

# Something to Talk About – A conversation guide for church leaders

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## Being Strategic

*Note: This is the second in an ongoing series of postings intended to facilitate and serve as a guide for church leaders' conversations about significant issues that often are not talked about among pastors, boards, and church leadership teams*

Yogi Berra, the Hall of Fame baseball player and manager, is one of my favorite people to quote. If you aren't aware of what has come to be known as "Yogi-isms," Just Google "Yogi Berra quotes" and have a good laugh or two.

I bring up Yogi Berra because one of his quotes really resonates with the leader inside of me.

*"If you don't know where you're going, you might end up someplace else."*

Organizations, churches included, are always changing, always going somewhere. They *never* stay the same. Leaders are not leaders unless they are going somewhere. The concept of a leader that is going nowhere, a stationary leader, is an oxymoron.

So, just where is our church going? That's something to talk about.

Over the years, I've worked with many different types of organizations, trying to help them become more strategic. I found that using the word "strategic," and certainly the concept of strategic planning, often resulted in pushback and resistance from others. It seemed that everyone wanted the organization to accomplish something worthwhile, but few if any wanted to do what was believed to be the tedious and demanding work of developing mission, vision, strategy, or core values. As a result, many of these organization's leadership teams persisted in behaviors that caused their organizations to drift aimlessly, like a ship at sea without sail or power. Yogi apparently was right – when leaders don't know where the organization is going, it will end up somewhere, and likely where they didn't intend for it to be.

Not all leaders or leadership teams are prepared to do engage in extensive strategic planning efforts. It can be a long and tedious process. But no organization should be allowed to merely drift through time. How can church leaders begin this important conversation?

Let me suggest three questions that, if thoughtfully pondered and answered by a church's leadership team, will help with vision clarity.

1. Where are we trying to go?
2. How are we going to get there?
3. What do I do?

Every member of the leadership team should be able to answer these three questions, and the answers to the first two should be consistent from person to person. Ideally, and the world has not been ideal since life in the Garden, the answers to the first two questions would not only be consistent, but the same. That, coupled with supporting behaviors, is an indicator that the leadership team is on the same page and working together.

If you fear that your leadership team is not ready to tackle these three questions, try this: Ask each member to individually talk about their personal dreams for the church – what will it look like in 3, 5, or 10 years, where will they be, and what will they be doing? Focus on the church as a whole, not individual ministry areas.

The most important part of this conversation is the act of just starting it. I suspect you will be amazed by what you learn.

Imagine you and your leadership team in a rowboat in the middle of a large lake. There are three questions to be answered: Where are we trying to go? How are we going to get there? What do I do? We journey more effectively when we are trying to move in the same direction, by the same or complementary means, and each one knows their role.

Where are we trying to go? That's something to talk about.

*Let us know how your conversation goes. Contact Bob Osborne by e-mail at [bob@efcawest.org](mailto:bob@efcawest.org).*

For those interested in a deeper dive, let me recommend the following:

- *Church Unique*, by Will Mancini
- *Leading from the Sandbox* and *High-Impact Church Boards*, by T.J. Addington
- *Advanced Strategic Planning*, by Aubrey Malphurs
- Contact Wil Regier, Vision Clarity Coach at [wil@CAM-Equip.org](mailto:wil@CAM-Equip.org) or [www.CAM-Equip.org](http://www.CAM-Equip.org)