



Evaluating Programs & Events in a Discipleship Portfolio

When God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden, he was to “tend to it and watch over it” (Genesis 2:15), and we must also steward the garden God has placed us in. Because God can use programs/events to feed and nurture the people, *watching over* should include stewarding the programs that are offered to people. Not every church program should be viewed the same or receive the same resources, attention, or energy. Here is a framework to help.



In 1979 Bruce Henderson developed a helpful framework for organization leaders to think about business units or products in their portfolio—based on the anticipated growth or retraction of a market and the effectiveness of a particular product or business in a market. His famous framework and language have been adapted for churches to evaluate programs.



FLOURISHING TREE: FEED IT **High effectiveness, high potential**

A program that is highly effective and has high potential in the future to serve people in increasing ways, mobilize people, generate new leaders, and provide opportunities for discipleship is a flourishing tree. It is providing fruit for the whole garden.

What do you do with a flourishing tree? You give it more nutrients. Ensure this tree has water, fertilizer, and careful pruning. Give more attention, resources, and energy to this program than the others. When people say, “That is not fair,” respond graciously, but stay disciplined.

NICE PLANT: LEAVE IT **High effectiveness, low potential**

A program that is running smoothly and serving people well (high in effectiveness) but has very limited potential to scale or serve people in increasing ways in the future is like a “nice plant” in the garden. It is nice to have but it won’t feed everyone who comes into the garden.

What do you do with a nice plant? You leave it alone. Some church programs are high in effectiveness but low in future potential. Let these programs be the nice plants that exist in the garden for the people who love them and are served by them, but don’t give the water, fertilizer, and attention to these.

WEED: PULL IT **Low effectiveness, low potential**

A program that is low in effectiveness and lacks potential for the future is a weed. This program is a distraction that clutters the ministry field/garden and robs nutrients from others.

What do you do with a weed? You pull it. Pull “weed” programs or events as they only take energy and resources away from the others.

PROBLEM TREE: REPLANT IT **Low effectiveness, high potential**

A program that you know has a lot of potential but is currently not providing fruit for the whole garden is a problem tree. Something is off with the communication or the execution.

What do you do with a problem tree? You replant it. Perhaps it needs more sunlight or another gardener’s skillful hands. It needs something. Don’t let it remain as it is in the garden.