

“The “P” word”

In our home it is called the “P” word. Planning!! The kids run the other way when I mention it because it usually means I need more information than usual, more questions are going to be asked and I want it in writing. This does not fit in the normal pattern of getting things done for college students and it slows them down.

Planning is something that I feel is really an important thing for not only organizations to do, but families as well. In the past few months as I’ve worked with a number of groups that are putting together their strategic plan it has appeared to me that those questions asked of the company would be equally beneficial to a family.

The first part of the plan is to ask yourself what you are trying to accomplish – in the business world they have come up with the word “mission”. And so we ask, “What is our mission”. All this means is what are we about, what do we do and to whom do we do it? Without understanding this clearly, plans don’t usually work that well. So, if you were thinking about your family you might say your mission is to raise your family in a fun, god-like manner (I have simplified).

Then you have to figure out what your “picture looks like”. And so we do that by looking at what our strengths are (well, we have good kids, they go to school, church, we have jobs,...) our weaknesses (lack of communication, could use more money,...), any opportunities that might be coming our way (kids are heading off to college, new business opened up in the area, ...) and any possible threats to our success (we have an economic downturn, kids are going to college,...). This process should help you to lay the groundwork for setting your family strategies/goals.

So, in order for us to reach our mission what do we need to do, what do we want to do, what are our dreams, really? Can you just imagine having these conversations in our family? People in organizations spend days putting these plans together. And they really can work wonders.

Can’t you just see it now in your family. “OK, guys. We’re going on a family strategic planning retreat this weekend”. “We’re going to take the time to plan for our future and we’re going to have fun while we’re doing it!” I don’t know about you, but I’m certain my kids would raise their eyebrows and wonder what’s up with Mom and Dad. But, this process helps everyone to see where they are (as a family or organization) and what the hopes and dreams are for the future. And the best part of the plan is the process. You are all there talking about what is really important to you. Winston Churchill’s comment about planning was that actually many times plans are useless, but the planning is invaluable.

“An unexamined life is not worth living”, this was said by Plato. Planning whether it is with your company, your family or your self is a great way to examine your life. And it is fun!!!