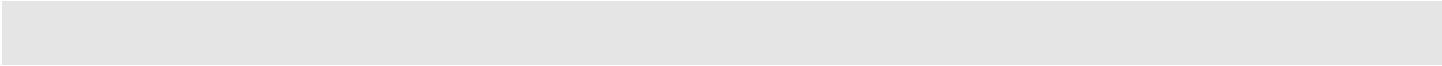


# Developing a Church Planting Plan



• • • • • • • • • •

From *How to Really Create a Successful Business Plan*  
by David E. Gumpert



A Church Planting Plan (CPP - also called proposal or prospectus) is a document that convincingly demonstrates that your church can provide a service significant enough to become a viable ministry and to be attractive to potential members.

1. It also becomes a means of enlisting partners, developing financial backing, and gauging potential interest.
2. It is useful to attract Church Planting Team members, to build unity of purpose and direction within the core group.
3. The plan becomes a sanity or reality check.

A CPP helps leaders to deal with questions like “are we on sound financial footing” and “do we have compelling reasons to continue?” A church needs to develop a strategy, target a ministry focus group, focus on service quality, and attend to basic business matters. The CPP can help focus persons with different agendas and interests on the common task of launching and developing a healthy church.

There are a couple of temptations facing Church Planting Teams in developing a CPP. The first is simply, “Why go to all this trouble? Why not just go plant the church and not worry about the details?” David Gumpert says, “One point to be emphasized about planning in general is that plans don't always work out as expected...

At the same time, it's important to emphasize that the chances of achieving your goals are much greater if you plan your approach.”<sup>1</sup> The second temptation is to take someone else's CPP—like some fill-in-the-blanks form. While this is tempting, it is not wise. The church planter

---

<sup>1</sup>David E. Gumpert, *How to Really Create a Successful Business Plan* (Boston: Inc. Publishing, 1994), 23.

can benefit from studying other CPPs, but the best course is to do the hard work of developing the strategy for the church God has called him to plant and then develop a CPP unique to the planter and that ministry. There are several samples of CPPs on the Church Planting Village Website and some outlines for CPPs in the Appendix.

**Contents** of a Church Planting Plan: There are a number of ways to put together a CPP but most have these common elements.

**Summary:** This is the CPP in miniature. This is not an abstract, an introduction, nor a preface. It focuses on the issues that are most important to success. Is the timing right? What is the strategy? Will it be effective? It is no more than a two-page summary of what makes your church tick.

What does the summary do for you? It helps crystallize your thoughts, set priorities, and provide a foundation for the plan. For the reader, it should capture attention and encourage further reading.

**The Church:** What is the current status, future strategy, goals, and actions to achieve the goals? A plan should guide the strategy and operations and address constituencies of growth.

**The Ministry Focus Group:**

**Service:** What is offered that makes it special and attractive? “To be successful today, it’s almost a prerequisite that businesses are doing at least one or two innovative things.”<sup>2</sup>How will the church do worship, discipleship, small groups, and ministry?

---

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 34.

**Promotion Plan:** How does the church intend to reach its focus group and enlist them (direct mail, telemarketing, etc.)? Specifically, what will be the evangelism plan and marketing (or communication) plan?

**Leadership:** Who is involved in the leadership team? What is their background and experience? Can the focus group identify with them?

**Finances:** What are the expectations of resources for the present/future? What are the financial needs and cash flow?

An important consideration is what Mo Siegel calls “gap analysis.” He defines this as “The assumption if you simply continue doing what you are doing the prior year, you will lose 10% or more . . . because of competition . . . and/or attrition. . . . Gap planning . . . forces you to do more and think bigger.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Key Questions for developing a CPP**

What is the underlying philosophy and logic?

1. Strategic Planning Elements: Vision statement, core values, and mission for the church.
2. Strategic Execution Plans: This is an overall approach to service and ministry development and includes goals and action plans to achieve those goals. Identify the expectations for growth. There needs to be sufficient information to make strategy believable.
3. Strategic Support Resources: Technology/information assessment, physical resources in place, and that they are still needed.
4. Strategic Leadership Team: What are members abilities and how are they to relate?

---

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 51.

Two common mistakes made in putting together a team are “the one man band” syndrome or having everyone from the same background, with the same giftedness or personality type. Focus on real-life experiences and accomplishments, identify special knowledge, and make the most of resources.

Who is the ministry focus group? How have they informed your evangelism and marketing strategy? Marketing is not just selling or promotion. Marketing is:

1. Identifying your prospects.
2. Determining how best to reach them.
3. Going out and making it happen.

Key marketing questions: What are real and felt needs of your focus group? What needs are being created by change? What are members of your focus group buying (not just what do you have to sell)? How do the services of the new church benefit? Focus on benefits rather than features. The best benefits are those that favorably affect people's feelings, add value to life, or enrich their life.

Market research is required. Do enough potential customers exist to make the new church a viable ministry? Where are they located? What/who is the market specifically (specific niche)? Is it growing or shrinking? Is planting a new church the best way to reach this group? Will the new church be financially self-supporting in three years? Generally speaking, a do-it-yourself approach to market research is preferable to hiring an outside market research firm.

Know your competition: Keep in mind that the new church will not be operating in a vacuum. Who are your competitors for people’s time and allegiance? (Do not think of other

churches as your competition.) Social, cultural, and recreational competitors demand their time and dollars as well as “the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desires for other things” (Mark 4:19, NIV). Do not take this lightly. Also, a void in the market is not necessarily a good sign. It may mean that the market is not receptive to the service/product? How will your church compete? Will it be by offering a better product, higher quality service, a new service – what is a competitive advantage? Also, just because one or two new churches have started recently does not mean the market is saturated!

What service are you offering?

1. The ministry focus group and what it values should impact the particulars of the ministry or service. Let the focus group impact your characteristics. The focus group cannot determine the message. That is set in the Word of God, but it will impact the method (packaging) of the message.
2. Given the fact that a market exists and is receptive, can you deliver what you promise? One of the worst things to do is to fail to produce the service on time or meet the quality standards expected. It is easy to fall into the trap of trying to offer too much. In the CPP, make a list of the major features that make you distinct in the marketplace. There is no better way to turn off a prospective member than to fail to deliver the service you promise.

How will you reach new people? How is the competition reaching people? What are the usual outreach approaches in the area? The outreach effort must be cost effective and get the attention of the prospect. Four issues to consider are:

1. Who will be outreach force; pastoral outreach force, member outreach representatives, mass distribution, direct/telemarketing, or a combination?
2. What training will be provided for those in outreach? What is the cost in time and money? A key principle is “better training, better outreach.” Money skimmed here shows up in disappointing results.

3. Is the outreach plan supported with a variety of materials and incentives?
4. How will you create a positive public image? This is an essential part of an outreach effort.

After determining the ministry focus group, determine which media will best reach that group.

How are we doing financially?

Financial issues tend to be unpopular among church planters. In starting a venture with no previous financial history, be careful about financial projections that you are not able to justify. Like other entrepreneurs, church planters “. . . tend to be optimistic and to treat their upbeat expectations as fact.”<sup>4</sup>

1. Explain assumptions.
2. Consider several scenarios: expectations, best and worst case scenario.
3. Avoid “spreadsheetitis.”
4. Use sound financial accounting procedures.

Financial statements serve a much larger purpose than impressing bankers or venture capitalists. They are important monitoring and planning tools.

Another segment of the financial plan is how the church will develop stewardship and financial responsibility among members.

### **Tailoring the Church Planting Plan**

Since the CPP is a communication document, think about who the audience is. “When

---

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 185.

you know your audience, you can 'speak' to those readers in terms you know they want to hear.”<sup>5</sup>

“The key concern is to prepare the Church Planting Plan making sure that it is tailored to the interests, needs, and fears of the readers.”<sup>6</sup> Once you have determined who you are addressing

“you need to consider what – and how much – that the audience really wants (or needs) to hear.”<sup>7</sup>

Who are the potential audiences?

1. Prospective church planting churches.
2. Potential workers or pastoral leadership team recruits.
3. Denominational workers.

For some of these people, a straight forward document with the message is all that is needed. For some audiences, pictures of the planting family or Church Planting Team, a picture that typifies the household portrait, a map of the area, and other pieces that help people see the plan—more pictures, less words—will be important. Many planters find it easy to move from this document to a brochure that communicates the plan for the new church and targets the ministry focus group.

---

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 172.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 173.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 175.



APPENDIX  
OUTLINES OF CPPs

Solid Rock Fellowship

- Who We Are
- Our Vision
- Our Goals
- Our History (intro of church planting family)
- Our Needs (budget and partner needs)

Mosaic

- Need for the Church (ministry focus group and why plant this church)
- Style of Church (vision, mission, core values)
- Strategy for the Church (plans and broad stoke countdown calendar for launch)
- Cost of the Church Plant (not simply projected budget but ministry justification)
- Current Partner Commitments
- Current Staff Plans

EastPointe

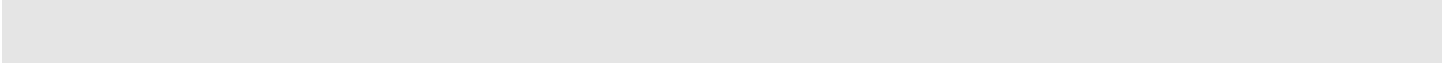
- Our Family (church planting couple and children)
- Our Story
- The Need (for the church in this community)
- The Challenge (combined focus group and partner needs)
- The Church (vision and values)
- The Partnership (opportunities for prayer, mission projects, and financial support)
- The Wish List (specific needs in preparation for launch)

Northstar

- Our Strategic Direction (rationale based on Bible and focus group needs)
- Our Core Ideology (vision, core values, “the way we do church,” and structure)
- Our Leadership (staff plans, volunteer ministry plans)
- Our Essentials (Statement of Faith and Practice “Baptist Faith and Message”)

RiverOaks

- Our Vision
- Our Focus Group
- Our Ministry Priorities (core values)
- Our Plan (countdown calendar to launch)
- Our Partnership
- Our Staff
- Our Proposed Budget



## Community Church

Why another church?

What kind of church will it be?

Where will it be located?

When will all of this happen?

Who will begin this work?

How will the church begin?

(Two appendixes, planter's resume, and first year's budget)

## NewSong

Our Strategic Principles (vision, core values, and focus group)

Our Strategic Process (connecting principles with functions of church life)

Our Strategic Plans (personnel of church and calendar of ministry plans)

Our Strategic Partners (current partners and opportunities for expanded partners)

## Bibliography

Gumpert, David E. *How to Really Create a Successful Business Plan*. Boston: Inc. Publishing, 1994.