PLANNING

By CJ Small

As a former director of a large men's ministry, I spent years organizing and perfecting men's retreats and events until I found a way to reach men in a huge way! You too can take a small or large group of men and do great things for the Lord and for your community. I know that you are excited to hold a great men's retreat, so here are some steps to help you along the way.

Instructions

1. **Step 1 TEAM**
   Believe it or not, choosing your team is the second most important step to planning a successful event. (I'll tell you the most important step later) You will need several people to help you to get this wonderful event running smoothly. I would suggest you begin by choosing at least 7-10 men volunteers that you can trust with various leadership assignments. You will need to schedule weekly meeting times and each member must be ok with making these important planning meetings. You will need men you can trust. They don’t have to be perfect but they will have to be reliable and Godly. You will delegate assignments to these men and assign time lines to complete these assignments.

   Remember, no matter what tasks you delegate, you will ultimately be responsible so follow-up on tasks that you assign. Make each leadership person over an area. For example; marketing, transportation, sales, budgeting, etc. All men can also double to be used as drivers if you trust them to do so. Make sure they have valid licenses and no outstanding tickets or warrants. You will also need a personal assistant. Someone who will take care of errands and other small tasks that come along the way. A couple of your leaders can also check-in the men upon registration.

2. **Step 2 THEME**
   The theme of the retreat or event is very important. Men rally around a great theme. You can use something like, "Men Seeking God" retreat, or "Warriors Pray and Play" weekend. Spend time with your group to come up with a great theme that all the men in your organization and community will want to rally around.

3. **Step 3 BUDGET**
   In one of your early planning meetings, you need to find out how much the entire event is going to cost you and then add an additional couple of hundred dollars as a cushion for unexpected costs or emergencies. Consider specific cost like, vehicle rentals, fuel, hiring a special guest speaker, renting equipment, marketing materials, food to feed the men each day, give-a-ways or raffle prizes, and especially the hotel or location costs where you will hold the retreat. Factor in how much it will cost to house 3-4 men in each hotel room for example. If the room is $85.00 per man, divide
this cost by 4. It will probably cost you around $20-25 per man for each room. For a complete retreat, I used to charge about $80-$85 for a weekend get-a-way. This would usually cover food, housing, and everything! The men found this cost reasonable.

4. Step 4 SPECIAL GUEST

You will need a special guest for a draw to get the maximum turn-out! I would also strongly suggest you find a 3 piece band or praise and worship leader to go to the retreat with you for live praise and worship. Offer your special guest keynote speaker a free ticket to the event and set aside budgeted honorarium (speaking fee) for him. The speaker should be paid at least half as a security deposit a few weeks before the event. A final balance check should be cut and given to the speaker a few days before the event or just before the event begins so he doesn't feel like he has to "perform" for his money. "A worker is worthy of his hire."

5. Step 5 LOCATION

When you are planning your event the first thing you want to do is to begin Googling "Men's Retreats in..." whatever area you are in. You will be surprised at the places that host men's events. If this is not possible, you may want to just plan a distant trip to another city or town with nice hotel accommodations and activities. You may also want to consider participating with a major conference where they will have daily workshops and other activities. I attended a ManPower conference in Atlanta with thousands of men present. The event was inspiring and well worth the money. Either way, the location may want a deposit to secure the hotel so plan accordingly.

6. Step 6 ACTIVITIES

Now for the fun stuff. What are you going to do when you get there? You need to plan activities for your men from morning to night ... seriously. Men get bored easily so be sure to keep the day filled with activities with a few breaks in between for personal time. Activities like morning breakfasts, morning prayer, 9-11AM fun stuff like baseball games or tug-o-war contests, then move to lunch and then maybe 1:30-4:00 personal time. For the evening move on to other activities like bike trails, mountain climbing, or horseback riding. Don't forget the praise and worship. I brought in a 3 piece gospel band. I'd give each band member free tickets and meals.

Remember your keynote speaker. Be sure to save your key speaker for prime time (maybe Saturday afternoon or evening) when the men are not too tired. Men love manly stuff so plan accordingly. Always keep the men busy so their minds aren't drifting to things they shouldn't. I highly suggest that men leave all computers and other tech devices at home during the spiritual retreat. The whole point is to keep men focused on the Lord at all times so keep prayer throughout the day and night.

7. Step 7 TRANSPORTATION

Getting the men to and from the retreat is very important. You only want reliable and safe drivers to get your men back safely to their families. Once we had a retreat in the
mountains of Colorado. We acquired several new vans for the trip. The weather started out really nice that day and at the last minute it quickly changed into a snowstorm. I was happy we had reliable vehicles and trustworthy men to take those vans safely up the mountain. Another suggestion is to simply hire a professional bus transportation company. The men would really bond being together on a bus for a long distance.

8. Step 8 MAREKING YOUR EVENT
This area is so crucial. To start, it is important to find and pay a professional graphic designer. Don’t try to use Photoshop or another mediocre program and do it yourself. This is an area you don’t want to skimp. There are many professional graphic artist out there, or maybe someone in your church would do a professional job for little or no money for your event. Your event will only be as good as it looks on paper (to others). You may not need thousands of dollars to promote your event, you will however need professional posters, flyers, and tickets. All of these should have the same theme, look and feel so that they are uniformed. If you can’t afford color, use color paper and card stock. Give each man on your team a couple of dozen flyers and only a couple of tickets before. If you don’t trust your men to hold tickets, let them help you promote before and after service in the foyer. Let them post the flyers in their neighborhoods. Do not however let them keep the money for long. Have each man turn in his money and/or checks immediately before and after service.

9. Step 9 PROMOTION
Now you are ready to promote your great event. So listen to this important step. ALWAYS use all of your men to help promote and sell the tickets. No matter how you organize your event, the bottom line is you want to sell tickets to ensure a successful event. Make sure the tickets are numbered and that you have written down all tickets assigned. One more thing, be sure to tell men attending to purchase extra tickets to bring a friend or two. Ask your pastor to make announcements weekly at least 4-6 weeks out from the pulpit. Set up a small ticket sales table in the foyer with posters and your excited men’s leadership team. This will instantly double or triple your sales and retreat numbers.

10. Step 10 PRAYER
Remember that "most important step" I told you about. You and your team must pray and pray often. Men and their families will be transformed because of your great event so the enemy will fight you every step of the way because you are trying to reach men in a special way and deliver them from the bondages that we all struggle with. "The Lord will fight for you and you shall hold your peace." Remember that great scripture? Prayer dispatches angelic forces to help you during your event. The church as a whole should pray for your event as well. Oh yea, one last important tip. If you reach the women of the church and convince them that this is going to be a life changing event for their husbands or boyfriends, they will buy the tickets for them and make sure that they get there. We sold 2/3rds of our tickets because the women caught the vision and sent their husbands. Pray for the women to support your event.
You need them to partner with you.
Enjoy your great event.

SCHEDULES:

Sixth Annual Diocesan Men's Lenten Retreat
March 5-6, 2010

Bishop O'Connor Pastoral Center
Madison Wisconsin

Friday

5:00 p.m.  Check-in begins
5:30  Mass available for early arrivals
7:00  Retreat begins - opening talks
8:30  Adoration
     Opportunity for confession
10:30  Group Rosary
      Commuters depart

Saturday

8:00 a.m.  Morning Prayer & Benediction
8:15  Morning talks & reflection
10:15  Brunch
11:15  Talks & discussion
Noon  Adoration & reflection
1:15 p.m.  Afternoon talks, etc.
4:00  Mass with Bishop Morlino
     Families welcome!
5:15  Potluck dinner
     Families welcome!

Spiritual Warfare, A Men's Retreat
Location: Birmingham, AL (Directions)
Dates:  August 27-29, 2010

Spiritual Warfare
A Men's Retreat with Father Bill Casey, CPM
August 27-29, 2010
RESOURCES FOR MEN:

National Fellowship of Catholic Men:  http://www.nfcmus.org/

CROSSING THE GOAL  http://www.crossingthegoal.com/