



Ideal Future Scenarios

Duration: 3 ½ hours

Group size: small groups

“The pursuit of God is also the pursuit of a whole and healthy community for future generations.” – Jay Gary

Purpose

This activity helps participants begin to imagine a better future for your community and to internalize a vision that will motivate them to act toward its implementation. Clear images of an improved future tend to prompt us to make unconscious choices and commitments that bring it into reality. This activity features creative presentations that connect with our senses and anchor hopes and dreams into the psyche.

Outputs

- A number of scenarios of possible futures for your community
- A list of possible barriers to achieving an ideal future and ideas for overcoming them

Preparation

- Prepare an area of open space where groups can present their scenarios.

Materials:

- √ Flip charts for each small group
- √ Colored markers
- √ If desired, props and materials for small group presentations

Guidelines

Allow 2 ½ hours for step one and 1 hour for step two.

Step 1

- Place yourself 5, 10, or 20 years into the future and imagine your dream for your ideal community has come true. Visualize the community you want as if it exists now. What is it like?
- On a flip chart, list significant changes that have occurred since 2009 that produced those positive outcomes you now enjoy. Cite examples of what actually happened.

- Now think back to 2009. What major barrier did you have to overcome in order to begin making the dream a reality? Explain how you did it.
- Find a creative way to present your vision as if it is happening now. For example, it could be a skit, TV news special, magazine cover story, a 'Day in the Life', a work of art, etc. You will have seven minutes to make your presentation.

Make your scenario:

- › Feasible – could realistically happen
- › Desirable – the community as a whole would benefit
- › Motivating – you personally would work to make it happen

At this point, forget about cost and difficulty. This is an exercise in describing what you really want.

Step 2

- Reassemble the full group and allow each small group seven minutes to present their scenario of the ideal future community.
- On a flip chart, note common themes.

Adapted from Weisbord, Marvin and Janoff, Sandra (2000). *Future Search: An Action Guide to Finding Common Ground in Organizations and Communities*, Second Edition. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Tips for facilitating group activities

- Consider changing the usual meeting environment to stimulate creative thinking.
- Keep the end goal of decisive action in mind for the duration of the activity.
- Open with a brief overview of the activity so participants know what to expect.
- Be careful and consistent to maintain pre-set boundaries of time and task.
- Encourage small group self-management; suggest that each group select a recorder, a reporter, a time keeper, and a discussion leader.
- Work with the people, ideas, and motivations you have to find enough common ground to act rather than being bogged down or sidetracked with an attempt to resolve "deeper issues".
- Seek global perspective on issues by allowing all opinions to be expressed, validating polarities, and by agreeing to disagree on issues that cannot be resolved quickly.
- Encourage people to stay engaged in spite of differences. Resist the urge to intervene unless you observe movement toward 'fight or flight'. Allow the group to resolve its own differences or agree to set them aside.
- Provide plenty of easily available nutritious snacks and beverages
- Consider using a Church Futures consultant to add depth and breadth of experience.

Copyright 2010, Dr. Steve Brimmer, www.churchfutures.com