The New Metrics:
How Do They Look in Your Church?

By Lois Swagerty
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Overview

Article Summary
Changing the scorecard is a hot topic among missional leaders these days. It seems as if everyone is talking about how the church should change its metrics of success. Books such as Reggie McNeal’s Missional Renaissance and Ed Stetzer’s Transformational Church are fueling the dialog. Within Missional Renaissance Leadership Communities, the new scorecard targets the shift from an internal to an external focus and from program development to people development.

Further Reading
Taking Your Church Missional: What Does it Cost the Leader?
by Lois Swagerty

Leading ones church in a missional direction may be easier said than done. Along with the rewards come risks—both personal and corporate. In an informal survey, church leaders identified 10 key areas of cost in taking their church missional. They answered the questions: What does missional leadership look like?

Churches in The Missional Renaissance: Facilitating The Transition to a Missional Mindset
by Stephen Shields

There is a new Spirit-breeze blowing through many churches—a missional renaissance. These churches no longer exist primarily to expand and improve their own organizations but to transform their communities. By combining practical service and a clear communication of the gospel, these churches seek to expand the kingdom beyond their four walls. There are many compelling stories of how this new emphasis began in each of these churches and also what they are doing today to expand their vision.
Leadership Network • The New Metrics

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New Scorecards

Changing the scorecard is a hot topic among missional leaders these days. It seems as if everyone is talking about how the church should change its metrics of success. Books such as Reggie McNeal’s *Missional Renaissance* and Ed Stetzer’s *Transformational Church* are fueling the dialog. Within Missional Renaissance Leadership Communities, the new scorecard targets the shift from an internal to an external focus and from program development to people development.

But changing the scorecard is easier said than done. “It’s the hardest thing to do,” Reggie says. “Spiritual leaders are great as idea people. But when we ask them how they know the shift to people development is happening, it’s not as easy. If it were easy, everyone would be doing it.”

“Scorecarding is difficult,” agrees Jay Madden, Pastor for Mission at Peachtree Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, GA (www.peachtreepres.org). “It’s challenging because it’s hard to measure the development of people. If you’re just counting attendance or money, that’s pretty easy. But when you start trying to measure life change, it’s a lot harder.”

New Strategies

“You can’t keep a new scorecard if you don’t have new scorekeepers,” says Charles Anderson, Directing Pastor of University United Methodist Church in San Antonio, TX (www.uchurch.tv). He launched a unique assignment called “The Wal-Mart Project” to create people with missional eyes. “I asked every church leader to spend one hour a week in Wal-Mart looking for Jesus,” Charles explains. “When you talk about being missional, people don’t get it. When I changed the question to ‘Where did you see Jesus?’ it was terminology they could answer.”

If they still couldn’t answer, he asked, “Is Jesus not there at Wal-Mart, or are you not used to looking for him the way he is disguised there?” For instance, Charles was amazed by
the number of people waiting in the prescription line. He says, “I began to wonder, What if one of these is Jesus? What’s he doing here? Is this the only place he can afford to get prescriptions?”

Charles asked his leaders to journal their experience and write down three implications for the purpose and priorities of their church. Using their insights, he will preach a sermon series called “Meeting God at Wal-Mart.” “Then I’ll have the congregation do the same assignment,” he says. “After each sermon they’ll turn in a card saying where they saw Jesus. In this way we are changing the collective mentality.” (Read more about the project at http://blogs.uchurch.tv/charles/)

Another strategy is to use pictures. Dave Bartlett, Senior Leader at Orchard Hill Reformed Church in Cedar Falls, IA (www.orchardhillchurch.org) says his church sponsors hundreds of children directly and indirectly through partner organizations, both locally and overseas in Haiti and Mozambique. “Even though the support money doesn’t flow through our church, we include it in our scorecard,” Dave says. “We’ve put pictures up of each student we sponsor in our atrium. It’s a wall of faces. By the time we add all of our six communities of influence, the number is well over 500. A lot of congregations wouldn’t think of it as a scorecard, but it’s where we changing lives.” He observes, “Many of the effective scorecards that are going to move your congregation will be visual.”

Gary Dolan, Executive Pastor of Rivertree Christian Church in Masillon, OH (www.rivertreechristian.com), believes that people development starts with the leaders. He uses a tool called the Huddle, which he took from a book by Mike Breen entitled Building a Discipling Culture. “A huddle is nothing more than a leader taking responsibility for coaching other leaders in the context of a small group,” Gary says. The first step will be for each staff member to participate in a huddle and then to lead a huddle of others. Rivertree is also hiring a Pastor of the Discipling Culture to develop staff and establish missional communities throughout the church.

At Gloria Dei Lutheran Church near Houston, TX, (www.gdlc.org) Senior Pastor Greg Finke uses five questions to help measure spiritual formation in his congregation:

1. How do you see God at work in your life?
2. What is God teaching you in his word?
3. What conversations are you having with pre-Christian people?
4. What good can we do around here?
5. How can we help you in prayer?

Greg says, “We meet weekly in Neighboring Groups where we hold each other accountable and support teach other in missional living. We use the questions as self-assessment for our people to stay focused and on-target.”

While some churches use questionnaires similar to the REVEAL™ survey from Willow Creek, others track spiritual growth through response cards. At University United Methodist, each person receives a card to choose their next level of commitment—a Bible study, small group, or weekend retreat. The cards become a way to locate, track and prescribe for their people. Charles Anderson says, “We’re not counting how many members we have. Instead, we’re counting how many people are on the pathway to discipleship. The point is not to make members, but disciples.”
New Statistics

Another aspect of changing the scorecard is changing what statistics are kept. “I love statistics,” says John Seybert, self-proclaimed “numbers guy” and Director of Operations at Peninsula Covenant Church in Redwood City, CA (www.peninsulacovenant.com). “You can make stats say whatever you want. It’s all in how you define success.”

Craig Heselton, Executive Pastor at Vineyard Church of Columbus in Westerville, OH (www.vineyardcolumbus.org) says they’ve begun to measure the idea of partnering—joining forces with numerous organizations in the community in areas such as health care, education, financial aid and food distribution. Their prolife ministry, Value Life alone comes alongside 450 women in unintended pregnancies each year. “Of those, 40% become Christians and over 99% carry their babies to term,” he says. “Virtually every hospital and health services agency in the city refers people to us, so we can track our favor rating in the community by the number of referrals we’re getting.”

Diversity is another category assessed. “We believe the church ought to reflect the community around us,” says Craig. “We’ve intentionally begun to track nations and diverse people in our congregation. In 2002 we were around 10% diverse, and today we’re 26% diverse. At last count, 94 different nations were represented in our church.”

At Vineyard, they also track the percentage of churched and nonchurched persons in their programs. “We are creating climates for people to engage with the unchurched,” Craig says. “Part of the mission of Christ is getting Christians into meaningful relationships with non-Christians, so we track our percentages in every program we run. If it’s too low, we just become a social agency.” He says that a 50:50 ratio of churched to nonchurched is optimal target.

Lead Pastor Matt Hammett of Flood Church in San Diego, CA (www.diveintoflood.com) believes that the best evidence of a changed life is greater service to others. “Coming up with the metrics is challenging,” he says. “We want to measure not just how many programs people are involved in, but substantive life change. Rather than asking how many are participating in an outreach project, we are now asking how many people from the community are also a part of the event. We are trying to increase our relational engagement.”

To increase their relational engagement at the local high school, Flood Church launched a tutoring program to come alongside students spiritually, socially, emotionally and academically. They target students who are underachieving and underperforming. Matt says, “One measurement is development of relationships with more students on campus, really knowing them personally and knowing their stories.”

Matt admits they are learning as they go along. “We used to give out a laptop computer to students when they graduated. We found it’s better to give it to them their junior year, because it helps them academically to lay a foundation for college and it also establishes a relational connection with them before they go off to college.

To hear more about how the Flood Church make an intentional shift from working in their community to working with their community click here or download the Making the Missional Shift podcast at www.leadnet.org/podcasts.
The new metrics are not always straightforward measurements, however. Says Jay Madden, “I see my role as two sides of a coin—engaging our people in mission to bring a life change for those we are serving, but also providing a life-changing experience for us. Often it is easier to measure life change in the people we are serving than in ourselves.

“For example, we offer an after-school tutoring and mentoring program called LaAmistad for Latino elementary school students. One of the metrics we’re using is their test scores. The flipside is the people from our church who come every afternoon to tutor. They see what it’s like to grow up as a minority in an under-resourced community. They begin to look at things differently. Hopefully their capacity to be compassionate grows and they become more like Christ. But it’s easier to measure the students’ test scores than the change in the 55-year-old retired executive who’s doing the mentoring.”

To hear more about La Amistad click here or download Raising Student Test Scores: A New Metric for Influencing the Community at leadnet.org/podcasts.

New Stories

For many leaders, the new scorecarding all comes down to the stories.

For John Seybert it’s simple. “The way you measure success is by stories,” he says. “If you can’t get together in a meeting and roll stories off the tip of your tongue, then you’re not having success.

You can always fake stats, but you can’t fake stories.

Peachtree Presbyterian Church uses the test scores of students who attend their afterschool tutoring program, LaAmistad, as a new metric for how their church is doing.

How do we know we’re succeeding? Because when we get together, we have 10 or 15 stories to tell. We’re not digging around to find one.”

“We start our meetings by asking, where did you see God show up this week?” says John. “When Reggie first introduced scorecarding, I thought it was a new kind of statistic. Now I realize the operational side of ministry has to support the stories. Reggie challenged us to decide what stories we want told after an event, and then figure out how to get there.”

Gary Dolan observes that there are two ways of measuring growth: like a scientist—nickels and noses, or like an attorney—with a preponderance of evidence. “Are you hearing over and over life-changing stories?” he asks. “We track the stories until they become a steady stream, too many to count. In

Each month Peninsula Covenant Church partners through Serve the Peninsula and Second Harvest Food Bank to distribute groceries to families whose children go to a local elementary school.
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our bulletin we have a section called Every Nook and Cranny—from our vision statement which says we want to influence every nook and cranny of society and culture for Jesus. We tell stories of how people are living out the missional lifestyle right where they are.”

Greg Finke finds that storytelling has become a circular process. “We tell stories as often as possible,” he says. “The purpose of the five questions is telling our stories, which reinforces our values, which reinforces our missional practices, which helps us have more stories to tell. Coming together regularly and telling our stories gets me fired up to go out and do it again the next week.”

“Storytelling paints a picture of what we’re hoping happens in lives,” says Dave Bartlett. “One of our members, a university professor who recently got tenured said to us, ‘I’ve been a professor for 10 years and this is the first year I’ve actually started praying for my students before they come into class.’ So that’s growth.”

“I find that the more people are living a missional life, the harder it is to capture their stories,” says Jay Madden. “They see it as natural—it’s just the way they live. For example, one day I was in Starbucks and saw a lady from our church talking to the workers there. I found out she takes their extra food to a homeless shelter several times a week. This woman lives in a four-million-dollar house and I would have never known her story if I hadn’t seen her.”

“One thing that has to happen for the storytelling to occur is a cultural shift in our church,” he says.

“Rescorecarding is a journey,” says Jay. “We don’t have it figured out. But we are trying to go forward and discover day to day how the new metric is going to look for us. We have to do a better job of capturing and retelling stories,” he says. “We’ve got a long way to go.”

John Seybert agrees. “We are figuring it out only as God gives us the grace,” he says. “But there’s not a day that goes by when we don’t slip back. It is a constant battle. I slip into my old way of thinking.

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About Leadership Network

Leadership Network's mission is to accelerate the impact of 100X leaders. These high-capacity leaders are like the hundredfold crop that comes from seed planted in good soil as Jesus described in Matthew 13:8.

Leadership Network...
• explores the “what’s next?” of what could be.
• creates “aha!” environments for collaborative discovery.
• works with exceptional “positive deviants.”
• invests in the success of others through generous relationships.
• pursues big impact through measurable kingdom results.
• strives to model Jesus through all we do.

Believing that meaningful conversations and strategic connections can change the world, we seek to help leaders navigate the future by exploring new ideas and finding application for each unique context. Through collaborative meetings and processes, leaders map future possibilities and challenge one another to action that accelerates fruitfulness and effectiveness. Leadership Network shares the learnings and inspiration with others through our books, concept papers, research reports, e-newsletters, podcasts, videos, and online experiences. This in turn generates a ripple effect of new conversations and further influence.

Leadership Network is a division of OneHundredX, a global ministry with initiatives around the world.

To learn more about Leadership Network go to www.leadnet.org.

About the Author

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Contact Us

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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is taken from the NIV translation.

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Taking Your Church Missional: What Does it Cost the Leader? by Lois Swagerty

Churches in The Missional Renaissance: Facilitating The Transition to a Missional Mindset by Stephen Shields

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