

How Do We Measure Success?

by Mark Koscak, Providence Academy

Implementing a development program at a Christian school is a lot like sharing the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our job is to share the Good News and to glorify God, and it is the Holy Spirit's job to convict the hearer. We are not, and cannot be, responsible for the results. There are times the person will be humbled and accept Jesus as their Savior, there are times a person will nicely put you off, and there are times they will laugh in your face!

As a development director, it can be tempting to try to be the Provider. As our confidence grows, as our strategy and tactics improve, we can be lulled into thinking that there is a direct relationship between effort and results; i.e., for every three people I ask for help, I can expect one to say yes. The problem is that God doesn't give us a formula, and God retains the title of Provider no matter how hard we try.

What Does God Require of Us?

1. Share the good news about the things that God is doing in your ministry.
2. Help people see the needs in your ministry (volunteer, prayer, financial).
3. Invite them to join God in His work at your ministry.
4. Follow up.

Henry Blackaby's Bible study, *Experiencing God*¹, was a great help to me in learning about development. He said to watch where God was working and to join Him. As we are diligent to watch where God is working and as we are diligent to join Him, we will

experience Him through His work.

How Do We Implement These Requirements?

Share your passion! It is exciting to be in the middle of God's work at Providence Academy. There are two aspects to sharing the passion: the heart and the mind. As you tell stories that connect with a person's heart, you help them to get excited about God's work at your ministry. As you share the quantifiable aspects of the work, you show how the work is making a difference. Our goal in sharing our passion should be to connect at a heart level and at a mind level.

Know Your Market. Many people will say, "Hey, there is a guy in so-and-so, and he has millions of dollars. Go see him to see if he can help." Sounds good doesn't it? "He gave a million dollars to the Christian Blue Hat Society," they continue. It's as if they think he is just waiting for you to knock on his door, so that he can invite you in for cookies.

Most people with this type of affluence have numerous levels of screeners, and they typically say, "Don't call us; we'll call you." Don't get me wrong, there may be an opportunity, and God can provide in many ways, but I wouldn't spend a high percentage of your time on the "Hail Mary" play. The bottom line is relationship. Who are the most likely to give?

- Parents
- Grandparents
- Businesses where parents and grandparents work
- Friends and relatives

- Vendors
- Others that have a relationship with the school

Keep a database. Keep information on every relationship that you have. It should include name, address, phone number, email address, relationship information, past giving, pledges, and contact history. At Providence Academy, we currently use eTapestry© fundraising software as our development database.

Develop Back Office Support. Organize your effort so that thank you letters and pledge reminders are sent on time. Ensure that the giving and contact histories are captured. Record address changes and new contacts. Remove outdated information.

Match People to Their Gifts and Passions. There are many gifts within the body of Christ. Some people have the gift of helping, some have the gift of prayer, and some have the gift of giving. As we identify people's gifts and passions we can plug them in as volunteers, prayer warriors, or givers. Over time, you will find that many who help via prayer or volunteering become givers to the ministry as they become invested in what God is doing in your ministry.

We need to find ways to glorify God and to share our passion with our whole database. Yet, God has gifted some people to be givers. He gifts these people to fund His kingdom in a greater way than the average person. He also expects them to be wise stewards. They will naturally need more attention to ensure that they are being wise. They will ask more questions, have more concerns,

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and need regular updates. We need to develop relationships with these people and to keep them up-to-date on good news and needs.

In a similar way, God has given some people great influence. We also need to keep them up-to-date with good news and needs. People in either group (those with affluence and influence) probably need a periodic update via a personal meeting where their interests and questions can be addressed and where solicitations can be made.

Communicate. Share the good news and the need with your market via an organized plan. We give God glory when we share the good news about the work that He is doing at our ministry. We are faithful when we show people how they can get involved in His work. Develop a plan for sharing the good news and the needs.

Find ways to share information with parents:

- Send out emails
- Publish newsletters
- Mail appeals
- Meet with the parents of new students
- Conduct periodic school-wide parent update sessions

Find ways to share with grandparents:

- Include grandparents on the mailing list for newsletters
- Publish a newsletter for grandparents
- Plan events that will focus on grandparents
- Send appeals through mail

Communicate with businesses:

- Include businesses on the mailing list for newsletters
- Develop advertising opportunities

Thank your supporters.

- Mail a thank you letter to every giver
- Call givers periodically to express your appreciation
- Send an occasional personal note
- Mail a copy of a student newspaper with a note
- Send a thank you note or piece of art from an elementary student

Develop a one-hour tour of the school

- Share your school's history
- Share your "God stories"
- Share your curriculum
- Share what it means to be a Christ-centered and classical school
- Develop a presentation that lets the students show off their knowledge through chants, songs, recitations, etc.

Questions to Consider as You Gauge the Development Effort

1. Do the parents, grandparents, businesses and friends in your constituency know the good news regarding God's work at your ministry?
2. Do they understand the need for a Christ-centered and classical school?
3. Do they know how they can get involved?
4. Do businesses have a way to advertise?
5. Do you thank everyone that helps more than once?
6. Do you have a process that is designed to capture the appropriate information on your ministry's family of friends and have you organized the back office support to maintain prompt communications?

Of course, the bottom line is important, but it reminds me of the great verse Psalm 37:4, "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart." As you delight yourself in the Lord by sharing the good news (the things God is doing in your ministry), as you help people see the needs in your ministry, and as you invite them to join God in His work at your ministry, you will find that God works through your diligence.

NOTES

1. Henry Blackaby, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville: Lifeway Press, 2008).