

Planning a Think Tank

Set up the Think Tank in a large room with round tables throughout. Each area of ministry should have its own space. Offer meals as an encouragement and as a thank you. The key leaders of each ministry area (staff or volunteer) should bring summaries/reports from the major events held during the previous year and any Major Event Notebooks they've used.

After an opening prayer, spend the first half of the Think Tank evaluating the overall success of the past year of ministry. Invite the ministry groups to spend a set time discussing and filling out each section of the Ministry Evaluation Form.

Each table should receive a Ministry Evaluation Form to be filled out by the group. A good form includes the following:

- Name of the ministry (e.g. outreach, children's ministry, youth ministry, music ministry, newcomer's, stewardship, women's ministry, men's ministry, etc.)
- A list of its key volunteers
- The ministry mission statement
- One-year benchmarks (based on three-year revolving goals)
- A list of all events sponsored by the ministry during the previous year
- A brief synopsis of each event (what went well, what didn't, did it meet the objective, should it be repeated, should it change, etc.)
- Were the benchmarks met? Why or why not?
- A year in review section that highlights the successes of the ministry

Filling out the evaluation forms should be an interactive process. After each section, invite each team to come up and share some of the thoughts the group discussed. Invite other ministry teams to give feedback to each group. Each section might take different amounts of time, but there should always be enough time after each section for the groups to share with the larger group to get feedback. Overall, this should take about four hours. Be sure to provide a couple of ten- to fifteen-minute breaks. This is hard work!

The ideal time to wrap the first half up is at mealtime. Each group should have completed the evaluation form, and sharing a meal together can be cathartic after evaluating the good, the bad and the ugly.

After the meal, gather everyone back together again in their same ministry groups. Now the fun begins! Give each group a Ministry Dream Sheet, a set of Ministry Game Plan Templates and Blank Major Event Notebook Forms.

Ministry Game Plan Templates should be three two-three pages total that flesh out the following details:

- Assets to Leverage or Challenges to Address
- Rationale (or case)
- What's currently happening
- Decisions to be made
- Help needed (staff or otherwise)
- Expectations of others
- Calendar space needed
- Database needed (if any)
- 6-12 month implementation timeline

The Ministry Dream Sheet will be what guides the second half of the Think Tank. A good Dream Sheet should include the following:

- Name of ministry
- The ministry mission statement
- A new one-year benchmark (for the upcoming year)
- Steps needed in order to meet the benchmark by next year
- A list of the ministry's major events for the upcoming program year (with dates, if known)
- Objectives for the major events

After the groups have filled out the Dream Sheet (shouldn't take more than 45 minutes), ask each to share with the larger group, inviting feedback and input from everyone.

Next, according to the information on the Dream Sheets, invite each group to develop a solid game plan using the blank game plan templates you provided. If something needs to be reimagined based upon the event and ministry evaluation forms, a solid game plan should be completed. However, if an event has been determined to be exactly what the church needs with little change, a game plan doesn't necessarily need to be filled out. Instead, the group should update the Major Event Notebook and prepare it for the next Major Event Coordinator.

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