

# Purpose Driven Campaigning

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40 key principles for growing  
social movements

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## About Australian Progress

Australian Progress revitalises civil society movements – enabling them to win social and environmental progress, while strengthening our democracy. Together with hundreds of partners, we ensure the community interest shapes our nation’s priorities.

We train leaders, drive collaboration, reframe debates, and accelerate new social change organisations. We’re led by a small team of staff and governed by a diverse board of Australia’s pre-eminent social leaders.

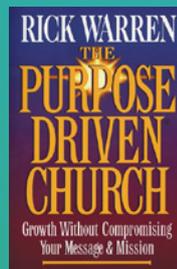
More information at [AustralianProgress.org.au](https://AustralianProgress.org.au)

## Purpose Driven Campaigning

Australian Progress has prepared this 40-point summary of Pastor Rick Warren's bestselling book *The Purpose Driven Church* to assist our partners, fellows and friends working towards environmental and social change.

The resource is based on Rick Warren's experience of growing his church, Saddleback, from scratch to 20,000 members attending every week. Saddleback is now the eighth biggest church in the United States.

Ultimately, we recommend you read the book itself – but here is a summary of the key lessons that the Australian Progress team have identified as transferrable from building churches to building sustainable non-profit organisations and mass support for progressive campaigns.



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*This summary paper was originally prepared by Nick Moraitis in 2010 and has been since informed the community organising and organisational approaches of hundreds of organisations in Australia and worldwide.*

01

# Levels of Commitment from Community to Core

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Rick Warren focuses on five ‘circles of commitment’ – community, crowd, congregation, committed and core, and argue that it’s important to recognise where your supporters fall in these categories, and develop processes to move them from the outside in.

### **The Circles of Commitment:**

The goal of your organisation is to move people from the outer circle (low commitment) to the inner circle (high commitment).

#### **Community**

- Your starting point
- Hottest prospects

#### **Crowd**

- Everyone who shows up
- Believers and non-believers’

#### **Congregation**

- Official members of your organisation
- Having more attendees than members means the organisation is being effective in attracting the unconverted; similar to having more new people signing an online petition than the existing list members.

#### **Committed**

- They pray (act), give (donate), and are dedicated to growing in discipleship (training). They are good people but they have not yet gotten involved in ministry (volunteer coordination).

#### **Core**

- Without these people your organisation would come to a standstill.

### **Listen to the community and earn their trust:**

‘I wanted to listen first to what they thought their most pressing needs were...I’ve learned that most people can’t hear until they’ve first been heard. People don’t care how much we know until they know how much we care. Intelligent, caring conversation opens the door for evangelism faster than anything else I’ve ever used... Jesus was able to ask for commitment from the crowd only after demonstrating his love for them and earning their trust.’

### **Growing from the outside in – and avoiding a single focus on the core:**

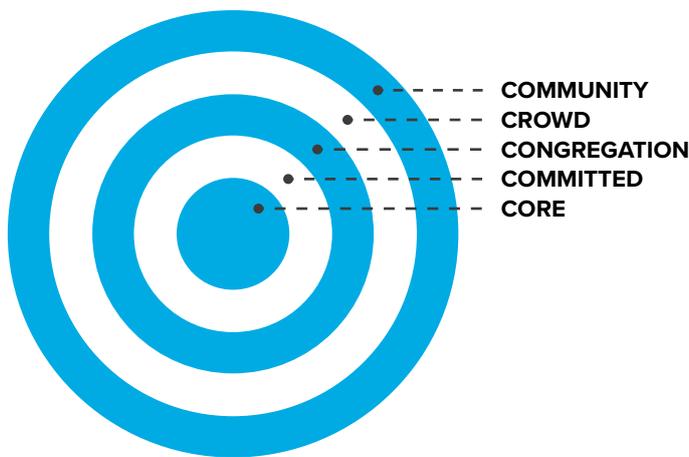
Begin by moving the unconverted from the community into the crowd.

“The problem with an ‘inside-out’ approach is that by the time the organisation planter has ‘discipled’ his core, they have often lost contact with the community and are actually afraid of interacting with the unchurched.”

It’s easy to get what Peter Wagner called ‘koinonitis’ – developing such a close-knit fellowship that newcomers are afraid or unable to break into it.

Too often, a core group planning a new organisation spends so long in the small group stage that they become comfortable with it and lose their sense of mission. The fire of evangelism (recruiting new people) dies out.

The problem with most small organisations is that they are all ‘core’ and nothing else. The same fifty people come to everything the organisation does. They’ve all been converted for so long they have few, if any, unconverted friends to convert.



### Design programs for each group in the Circle of Commitment:

For the community, focus on bridge events.

- Designed to build a bridge between our organisation and our community. They are usually quite large in order to capture the attention of the entire community.
- For the crowd, ‘seeker’ services. (Services for people who are open and seeking new ideas as opposed to those already connected.)

For the congregation, small groups

For the committed, training

For the core, leadership development

### Go slow:

“I can tell you how to build a balanced healthy organisation but I can’t tell you how to do it quickly. Do you want your organisation to be a mushroom (six hours to grow) or an Oaktree (sixty years).”

“The first year, about all we tried to do was build a crowd and introduce them to Christ. Just as it takes an enormous amount of energy to move a rocket off a launch pad, it requires an incredible amount of effort to gather a crowd out of nothing. Our focus was very narrow.”

“The second year I began turning the believers in the crowd into a congregation – continuing the focus on reaching out to the community and increasing the size of the crowd, but also adding a strong emphasis on building relationships. We focused on converting attendees into members.”

“The third year I instituted a plan to raise the commitment level of our members. I added staff to assist me in leading regular meetings for training.”

### Growing your crowd:

Create an atmosphere of acceptance. For your organisation to grow you must be nice to people when they show up.

Saddleback monitors its effectiveness on a weekly basis by asking first-time visitors to give us their frank anonymous, first impressions.

Offer something they can’t get anywhere else.

### Develop a seeker-sensitive service:

We must be willing to adjust our practices when unconverted are present.

In reality the needs of believers and non-believers often overlap.

What really attracts people to an organisation is ‘changed lives’ *[added by Australian Progress: personal narrative!]*

### Turning attendees into members:

Assimilation is the task of moving people from an awareness of your organisation to attendance at events to active membership in your organisation.

The community talks about ‘that organisation’. The crowd talks about ‘this organisation’. The congregation talks about ‘our organisation’. Members have a sense of ownership – they are contributors, not just consumers.

Before people commit, they want to know:

- Will they make friends?
- Are they actually needed?
- What is the benefit in joining to them?
- What is expected or required of them if they join?

Important to position the organisation as a family/ community rather than an institution. Since the 1960s, Americans have become increasingly anti-institutional – yet people are also longing for a sense of family and community.

The manner in which people join your organisation will determine their effectiveness as members for years to come.

Having 'inductions' is essential because it sets the tone and expectation level for everything else that follows. The best time to elicit a strong commitment from your members is the moment they join.

Make the members feel special.

Create opportunities to build relationships – friendships are key to retaining members. People might join because of a leader, but they stay because of new friends. Saddleback's weekend retreats have been the most effective tool for cultivating new friendships.

02

# Being Purpose-Driven

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The book's core premise is that you must ensure your organisation (and every department, budget sheet and staff member in it) is driven to achieve the core purpose of the organisation/ movement. Sounds easy and self-explanatory, right? Yes, but it's harder to implement than you think. Too many nonprofits are being pulled in so many different directions that they aren't really kicking goals in their core purpose any more; and some can't even remember what that purpose was in the first place!

### **The importance of purpose:**

Nothing precedes purpose. The starting point for every organisation or movement should be the question 'Why do we exist'?

If you serve in an existing organisation that has plateaued, is declining or is simply discouraged your most important task is to redefine your purpose.

If the leadership can't even agree on why the organisation exists, conflict and disagreement on everything else is inevitable.

A clear purpose builds morale.

A clear purpose not only defines what we do, it defines what we do not do. Once your purpose is set, decision making becomes far easier and less frustrating.

There is no correlation between the size and the strength of your organisation. An organisation can be big and strong, or big and flabby. Big is not necessarily better – better is better.

### **Share strategy:**

A clear purpose attracts cooperation – people want to join an organisation that knows where it is going. When an organisation clearly communicates its destination, people are eager to get onboard.

If you want your members to get excited about the organisation, actively support it, and generously give to it, you must vividly explain up front exactly where the organisation is heading.

Clearly explain your strategy and structure- this will keep people from joining the membership with false assumptions. Explaining your organisation's purposes to people before they join will not only reduce conflict and disappointment in your organisation, it will also help some people realise they should join another organisation because of philosophy or taste.

This is especially important when going through change – or when recruiting people who have been part of other organisations.

### **Focus:**

Focused light has tremendous power. Diffused light has no power and all. Like a laser beam, the more focused your organisation becomes, the more impact it will have on society.

Don't fall for the trap of 'majoring in the minors'. This is when your organisation becomes distracted by good, but less important agendas, crusades and purposes. The energy of the organisation is diffused and then dissipated; the power is lost.

Most organisations try to do too much – dabble in forty different things and miss being good at any of them.

The older an organisation gets, the truer this becomes – programs and events continue to be added to the agenda without ever cutting anything out.

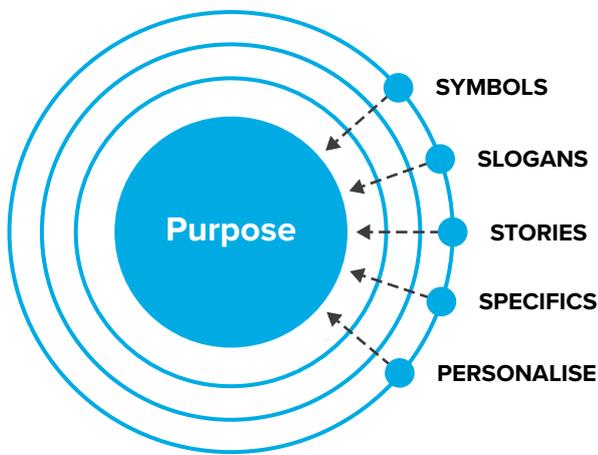
The question to ask is 'Would we begin this today if we were not already doing it?'

### **Restate purpose at least monthly:**

It is amazing how quickly human beings – and organisations – lose their sense of purpose. Vision and purpose must be restarted every twenty-six days to keep the organisation moving in the right direction.

This is the foremost responsibility of leadership – if you fail to communicate your statement of purpose to your members you may as well not have one.

The vision of any organisation always fades with time unless it is reinforced. This is because people become distracted by other things. By continually fanning the figure of your purposes you can overcome the tendency of your organisation to become complacent or discouraged.



## Ways to communicate vision and purpose:

### Symbols

Slogans – ‘history has proven that a simple slogan, repeatedly shared with conviction, can motivate people to do things they would normally never do’

Stories:

- Use stories to dramatise the purpose of your organisation.
- Share actual testimonials or letters from real people.
- Organisational legends (historical within the org).

### Specifics

- Always give practical clear, concrete action steps that explain exactly how your organisation intends to fulfil its purpose. Offer a detailed plan for implementing your purpose. Remember nothing becomes dynamic until it becomes specific. When a vision is vague it holds no attraction. The more specific your organisation’s vision is, the more it will grab attention and attract a commitment. The most specific way to communicate the purpose is to apply it personally to how each member lives.

### Personalise

- Member at the centre of the story.

## Be purpose/mission driven. Don’t be driven by:

### Tradition

- The seven last words of an organisation are: ‘We’ve never done it that way before’.

### Personality

- Where the agenda is determined more by the background, needs and insecurities of the leader.

### Finances

- Finances must never be the controlling issue.
- Rick Warren notes that many churches are driven by faith in their early years and by finances in later years. This is applicable to non profits!

### Programs

- Often the program-driven organisation’s goal subtly shifts from developing people to just filling positions. If results from a program diminish, the people blame themselves for not working hard enough. No one ever questions if a program still works.

### Buildings

- The tail ends up wagging the dog

### Events

- Meetings! What is the purpose behind them all?
- Attendance becomes the sole measurement of success.

### Seekers

- Should be seeker (new recruit) sensitive, but not seeker driven.

### **Considering whether you are really achieving your mission:**

Are you being faithful to your mission if you insist on communicating in an outdated style? Are you being faithful to your mission if you insist on doing things in a way that is comfortable for you even though it doesn't produce any results?

We must be willing to say with unreserved commitment, 'We'll do whatever it takes to reach people'.

### **Apply purpose principles throughout the organisation:**

A purpose driven organisation must rigorously apply its purposes to every part of the organisation – programming, scheduling, budgeting, staffing.

When thinking about finances, people give to vision.

03

# Organisational Culture and Management

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How in practice can you run an excellent organisation that attracts, develops and retains people and achieves its purpose? The Purpose-Driven Church model emphasises flexibility and being open to change, constant evaluation, asking for commitment from your people at an early stage, focusing on people and processes rather than programs and finally not letting ‘complainers’ set the agenda.

### Evaluate:

Generate a simple report. Rick Warren’s church has a reporting tool called ‘Saddleback Snapshot’. The Snapshot shows how many people are currently in each Circle of Commitment and measures a number of other key indicators of organisation health.

‘The Snapshot forces us to take an honest look each month at how well our organisation is fulfilling its purposes. Bottlenecks in the system become easier to spot.’

### Ask for commitment:

Rick Warren has found that challenging people to a serious commitment actually attracts people rather than repels them. The greater the commitment we ask for, the greater the response we get.

If you don’t ask people for commitment, you won’t get it. And if you don’t ask your members, you can be certain that other groups will ask for it: civic groups, service clubs, political parties. The question isn’t whether or not people are going to be committed, but rather who is going to get their commitment. If you don’t ask for commitment, people will assume what the organisation is doing is not as important.

#### In asking for commitment:

- Be specific. Tell people exactly what is expected of them.
- Explain the benefits of commitment.
- Build on commitment rather than toward commitment. It is important to start with whatever commitment they are able to give, regardless of how weak it may seem.
- Celebrate each time someone commits to moving forward.

### Conviction:

Conviction is caught as much as it is taught. People acquire it by being around other people who have it. This is a major reason Saddleback emphasises small groups.

### Be open to change:

Saddleback met for fifteen years before being able to build their first building. This one factor alone helped shape their strategy of reaching, retaining and growing believers. It kept their focus on people and created a organisational culture very open to change.

Some of their ideas were spectacular failures – but they learnt from them.

It is obvious that some methods that have worked in the past are no longer effective. There is a time to keep, and there is a time to throw away. Each generation of the organisation or movement must decide which methods to keep using and which should be thrown away because they are no longer effective.

Be open to changing things (like the type of music you use at events) and processes to attract new people. In the average organisation it is probably easier to change the organisation’s theology than its order of service *[added by Australian Progress: easier to change an organisation’s policy than its processes!]*

### **Show leadership:**

You cannot let ‘whiners’ set the agenda for the organisation.

That is an abdication of leadership. Unfortunately the smaller an organisation is, the more influence the most negative member has.

### **It’s about mobilising for action, not just meeting:**

The honest reason many organisations do not have a crowd is because they don’t want one! They don’t like having to relate to unbelievers and feel that attracting a crowd would disturb their comfortable routine. This kind of selfishness keeps a lot of organisations from growing.

### **Your community/crowd has everything you need:**

Find out about, and use, the skills of your membership! It is easy for talent to hide in the crowd. Unless they take the initiative to reveal their giftedness or expertise, talented members could be sitting in your crowd and you have no idea what they are capable of doing.

### **Grow without poaching:**

Saddleback’s growth has been by conversion not by transferring Christians from other churches. They don’t want transfer growth (stealing members from other churches) and openly discourage it.

### **Offer value and quality:**

Attendance campaigns and advertising may bring people to your organisation once, but they will not come back unless your organisation delivers the goods.

Quality leads to quantity if you design it to.

### **Be contemporary without compromising:**

At Saddleback they don’t expect unbelievers to act like believers until they are.

Some organisations retreat into isolation from today’s culture – e.g. the Amish. Rick Warren says: ‘What I admire about the Amish is at least they are honest about it. They freely admit that they have chosen to preserve the lifestyle of the 1800s. In contrast organisations that try to perpetuate the culture of the 1950s usually deny they are doing it.’

We must never become so enamoured with methods [tactics] that we lose sight of our mission and forget our message.

### **Skill and mistakes:**

It takes more than dedication to lead an organisation to grow; it takes skill. Take the time to learn the skills you need. You’ll save time in the long run and be far more successful.

‘One time God told Joshua to stop praying about his failure and get up and correct the cause of it instead.’

Experiment and focus on progress, not perfection.

### **No silver bullets:**

There is more than one way to grow an organisation.

It takes all kinds of organisations to reach all kinds of people.

Never criticise other approaches which are working just because they are different to yours.

### **Learn from others:**

We don’t have to be original at everything. We just have to be effective.

Anytime Rick Warren sees a program working in another organisation, he tries to extract the principle behind it and apply it in Saddleback.

You can’t however copy your context, staff, or leadership.

We’re here to learn from each other; it’s flattering to have your methods copied. Remember we’re all on the same team.

### **Focus on people and process, not institutional program growth:**

Don’t focus on growing an organisation with programs; focus on growing people with a process.

Saddleback brings people in, builds them up, trains them, and sends them out. That’s it – their total focus.

‘Our ultimate goal at Saddleback is to turn an audience into an army. You don’t judge the strength of the army by how many soldiers sit and eat in the mess hall but by how they perform on the front line. Likewise, an organisation’s strength is not seen in how many show up for services (the crowd) but how many serve in the core.’

## Streamline your structure:

Warren says that a major reason many church members aren't active in 'ministry' (actually getting out in the community doing stuff and recruiting new people) is because the organisation takes up too much of their time doing less important things. 'One of the reasons church members don't witness to their neighbours is because they don't know them - they are too busy at the church, attending meetings!'

Teach people the difference between maintenance and ministry (actually getting out in the community doing stuff and recruiting new people). The more you involve people in maintenance (budgets, buildings, organisational structures and so forth) the more you waste their time.

Every organisation must eventually decide whether it is structured for growth or for control.

In war, Warren says, you always find the highest morale and sense of camaraderie among those serving on the front line.

You don't have time to argue and complain when you're dodging bullets. Ten miles back, however, the soldiers in the rear echelon grumble about the food, the showers and the lack of entertainment. The biggest complainers in any organisation are usually committee members with nothing to do.

Don't elect people to positions. You avoid a personality contest. You avoid public spotlight on something that needs time to develop. You allow people to get involved more quickly. You avoid attracting people who just want power. If they fail, you can remove them more easily. You can develop new areas more quickly.

Establish minimum standards and guidelines for volunteers.

Help people realise they are the organisation. People respond to responsibility. They thrive and grow when you trust them.

04

# Communication and Recruitment

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Recruitment is key for churches, social movements and non-profit organisations. Rick Warren's church has recruited tens of thousands of people; so his tips are based in sound experience. He emphasises the importance of good messaging and framing, figuring out who you're targeting to join, and having a solid recruitment strategy.

## Messaging

Framing messages in a way that disarms people's prejudices and objections to being part of the movement.

Starting where people are and move them to where you want them to be.

Ask yourself, 'Do people delight in your messages?'

We should not be afraid of being interesting. Truth poorly delivered is ignored.

Use stories:

- Stories hold our attention.
- Stories stir our emotions.
- Stories help us remember.

## Advertising is necessary in the first year – then you can rely more on viral growth:

'We also used a lot of advertising that first year because we didn't have enough relationships to rely on word of mouth to build a crowd. Today with thousands of members inviting friends to our organisation, advertising is unnecessary.'

## Identifying your target:

In a small organisation with limited resources, it is vital that you make the most of what you've got. Focus your resources on reaching the people your organisation can best communicate with. Small organisations must also make choices on tough issues. Changing styles randomly to appeal to different demographics will produce the same effect as a radio station with a mixed format. No one will listen.

Figure out who your organisation is best capable of reaching, then go after those people. 'When we plan an effort we always have a specific target in mind. The Bible determines our message, but our target determines when, where and how we communicate it.'

### How do you define your target?

- Geographically.
- Demographically: if you are serious about having your organisation make an impact, become an expert on your community. Organisers should know more about their community than everyone else.
- Culturally.
  - We don't have to agree with our culture, but we must understand it.
  - One of the major barriers to organisation growth is 'people blindness' – being unaware of social and cultural differences. The best way to find out the culture, mindset and lifestyle of people is to talk to them personally. Take your own survey. Listen for their hurts, interests, and fears.
- Spiritually (level of commitment to issue).

### Use surveys and research

- 'It is amazing to me that organisations often spend thousands of dollars on projects without first asking the people they intend to reach if they think the programs will work.'

### Personalise your Target

- At Saddleback they named their composite profile 'Saddleback Sam'. Most of their members would have no problem describing 'Sam'.

## Know who you can best reach:

I believe the most effective evangelistic strategy is to first try to reach those with whom you already have something in common. Go after those you are most likely to reach:

- People similar to those who already attend – if visitors find other people in your organisation that seem similar to them, they are much more likely to come back again.
- People similar to the leaders - leaders cast long shadows. Sometimes the wisest thing a leader can do is admit that he doesn't match the organisation or community and move somewhere else.
- To change your organisation's profile:
  - Don't try and be something you're not. Strengthen what you already are – and don't worry about what you can't do.
  - Reinvent your congregation. Much easier if you are a small organisation.
  - Start a new congregation.

## Recruitment strategy:

Too many organisations have a lazy attitude towards fishing for new recruits. They don't take the time to understand the people they want to reach, and they don't have a strategy.

### Know what you're fishing for.

Go where the fish are biting (we aren't supposed to pick the green fruit, but to find the ripe fruit and harvest it).

Learn to think like a fish. 'The problem is, the longer you are a believer the less you think like an unbeliever. If you look at Church advertising, it's obvious that it was written from a believer's viewpoint. One of the greatest barriers to evangelism is that most believers spend all their time with other Christians. They don't have any non-believing friends.

- Survey them e.g.:
  - What do you think the greatest need in this area is?
  - Are you actively attending any community organisation?
  - Why do you think most people aren't involved?
  - If you were to look for a community organisation to join, what kind of things would you look for?
- Four basic complaints that come through the survey:

- The church (organisation) is boring.
- Church members are unfriendly to visitors (the greatest emotion new people feel when they attend a service is fear, they don't know the inside terminology, rituals, songs and feel foolish).
- The church is more interested in my money than me.
- We worry about the quality of the church's childcare.
- Don't assume the problems people have will be theological (or policy oriented!) 'What seemed most interesting to me about our survey was that none of the complaints from the unchurched in our area were theological. I didn't meet a single person who said 'I don't go to church because I don't believe in God'.  
*[Added by Australian Progress: don't assume that the barrier is convincing people on the strength of your policies or that climate change is real.]*

### Read the defence.

- Understand and anticipate the objections unbelievers will have before they voice them.

### Catch fish on their terms.

- People don't voluntarily jump into your boat. You must penetrate their culture. To penetrate any culture you must be willing to make small concessions in matters of style in order to gain a hearing.

### Use more than one hook:

- It is not pandering to consumerism to offer multiple projects or ways of involvement.
- The goal is not to make it as difficult as possible – but to make it as easy as possible for people to get involved.
- Money spent on recruiting new members is never an expense – it's always an investment. When finances get tight in an organisation, often the first thing cut is the advertising budget. That is the last thing you should cut. It is the source of new blood and life for your organisation.

