

Churches Need Project Management Too ¹

Latoya Morris, PMP

Introduction

Do churches have goals and objectives? Do they have stakeholders? Do they implement projects and initiatives? Yes, Yes, Yes. Why then do so many churches not realize their need for project management. Project Management adds to the success of any organization's ability to successfully launch projects and initiatives. I would say that there is a stigma within the church that Project Management is too corporate, or too rigid/structured. There is a misconception still within some churches that structure takes from the ability to move with the spirit. That is not the case, project management provides some structure so that churches can meet its key spiritual goal which is to spread the gospel.

When churches start realizing that while their purpose may be "higher" than your average organization, they are still very similar to most organizations, they can then start to see the need for Project Management. Here are four ways that Project Management can support the work of the church.

1. Supporting the Implementation of the Strategic Vision

Pastors, rabbis, priests, etc. are trained spiritual leaders and advisors. They are educated in Biblical principles, counseling, theology and the like, but are they also trained as organizational administrators? In most instances, the answer is no. Often churches are blessed with Board Members or Elders that have experience with business planning and oversight but that is not always the case. The leader of the church, with the help of perhaps the church board, develops a strategy for the church that aligns to their bible principles and organizational focus; but who ensures the oversight of the development and the strategy?

The Bible says, write the vision and make it plain. It also says to count the costs. I translate that to writing the vision and determining the needs (funds, people and expertise). The Bible also says that we can know a tree by the fruit it is bearing. Wait, this means that we should be taking stock of what is going on – or in other words assessing/evaluating how this tree, this plan, this initiative is doing.

The Strategic Vision is the entire lot of activities and plans. It can be a lot for the churches spiritual leader to ensure that the flock is properly fed, communicate his or her vision, and then ensure that it is carried out and manage it. Program Management

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(the management of multiple projects with the same strategic focus) would be essential in working with the church leader and Board to map out the strategic vision and manage it. The Program Manager would assist in ensuring that the following are considered and then manage those aspects.

- a. What is our church's key focus?
- b. What are the programs, projects and initiatives needed to reach our key demographic and share our message?
- c. What is the timeline for these goals, who will carry out these projects, and what are the measurements of success for each?
- d. How did we perform this quarter (evaluation of the initiatives)?
- e. Where do we need to refine and improve and how?
- f. Do we need to alter this strategic vision and our approach?

2. Operational Delivery

How are we operating? Do we do the same things again and again, yet we continue to do them differently each time? Do we miss or forget steps? Is there anxiety when performing standard operations? Are the roles and responsibilities clear? Project Management can help a church implement repeatable organizational processes so that volunteers can more easily support activities, operational activities are planned and implemented on a manageable timeline, and church resources are maximized and used efficiently. Project Management can also help the church to build efficiencies into their organizational processes or evolve by integrating and applying lessons learned across activities.

Operational Project Management can also ensure that the operational activities have the needed volunteer support and funding, as well as utilization of existing church resources from other operations or initiatives.

3. Church Initiative Planning and Implementation

A key function of project management is to properly plan and implement initiatives. A project manager can help a church to develop a framework for implementing new initiatives. How? By working with the church to develop a standard repeatable process for prioritizing and selecting new initiatives, capturing the needs of the initiative, developing an implementation plan and executing. A project manager will help the church ensure they are on track with spending which is key to maintaining the fiduciary responsibility of the church. A project manager will also help to plan for and manage risks that could delay or hamper the success of the initiative. They can also assess what is needed to realign the initiative when not on track and course correct when the objective is not meeting its goals.

4. Communications Planning

All churches are trying to reach all kinds of people with a variety of different messages and purposes. Churches are attempting to reach older people, younger people, families, singles, existing members, new members, visitors, stakeholders, community partners, volunteers, you name it. Project Management includes a focus on communication management and stakeholder awareness. This is key in considering the messaging needed for different audiences: content, style, language, delivery mechanisms and even the message itself; and then finding the best tools and approaches to delivering it. Effective communications cannot be a one-size fits all approach.

Project Management does not have to be an expensive church cost. Churches don't have to spend money on high-priced labor or fancy IT-software packages. Inexpensive MS Office tools can be used to support project and program management activities. Project Management labor can be sourced out by the project or for a time period. This is essentially Project Management as a Service (PMaaS). It can also be led by an experienced Project Manager that is a member of the church willing to support the need as an unpaid volunteer. Informational links and downloadable resources are offered on many Project Management Associations and Consulting Firms sites as well.

About the Author



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Latoya Morris, PMP, is a 20-year veteran in organizational consulting covering training, management, quality and compliance. For the past 5 years, Ms. Morris is the Chief Member at Integrity Consulting Experts, LLC, a small management consulting and Instructional Design firm that has provided organizational management consulting, quality implementation and various types of training for various Federal government agencies and corporate entities. Ms. Morris has been published by the Project Management Institute (PMI) multiple times on a variety of project management topics ranging from resource management, diversity and inclusion, and mental health. She has also been published in Training Industry and Training Magazine. She has spoken to continuing education students and professionals at Georgetown University for PMI's University of Project Management. Ms. Morris is also a published author in the international journal, "The Upper Room" and author of "Grace in the Moment: Daily Devotions for Business Women".

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