting others needs for salvation before our own needs
- **Supernaturally empowered**
- **A family and a team** - with all that means for relationships, including being encouraging and not critical
- **Real and Realistic** - people of authenticity and integrity, and concerned with truth not wishful thinking

## Calvin's Purpose

**Our Mission is...**

### Helping People Follow Jesus

We have an expanded version that spells out what it means to follow Jesus. The five bullet points reflect the five purposes of the church and the "purpose-driven life"

### Helping People Follow Jesus

- Worshipping God
- Caring for each other
- Becoming like Jesus
  - Serving others
- Sharing the Good News

We believe there are Five Purposes that the church is called to (which are reflected in the Mission Statement):

**Worship**  
**Fellowship** (Belonging)  
**Discipleship** (Growth)  
**Serving**  
**Evangelism**

Our Small Groups will possibly concentrate on one of these purposes but we do ask them to build into their programme something of each purpose.

Plus there are Four Support Ministries:

**Prayer**  
**Leadership**  
**Elders**  
**Administration & Deacons**

## **Calvin's Vision**

The following is an informal "vision" statement that we are using at the moment.

Our vision is to be a church family that is

- 1. Committed to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord**
- 2. Wholehearted and enthusiastic in worshipping God**
- 3. Empowered by the infilling of the Holy Spirit**
- 4. Prayerful, able to hear the voice of God and willing to obey especially when that requires faith in God.**
- 5. Committed to living obedient, God-honouring, holy lives**
- 6. Caring, supportive, generous and encouraging**
- 7. United behind a clear vision**
- 8. Meeting regularly in small groups where members are cared for and encouraged to grow as "doers of the word"**
- 9. Growing to spiritual maturity and depth and regularly exercising the spiritual disciplines, especially prayer and the study of the Bible.**
- 10. Keen to see members grow in knowledge, character and skills**
- 11. Encouraging all members to discover and use their God-given spiritual gifts**
- 12. Serving the community through relevant and effective ministries**
- 13. Passionate about reaching the lost with the gospel and making disciples, in this community and the world, and willing to sacrifice for that to happen**
- 14. Constantly growing in numbers**
- 15. Known and respected in the community**
- 16. Well led by strong, gifted leaders who serve, and empower members in their discipleship**
- 17. Well resourced, having the facilities, equipment and resources that maximise mission effectiveness**
- 18. Structured so that decision-making and action are streamlined and in a way that serves the mission of the church**
- 19. A healing community where people are loved and accepted and where lives are transformed by the power of God.**

Please keep these "big picture" statements in mind as you work on your own function and contribution.

## **Why We Want To Achieve**

# Values

Values might also be called “convictions”. They are the most central beliefs you have that shape your understanding of your group/ministry. They are matters about which you might say, “This is important to me.” or “I believe in...”.

We are dealing here more with the character, or nature, of your group/ministry than with the activities.

**Examples:** A value might be expressed in only one, or a few, words, or they may be a short statement e.g.

- Confidentiality
- The elderly matter to God and must not be neglected by the church
- Unity
- The largest single share of a church’s budget should go to caring for the poor

Each of these are things about which you could say, “We value...” or “We believe...”.

## What To Do

### Pray

- that God will reveal His heart to you.
- that you will know what things are of ultimate importance.
- that he will remind you of relevant Bible passages.
- for clear, Kingdom thinking.

### Exercise

Answer as many, or as few, of the following questions as you find useful. Different questions might bring different things to mind. Be willing to keep grappling with it until you believe you have discovered something worthwhile.

You might like to write each question at the top of an empty page and then, below it, write anything that comes to mind.

- 1. In relations to your group/ministry what would you be willing to fight to the death for?**
- 2. If a new member was added to your leadership team, what attitudes or actions would frustrate you?**
- 3. If you were writing an advertisement for your group/ministry, how would you describe it?**  
**And how would you like to be able to describe it (i.e. what values do you still hope for)?**
- 4. What are the core beliefs that drive this ministry? Make a list of statements that begin “In relation to my group/ministry I believe that...”**
- 5. What are the most basic, fundamental reasons you are involved in this work?**
- 6. What Biblical passages are important to you when you think about the character of your group? What characteristics are described in those passages?**
- 7. If someone wanted to change the way you do things, what aspects would you consider non-negotiable and refuse to change? Make a list.**
- 8. If someone was starting a group/ministry similar to yours, what advice would you give?**

**Summarise**

Review everything you have written down. Look for patterns. What issues emerge as the key ones? What different, but related, statements could all come under one heading? Write your summary list of Values.

**Prioritise**

Put them in order of importance. Now write your list in the box below.

**Double Checking**

Describe how each value is actually expressed in the life of the group/team now. How would an observer actually know that these things are valued?

Do your answers indicate that a) anything you thought was valued , isn't actually or b) that there are other things that are held as being important values?

**Summary: Values**

List your values as they have emerged through this exercise. You might want to list them in what seems to you to be their order of importance.

Now, transfer this list of Values onto the Group Identity Form

# Purpose

Use as many, or as few, of these questions as you need to be confident that you know what your purpose is.

Your purpose is your reason for existing. It is your God-given calling. It is your mission. There are many things that need to be done, but you are not called to do them. These questions should help you hear God's voice about what you are called to do. Pray, and listen for the voice of the Spirit.

|   |
|---|
| <b>What To Do</b>   |
| <b>Pray</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• for clarity in determining what God is calling you to do</li><li>• for the ability to identify those things that are merely distraction</li><li>• for a sense of excitement about God's calling on your life</li></ul>  |
| <b>Exercise</b> <p>You might like to write each question at the top of an empty page and then, below it, write anything that comes to mind.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. Write a paragraph beginning, "My group/ministry exists to..."</b></li><li><b>2. What line of business are we in?</b></li><li><b>3. What does the Bible have to say about the role of groups such as ours? List as many as seem relevant and identify the key elements.</b></li><li><b>4. What does God want us to do?</b></li><li><b>5. How do we know that that is what God wants us to do?</b></li><li><b>6. What is the unique calling my group/ministry has that no other group has?</b></li><li><b>7. If someone asked us to take on a large undertaking that wasn't part of what God has called us to do, how would we explain our reasons for saying "no"?</b></li></ol> |
| <b>Summarise</b> <p>You may have covered lots of different things or expressed them in a number of ways. Before you write a final Purpose Statement, you should try to summarise all you have said in one paragraph that shows the connection between the various components. Then try to write it in one sentence. That is your Purpose Statement.</p>   |

|   |
|---|
| <b>Check</b>  |
| A good Purpose Statement should be <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Biblical (if it is for a Christian setting)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Clear and accurate. Do you know exactly what your purpose is, and what it isn't?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Practical – easy to understand in everyday terms. Would someone know what it means in practice?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Short enough to be remembered and passed on to other people</li></ul> |

## Purpose

Write down your Purpose Statement (or Mission Statement)

Now, transfer this Purpose Statement onto the Group Identity Form

### **An alternative approach – Problem-solving**

Andy Stanley says that the problem-solving approach gives a sense of urgency and purpose for a team. The team is aware that if they don't do something, something won't happen. While there is a problem to be solved, there is a reason for the team to exist.

Questions to ask:

1. What is the problem?
2. What won't happen if we don't do what God has called us to do?
3. What problem that won't be solved in our community if we don't do what God has called us to do?

Once the problem has been identified, the team plans to solve that problem.

The problem is essentially the other side of the purpose and possibly, the vision. It is not necessary but it would be possible to work from the problem to state a purpose statement and a vision.

The plan for solving the problem can start from the statement of the problem and work through goals and strategies as described later in this handbook.

## **Our Starting Point**

# SWOT Analysis

A key part of successful planning is an honest assessment of how things stand at the moment. As with any journey, the only place you can start is where you currently are. There is no point developing a plan that ignores the current realities.

A simple but useful outline for such an assessment is provided by SWOT. You simply list your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

You will want to make your assessment in the light of your Values, Purpose and Vision. Keep referring back to these. Ask yourself questions raised by what you have already written.

For example, if your values include "action rather than all talk" or "being honest and vulnerable with each other", your analysis will question how well those values are being implemented.

Likewise, if your Purpose includes "to introduce people to Jesus Christ" then you will want to assess how successful you have been.

Try to express your analysis in specific terms rather than generalised statements. If this is not your first attempt at planning, then you will have last years goals to review. They should have been expressed in terms that are measurable and so you will be able to do the measurements and see whether or not you have met those goals, or even exceeded them.

You may want to get feedback from the rest of your group or team. This adds a perspective other than your own and increases the objectivity of the assessment. If you do this, you may just want to use the headings, or a different set of questions. The ones listed below are designed to help the team reflect.

## What To Do

### Pray

- for the ability to make an objective, honest assessment (not unrealistically positive or unnecessarily negative)
- for insight into what God is saying and wisdom to filter and assess what other people are saying
- for the ability to think outside the square when it comes to the opportunities and to see the doors that are standing open

### Exercise

All you need to do is write down the following four headings, then prayerfully list the relevant matters under each one. Use the questions only if they are useful.

- **Strengths**
  - What do we do well?
  - What is it that people most appreciate?
  - Of all the things we do, which ones move us forwards the most?
  - Within our personnel, what are the strengths and spiritual gifts that people have?
- **Weaknesses**
  - What are the main causes of frustration, discontent or complaint?
  - Can we pinpoint what is hindering our effectiveness?
  - What important skills are missing from our team?
- **Opportunities**
  - What doors seem to be opening for us at the moment?
  - What needs can we see? Do these constitute an opportunity?
  - Brainstorm: What are the possibilities – even the wild ones?
- **Threats**
  - What is standing between you and your vision?
  - What are the challenges we are facing?

- What might we be afraid of?
- What are the costs associated with our Vision?
- Who, or what, could stop us being effective?
- What (theoretically) could undermine your ministry?

## **What We Want To Achieve**

# Vision

Your vision is what you can see. It doesn't exist yet but you can still see it.

Your vision is what you can see your group/ministry being like with God's help.

Leaders can often see the possibilities long before other people can. That is one of the characteristics of leaders. They are visionary. They are not happy with the status quo. They can see something better and they want to go for it. The leader then needs to share that vision in a way that other people also begin to see it and want to be part of accomplishing it.

Hebrews 11:1 defines faith thus: "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." You can see that vision and faith are closely related. A vision is also something we hope for yet do not yet see. Many dreams are unrealistic. There is no guarantee that wild ideas will come to pass. However, a God-given vision is something that can become reality. That is why God has given the vision! For Christians to have confidence about their dreams, the dreams will have come from God. They will have been discerned in prayer.

The other necessary component is that we are willing to aim for that vision, working hard and trusting God.

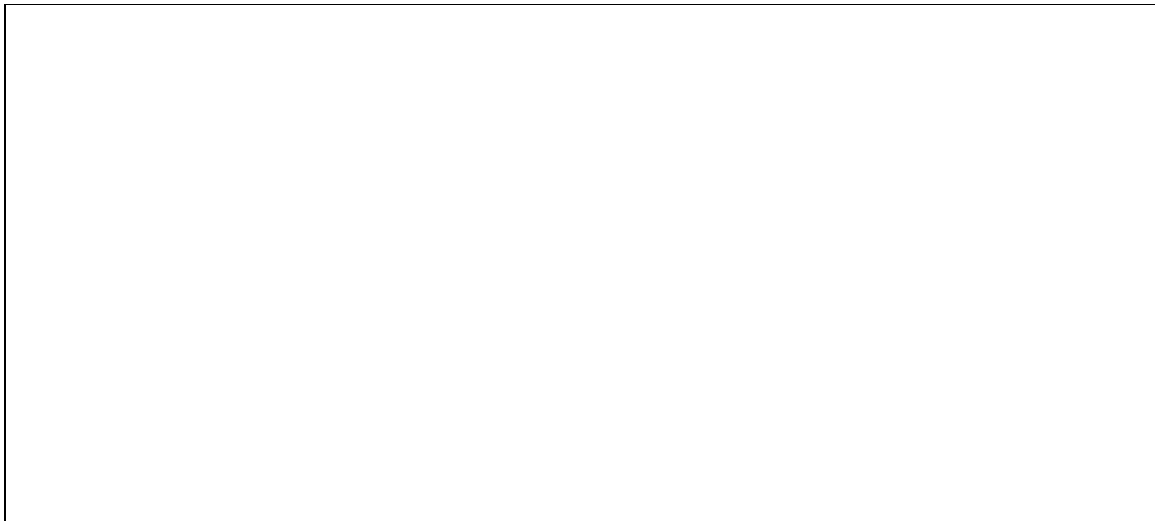
## Two types of vision

### The Ultimate Vision (Ideal)

A vision may be an ideal towards which you are moving. It may be a picture of the perfect situation. There is real value in visualising your goal and knowing what you want to be like. In many ways, the Bible gives just that sort of vision – for both our personal lives and our group or church lives. It is a good idea to write down this ultimate vision. It will possibly resemble your list of values, although maybe not.

#### **My Ultimate Vision or "Ideal"**

- 1. If you want to, you could review your list of values and write a description of your group/ministry in an ideal world. What would you and God like to see this group being and doing?**
- 2. What would it look like if we were fulfilling our mission statement perfectly?**
- 3. If you could snap your fingers and know that you could achieve anything in your group, what would it be?**
- 4. What do you think is on the heart of God for your group/ministry?**
- 5. What Biblical principles are most pertinent to your group at the moment? Are there some passages through which God is speaking at the moment?**
- 6. What do you regularly pray for, for your group?**
- 7. What about your group/ministry would give you a real buzz? What could you get really passionate about?**
- 8. In words (or using art) draw a picture of your group/ministry, working really well.**



**You can skip this section if you want to!**

A time-limited vision, depending on how it is expressed, can be very close to a set of goals. We look at goals next, so you can simply leave it until then.

The value of completing this section is simply to approach it from two different angles. If you don't want to, jump straight to "Testing Your Vision"

**The Time-limited Vision**

The second type of vision is more specific and limited. It is your vision of what you think your group/ministry could look like in a specific time e.g. in one year's time. (For the purposes of Small Group and Ministry Team planning at Calvin we are interested in a plan for the next year. Therefore the vision is also related to the next year.)

This vision will be a scaled down version of the ultimate vision. It will be a realistic, but inspiring, view of the progress that might be made in a certain time.

The main purpose of this handbook is to discover a vision for a particular planning period.

Use as many or as few of the following questions as you need, to hear what God is saying should be your vision for the next year. Answer each question in terms of the next year.

**What To Do**

**Pray**

- that God will let you see what He sees and that you might be inspired by it
- for the courage to believe in a big vision and for the overcoming of your natural fears
- that your mind will be transformed and your thinking guided by the Holy Spirit

**Exercise**

You might like to write each question at the top of an empty page and then, below it, write anything that comes to mind.

This is the time to be bold enough to catch God's dreams.

Do not worry yet how the vision will be achieved. That comes later. Your vision is simply your God-given picture of what it would look like.

You could use any of the questions above (Under the ideal vision section) adapting it to apply to the time period you have chosen (e.g. one year from now). And/or use the questions below.

- 1. What would it look like (in x years time) if we were increasingly fulfilling our mission statement?**
- 2. In a years' time I would like to be able to look back and say, "I am thrilled with these changes"?**
- 3. Choose two strengths, two weaknesses and two opportunities from your SWOT analysis. What would your organisation look like if those strengths were built on, the weaknesses were improved and the opportunities seized?**

**Summarise**

Consider now how you might take all these answers and combine them into one vision statement. Try drafting it and re-writing it until you sense you have captured the vision.

## Testing Your Vision

This page should be completed for your "ideal" vision *and*, if you have done it, your time-limited vision.

### Vision

Write down your vision for your group/ministry.

### Check

- Does your vision excite you? Do your eyes light up and your heart start pumping harder?
- Would it capture the imagination of other people and make them want to be involved?

Now, transfer this Vision Statement onto the Group Identity Form

### Vitally Important Check

#### Is your vision consistent with your Values and your Purpose?

A person might say, "My vision is that, in a year's time, everyone in my group will have memorised 50 Bible verses and will be actively involved in discipling one other person." That would be an admirable vision. There is nothing wrong with the vision. However, if the God-given purpose of that group is "to provide a non-threatening context in which lonely people can find genuine friendship" then the vision is inconsistent with the purpose.

Likewise, if one of the values of this particular group was "that we serve our group members, asking nothing of them" then the vision is great but not consistent with what has already been determined.

Please, go back and be absolutely sure that this is true.

### Optional (but very valuable) exercise

This exercise will be of value only if you are able to be honest with yourself in discerning your own motives

1. Ask yourself why this is your vision. Why would you want to achieve this? Write down your answers.
2. Look at your answer and again ask "Why?"
3. Keep asking "Why?" until you have boiled it down to some fundamental reasons.
4. Compare these reasons with your Values identified earlier. If your underlying reasons are not the same as your stated values, you might want to re-think what you have written and what your motives are.

Don't be afraid of starting again from the beginning. The purpose is to think it through, hear God speak, and know that what you have written is the honest result.

## **How We Plan To Achieve It**

# Goals

To see your vision become a reality you will need to identify a number of goals that you will aim for. The goals are the manageable stepping-stones to the vision.

Many of the goals may fall very naturally out of the Vision. For example, if the vision included something about the future size of the group, or about numerical growth, then one goal may be an attendance goal.

Equally, if the vision included something about the spiritual maturity of the members, then there will need to be some specific goal related to spiritual growth.

Each individual goal addresses only part of the vision but together they should be designed to be the steps towards realising the vision.

## S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Goals should be

- S**pecific
- M**easurable
- A**mbitious but **A**chievable
- R**elevant
- T**imetabled

**Note:** some would argue that forcing goals to be S.M.A.R.T. is overly complicated. They say it is sufficient if goals are **Measurable** and **Timetabled**. This might provide a simplified approach if you prefer it.

### Specific

Make sure that you have a clear understanding of what you want to achieve. It needs to be pinned down much more than a general statement.

### Examples

"I will become a better person" is so general as to be virtually meaningless. What does "better" mean? "Better" in what ways? Somebody reading that goal would still have many questions.

"Improved business performance" is not specific. "Adding five new customers each week" and "Reducing overheads by 20%" are quite specific.

### Ask yourself

- Have I thought this through sufficiently that I am clear about what I want to achieve?
- Which words or phrases are vague and raise questions?

### Measurable

How will you know that you have reached your target, or are heading in the right direction?

You must be able to measure your progress.

### Examples

"Lose weight" is not measurable because we haven't specified how much weight.

"Lose 2kg" is measurable (assuming that you also recorded the starting point).

### Ask yourself

- How will I measure this goal?
- Am I measuring the right things?

This is not as straight-forward as it seems. It takes considerable thought to know that we are measuring the right things. For example, an obvious thing to measure is the membership of a church. But obvious isn't necessarily useful. The membership might be out of date or it might be inflated with members who play no significant role in the

church. A more realistic measure might be worship attendance. At least that shows some form of commitment.

But even then we might ask what level of commitment is being measured. Does this really tell us about the health of a church (assuming that it is health that we are interested in)?

Might a better measure be the number of people involved in small groups? Even that might not be what you really want.

The point is that it takes some insight to know what are the right things to measure.

You might ask yourself:

- What are the key things that demonstrate we are achieving the results we want?
- We might think we are measuring a particular thing but are we really? what might be distorting the information we are receiving?
- What assumptions are we making? Are they valid?

If you discover that what you are measuring is not the best indicator of what you want to achieve, you will need to rethink the goal until it is.

- Is this giving me all of the information I need?

### **Ambitious but Achievable**

Goals should be ambitious. If they are too small they will not be worth pursuing. Successful people dream big dreams. Significant goals attract the attention of people who like a challenge.

Christians are not limited by what is practical because they believe in miracles. If God is suggesting big goals, we should not dismiss them and opt for small goals. If God is suggesting big goals, God will bring those goals about. Christians desire to set "faith goals".

Note, however, that they are faith goals only if the goal has come from God in the first place. Grandiose human schemes are not faith goals and do not have God's blessing.

The balance is maintained by "ambitious but achievable". An unrealistically ambitious goal will result in failure and discouragement. A plan that contains unachievable goals does no good.

Achievability might be achieved by breaking a big goal down into smaller sub-goals. See below.

### **Examples**

"My goal is to lose 5kg by tomorrow" - ambitious but probably unachievable and very unwise.

"I hope to have lost 0.1kg in a year's time" - achievable but small and therefore uninspiring.

"I will finish this history essay by tonight" - unachievable if the preliminary work has not been done.

"I will have got the books I need from the library and have written an outline for my history essay by tonight" might be much more achievable. Adding goals such as "having the first draft finished by next Thursday" and "completing the essay by 5 p.m. on Saturday" illustrates the setting of sub-goals that lead to the successful completion of the project.

### **Ask yourself**

- Does this goal require any faith? Am I living by faith or can I accomplish it without God's help?
- Is God calling me to something bigger than this?
- Has God said "yes", or is it merely a human dream?

### **Relevant**

Relevance refers to the appropriateness of a goal.

#### Ask yourself

- Is it part of my job?
- Is this the right time for this particular goal?
- Does it fit with our Values, our Purpose, our Vision as already discerned?
- Is it where we are at? Does it fit easily with our SWOT analysis?
- Does it fit with our current capabilities, or is it unrealistic for us at this point?
- Is it going to help us achieve what we want to achieve at this stage?

#### **Timetabled**

Set a target date for accomplishing this goal.

It can be changed later, in the light of how things progress but at least you have something to aim for and a deadline to try to reach. This builds in some accountability. The target date is sitting on your piece of paper, staring at you.

If there is no target date, it is too easy for it simply to become something that will be done "one day".

Do not adjust the date too readily. That defeats the purpose of having it.

#### **Interrogate Your Goals**

Be ruthless at this point. Ask your goals lots of questions so that it is clear exactly what is intended and how it is intended. Ask Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

The following are particularly important.

#### **Who?**

Ensure that each goal is assigned to someone who will take responsibility for it. This is vital. If no one is specifically responsible for it, no one will take responsibility for it.

But there are other who questions e.g.

- Who are we going to be reliant on?
- Who do we need to get permission from?
- Who is likely to oppose this goal?
- Who do we need to consult for advice?

#### **What?**

Although there is no room for it in this simplified process, you might benefit from asking questions such as:

- What is the cost associated with this goal?
- What resources are we going to need?
- What is the benefit going to be if we achieve it?
- What is the worst that can happen if we don't achieve it?

#### **When?**

- We have already talked about setting a target completion date. However, you might also ask:
  - When will we start?
  - When will we get delivery of the resources we need?
  - In what sequences do we need to do things so as not to run into unnecessary delays?

#### **Why?**

Again raises question of our motives and questions about relevance.

#### **How?**

The goals are the "how" when it comes to "How are we going to accomplish our vision?", but there might also be how questions about the goals. These are unpacked by looking at sub-goals and strategies.

### Sub-goals

If the goal is a biggie, you might want to break it down into sub-goals to make it more manageable.

For example, if a goal was "to increase profits to \$2,000,000 by 31 March next year" then there might be a series of sub-goals that would make that possible. For example, the sub-goals might be:

- To increase total sales by 20% by June 30 and by another 15% by 31 December
- To reduce maintenance costs by 50% by replacing machinery older than 7 years
- To increase the advertising budget by \$15,000 by 30 June.

In this example, even the sub-goals are possible quite large and could be broken down another level, but you probably won't need to worry about that. For our purposes, a set of goals is probably sufficient. Our forms don't have space for sub-goals but do remember that this may be important.

All that applies to goals also applies to sub-goals. For example, are the goals and sub-goals mentioned above specific, measurable, ambitious but achievable, relevant and timetabled?

#### Calvin Small Groups

As you set goals, please remember that you are asked to include in your programme something of each of the five purposes: Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Outreach.

### What To Do

#### Pray

- for wisdom to identify the steps required to accomplish the vision
- for the ability to express your goals in such a way that it will be helpful later
- for a balance of realism but also faith

#### Exercise

Use extra paper. Write down some possible goals. Play around with them.

- Are they SMART?
- Will they lead to the realisation of your vision?
- Do they fit together OK or are some conflicting?

#### Prioritise them.

You may not be able to do everything you would like to in the next year. Identify those goals that are most important or are going to bring the greatest benefits. Eliminate some of the lower priority goals if they are not going to materially help.

When you think you have a good set of goals, that fit the criteria, write them on the Planning & Budgeting Form – one goal per form.

For the purposes of Small Group and Ministry Teams we are possibly talking about a maximum of 4 goals and maybe fewer. Don't feel overburdened by this, and don't feel that you have to come up with an elaborate plan that is unrealistic.

# Strategies

It is pointless having goals but not having practical ways of accomplishing them. These are your strategies. How can we accomplish this goal? What do we need to do to accomplish this goal? What actions do we need to take? What resources will be needed and how will we get them?

For each goal, list the following. This is the time to be specific about how things are going to happen and to build in some accountability for those things happening.

- **What?** What needs to be done.
- **Who?** Again, it is important that you know who is responsible for each strategy. A strategy actioned by no one will achieve nothing.
- **When?** Also, make sure you have a target completion date. You might also want to specify other dates as markers of progress i.e. certain steps towards this goal will be done by these dates. It will just keep you accountable and keep you on track.
- **How much?** What resources are required? Can they be obtained? How? If not, is this goal realistic?
- **Next action.** This is a very useful tool. For each goal, specify the next action (and who is responsible for it, when it should be completed etc.?) This needs to be constantly updated. As that action is completed, what is the next step?

## **A Simplified Example** (there would actually be more to it than this)

**Vision:** to run a holiday programme that is fun and challenging for the children but also provides an opportunity for them to hear the gospel.

**Goal 1:** To attract at least 50 children for the first day and for each subsequent day's attendance to be bigger than the previous day's

**Strategy 1** Tom to build a team to design advertising by 30 April

**Strategy 2** Dick to have advertising printed and distributed through schools by 15 May

**Strategy 3** Harry to approach all school about Drama Team involvement in assembly, by 30 April

**Strategy 4** Drama team to perform in assemblies, by 15 May

**Strategy 5** Mary to organise for army display outside hall on first day, by 30 April

**Strategy 6** Jackie to ask Art Group to decorate the hall with Commando theme

**Goal 2:** to have a full programme involving challenging team-building exercises, a devotional slot and afternoon tea

**Strategy 1** Alice to get team to provide food each afternoon, by 31 May

**Strategy 2** Julie to produce roster of people willing to do devotions on theme of leadership, by 20 May

**Strategy 3** Bruce to liaise with Army re team-building event for each day

**Goal 3:** that parents of at least 50% of the children attend on the final night

**Strategy 1** Noelene to produce a newsletter for the children to take home each day of programme

**Strategy 2** Creative Ministries Team to prepare high impact programme for last night (8 June)

## What To Do

### Pray

We are now getting down to the nitty-gritty. The practical implementation of your plan depends on defining what needs to be done and wisdom in allocating people, resources and setting deadlines.

- Pray for the skills to manage this process well.
- Pray for unity in your team and a willingness to work hard and work together

### Exercise

For each goal, think about the different things that will need to be done to accomplish that goal. Make sure you have covered everything you can think of. For each goal there will be several strategies.

On the Planning & Budgeting Form write down what needs to be done, who will do it, the target date and the estimated cost.

This section of the plan needs to be the most flexible. In the midst of working on it, it may become apparent that some things were forgotten, and now need to be added, or that there are other suggestions that now seem useful. Do the best job you can now to make sure everything is covered but keep monitoring progress and keep asking how best to make progress.

**After planning your work you must work your plan**

# You Now Have A Strategic Plan!

## Congratulations

Only one more thing is required

### Action

The planning does not get the work done. The planning only helps us clarify our thinking and hear what God is saying. That process is incredibly valuable but, at this stage, the plan is simply words on paper.

It is a valuable document because it can give the impetus and the focus to see great things happen. It provides a blueprint and clarity about what you want to do, why you want to do it and how it can be done. But the plan doesn't do the work. That is still waiting.

Put the work in and, because you have put the effort into planning, you will see results that will be a major blessing to you. Congratulations on being willing to put that effort in.

### Review

You will need to keep monitoring progress. That enables you to assess how well you are going and to make mid-course corrections where necessary. Don't be afraid of modifying your plan. The world is changing so fast that it is almost impossible to predict the future. Be willing to adapt as you go.

Try to avoid, however, the temptation to make your goals smaller just because there are difficult patches along the way and it is apparent that it is going to require hard work. Don't lose your vision and be content with small results.

**If you aim for the stars, at least you might hit the moon.  
If you aim for the moon, you might hit only the earth.**

The major review will come of course at the end of the planning period when you see how much you have achieved. In most instances that will be when you go through this exercise again in a years time.

Then, you probably won't need to work on your Values and Purpose again (unless you want to modify them). You will simply need to consider your Vision for the next year and how you are going to achieve that.

The fact that you do review your plan, is vitally important. Obviously, there is no value in working hard developing a plan and then never looking at it again, but, surprising as it may seem, many groups have done that.

By reviewing progress, your plan becomes the blueprint for seeing your dreams become realities as you and God work together.

We now have an 8-step process

Values → Purpose → Vision → Assessment → Goals → Strategies → Action → Review

And you've just done six of them!

You might remember this sequences with the mnemonic:

**V**ictorious **P**eople **V**irtually **A**lways **G**o **S**ingle-mindedly **A**fter **R**esults  
Or  
**V**ibrant **P**eople **V**isualising **A**dventurous **G**oals **S**ee **A**wesome **R**esults

God bless you.

## Appendices

## Appendix A

### Should Christians Plan?

There might be some nervousness about planning. Is this something Christians ought to do?

- Shouldn't we just leave everything up to God? Isn't it forcing God's hand?
- This has been imported from the business world where the motivations are completely different. It is not appropriate in a church or Christian organisation.

#### **Bible passages that appear to condemn planning**

How are we to understand these passages? They do appear to be negative about planning.

*Psalm 94:11            The LORD knows all human plans; he knows that they are futile.*

*Proverbs 19:21        Many are the plans in a human heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.*

*Matthew 6:34           Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

*James 4:13-17        <sup>13</sup> Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." <sup>14</sup> Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. <sup>15</sup> Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." <sup>16</sup> As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. <sup>17</sup> So then, if you know the good you ought to do and don't do it, you sin.*

#### **Bible passages that commend planning**

On the other hand, there are passages in which planning is expected, commended or even commanded.

*Luke 14:28-33        <sup>28</sup> "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? <sup>29</sup> For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, <sup>30</sup> saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'*

*<sup>31</sup> "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. <sup>33</sup> In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.*

In this passage Jesus assumes that a wise person would spend time planning ahead and weighing up the options. It would be foolish to start a project and not be able to complete it or to embark on a campaign that turned out to be impossible. The whole point of these illustrations was to teach that potential disciples should think first and weigh up the cost before committing to following Jesus.

In Luke 16:1-9 Jesus told a story about a shrewd Manager who planned ahead. His methods were dishonest but Jesus was simply saying that the people of the world are more "strategic" than Christians often are. Jesus commended using our heads and working out how to achieve things.

Consider also the following Proverbs

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <i>Proverbs 12:5</i>  | <i>The plans of the righteous are just, but the advice of the wicked is deceitful.</i> |
| <i>Proverbs 14:15</i> | <i>The simple believe anything, but the prudent give thought to their steps.</i>       |
| <i>Proverbs 15:22</i> | <i>Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.</i>            |
| <i>Proverbs 16:3</i>  | <i>Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.</i>           |
| <i>Proverbs 20:18</i> | <i>Plans are established by seeking advice; so if you wage war, obtain guidance.</i>   |
| <i>Proverbs 21:5</i>  | <i>The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.</i>   |

### **Examples of strategic thinking in the Bible**

There are also many Biblical examples of people acting very strategically. Being strategic is simply about being clever or wise in how we operate. Generally the strategies employed by these leaders came directly from God. It is practical wisdom; how to do something well. God says if we need it we should ask for wisdom – ask for a plan.

- Although it is not a Biblical term, we talk about God’s “plan of salvation” meaning that God had a plan from before time, that he implemented primarily with the incarnation and ultimately the cross.
- **Jethro** shared with **Moses** a strategy for exercising leadership without getting bogged down by it. As a result more was accomplished by using the manpower resources more effectively.  
It was a strategic move sending spies into the land.
- God gave **Joshua** a strategy for conquering Jericho.
- **Nehemiah** took time to survey the scene and to develop a plan. He secured resources. When he was ready he cast the vision of a restored Jerusalem and organised the people very strategically, appointing leaders and assigning tasks.
- All **military leaders** develop strategies – some better than others. But notice also how often Israel’s leaders benefitted from simply listening to God’s strategies which were sometimes very unconventional. They were strategic but it was God’s strategies that they needed to hear.
- **David** was one such military leader and strategist. He needed men who could think and plan strategically and God gave him the **men of Issachar** whom 1 Chron 12:32 says were “men who understood the times and knew what Israel should do”.
- **Jesus** was strategic in many ways:
  - He knew the importance of time alone with God – part of His strategy
  - In some times of danger He withdrew
  - He chose to invest most of His time and teaching in twelve men
  - He very deliberately “set His face towards Jerusalem”
  - He was very clear about His purpose. He frequently talked about why he had come and could do so clearly and concisely
    - To fulfil the law and the Prophets (Mt 5:17)
    - To call the righteous (Mt 9:13)
    - To give His life as a ransom for many (Mt 20:28)
    - To preach good news to the poor etc (Lk 4:18-21)
    - To preach the good news of the Kingdom (Lk 4:43)
    - To bring fire on the earth (Lk 12:49)
    - To seek and to save what was lost (Lk 19:10)
    - To save the world (Jn 3:17; 12:47)
    - For judgement (Jn 9:39)
    - That you might have life and have it to the full (Jn 10:10)
    - To testify to the truth (Jn 18:37)
- **Paul** was very strategic in his mission

- He chose to go where Christ had not been preached
- He had plans even to go to Spain
- He spent long periods in major cities at important crossroads where many would hear the gospel and it would spread rapidly
- He always took trainees with him
- He planted churches
- He appointed elders in the various places churches had been established
- He had a letter-writing ministry to give encouragement, further instruction, and correction

It would seem that the Bible teaches and contains many examples of praying, thinking and planning strategically. God expects us to plan and be strategic about how we are going to accomplish.

### **What about those negative passages?**

The passages quoted above that might seem to be negative about planning are not saying "Don't plan" but talk about *how* we plan. We need to heed their warnings about how we plan.

Psalm 94:11 does seem to damn all human planning. Human plans are futile. However, in the light of passages such as those above, can we conclude that this verse is saying all human plans are futile? Is it not that this verse is saying that those plans that are merely human are futile. The psalm shows is about those who are wicked and arrogant. It is their plans that are futile.

Proverbs 19:21 says that people dream all sorts of dreams but God determines what happens. God is sovereign. This emphasises the need to discern God's plans. It is only those plans that will ultimately succeed or will achieve anything worthwhile for the Kingdom of God. We can come up with all sorts of ideas but they are worthless compared with hearing what God is asking us to do.

It is seeking God's plans that makes strategic planning for Christians vastly different from secular strategic planning.

In Matthew 6:34 Jesus is not saying that we shouldn't plan for tomorrow but that we shouldn't worry about tomorrow. Worrying is particularly unproductive. In this passage (read verses 25 to 34 to see the context) Jesus emphasises faith in God's love and provision rather than us either worrying about what we need or being focused on providing for ourselves. Verse 33 says that God will provide if we focus on His Kingdom and righteousness. It is not about planning at all but about worrying or focusing on the wrong things.

Indeed, the focus on the Kingdom and righteousness might suggest the need for planning! How are you going to "seek first" God's Kingdom? What will you do? What will your priorities be?

Although James 4:13-17 might seem to suggest that planning is arrogant since we don't know the future, the passage actually says we should plan! Look at v.18. We should talk about what we plan to do but that should be qualified by "if it is the lord's will". In other words, we need to be humble enough to recognise that we are not in control of the future and that we don't even know what the future will bring. We should have plans but those plans should be held lightly and should be very flexible. If circumstances change or it doesn't work out as we anticipated, we need to change, or even abandon our plans, recognising that we got it wrong.

We might learn the following from these passages:

1. Our human plans are of no significance. Our task is to hear God's plans and to make them ours.

2. Planning is not a way of ensuring we get what we want. It is God's plans that will prevail.
3. In planning we need to identify priorities. Are we seeking what is important – what God says is top priority? And are we trusting God for everything else?
4. We do not know what the future holds and we shouldn't talk as if we do. We need to be humble enough to say, "We plan to do such-and-such *if that is God's will.*"
5. Because we do not know the future, we need to be humble enough to say, "We got it wrong. Things didn't turn out as we thought they would."
6. Plans need to be flexible. If, part way through the period covered by the plan, circumstances change, the plan must change.

## Appendix B

### An Alternative Approach

#### Bottom Line

The following is developed from "Skill 11: Enjoy The Return of Bottom-Line Thinking" in John C. Maxwell's book, Thinking For A Change. My knowledge of it is limited to my understanding of that chapter. This therefore should be seen as only an introduction that requires more thought and research.

1. What is the bottom line? What is the one thing you MUST do? (If other things didn't get done, it wouldn't matter but if this one thing didn't get done, you would have failed.)
2. Be sure that bottom line really is the bottom line. Try to identify any issues that might be clouding it or distorting your thinking.
  - Your wants. Your selfish preferences
  - Emotions that might cloud your judgement, e.g. fear of the cost, fear of other people's reactions.
  - Any politics that might influence your perception, e.g. other people's expectations or pressures.
3. Focus everything on that bottom line. Talk about it frequently.

#### Develop a plan for achieving that bottom line

4. What core things must be done to achieve that bottom line? Identify those things that simply MUST be done – without which the bottom line cannot be achieved. Note: each individual bottom line must contribute directly to the organisation's bottom line.
5. For each of those things determine the bottom line. What is the one thing that function MUST do?
6. Express that one thing as a bottom line goal. How will you measure that that function is succeeding?
7. Measure accomplishment against that bottom line goal frequently and determine whether changes need to be made in order to achieve the goal. If so, make those changes.

#### Repeat this process.

8. If it is useful, break each function down into its core parts and determine the bottom line for each of those.

#### Align all team members with the strategy.

All team members should know

- a. The overall bottom line
  - b. Their own part in achieving it
9. Identify each person's bottom line. What is the one thing this person MUST achieve? (Be sure that it is clear how this bottom line contributes to the overall bottom line.)
  10. Express that one thing in a bottom line goal. How can you measure that this person is contributing to the degree desired?

11. Measure accomplishment against that goal frequently. Do changes need to be made to improve performance? (N.B. this might not reflect poor performance on the part of the individual. It might be that he/she needs more support e.g. more encouragement, more training, better resources...)

### **Example 1**

Consider the automotive industry. The following is completely imaginary. I know very little about this sort of industry but it might illustrate the process.

**Bottom line:** Sell new cars to customers who will be very satisfied with their purchase

The next question is how that is going to be accomplished. What are the core functions required to sell new cars and to ensure that the customers are satisfied? You must make the cars, sell them and provide after-sales service.

### **Core functions**

Three core functions have been identified: manufacture, marketing and after-sales service and a goal formulated for each. For illustrative purposes manufacturing has been broken down into further core functions, each with its own goal.

#### **a. Manufacture**

- a. Goal: to produce x cars in the next year

#### **Core functions**

##### i. Design

1. Goal: to produce three new designs in the next year that will exceed customer desires for a new car

##### ii. Production

1. Goal: to incorporate the new designs and to manufacture x cars in the next year

#### **Core functions**

- a. Design of machinery for manufacturing process
- b. Maintenance
- c. Sourcing of raw materials

##### iii. Human Resources

1. Goal: to maintain a happy work force such that there is less than a 10% turn-over in the next year

#### **Core functions**

- a. Recruiting
- b. Training
- c. Salaries and other means of keeping employees satisfied

#### **b. Marketing**

- a. Goal: to sell y cars in the next year

#### **c. After-sales support**

- a. Goal: to satisfy all customer needs, 80% of them within 48 hours

### **Example 2**

The bottom line of a children's ministry might be: to nurture children in the growth of their faith

How can that be accomplished? The core functions might be: teaching and the pastoral care of the children.

How can teaching be accomplished? How does one provide excellent pastoral care of children? They are huge questions. Considerable research might be required to know what

the core components of effective teaching and effective pastoral care of children might be. But once identified, a goal can be assigned to each one.

### **Comparison with the system presented in this handbook**

#### Bottom line = Purpose

Determining the bottom line is equivalent to determining the organisations purpose or mission i.e. the one thing it is called to achieve.

Identifying the true bottom line assumes knowledge of one's values. It is values that lie behind eliminating the emotional or political distortions.

#### Core functions = an additional component

The core functions are an additional feature. They break the purpose down into key areas.

#### Goals = goals

The development of goals etc is then similar to the previous method but is carried out within each core function which possibly provides a more manageable way of doing it. The key is to keep each core function aligned to the overall bottom line.

In summary, this method is essentially the same but possibly has the advantages of identifying the core functions and of more of an emphasis on results. It has the advantage too of defining only one goal for each section of the organisation.