

# Wise Timing for Board Decisions

—T. Ray Rachels, Irvine, California

Wise church leaders discern carefully when to call for decision and action. Paul Munday, director of the Andrew Center, a nondenominational agency for helping church leaders, offers these six pointers on timing:

Never introduce a new idea and vote on it in the same meeting. Always allow space between your initial presentation of the new possibility and a final decision. Give people ample time to make up their own minds.

Identify clearly the avenues for additional information and input. Make people aware of the option of more give-and-take with you and other members of the appropriate committee. Keeps facts and figures flowing.

If people are opposed, meet with them individually. Listen carefully to objections, reviewing the benefits of the proposed change as needed.

Don't position yourself for a negative vote. Avoid a decision or vote, at all costs, when the tide is taking your boat out to sea.

If you sense that the tide is against you, do a reassessment. Does the vision or goal have broad backing, or is it an idea that belongs to only a few people? You may need to broaden the support base before proceeding.

When you sense that people are with you, bring them together and move toward a positive vote. Ted Engstrom, former president of World Vision, calls for Christian leaders to distinguish between priorities and posteriorities. Priorities give us direction about what and when we are going to do something. Posteriorities are statements of things that we are not going to do this year.

Picture an organization as an alligator; it has a great tendency to grow a very long tail. Periodically someone needs to chop off the tail so the alligator can keep moving. Perhaps we need a committee to decide each year which 10 percent of all the things we did last year we are not going to do again this year.