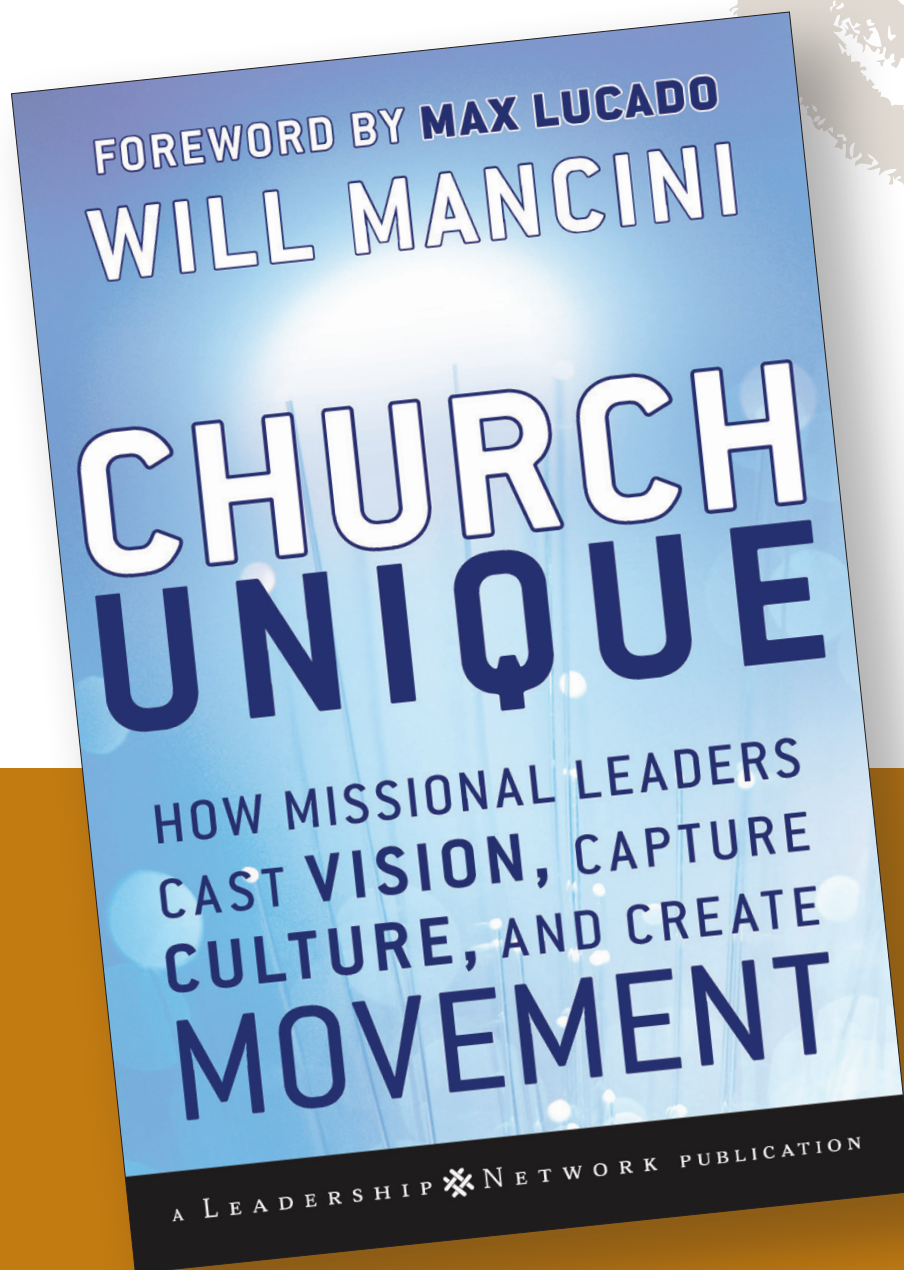


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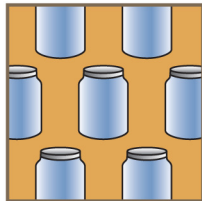
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CHURCH UNIQUE

Church Unique | Will Mancini

Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement
Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, 2008. 271 pages.

Will Mancini's *Church Unique* serves as a map that will help you discover and live a vision that creates a stunningly vision in your unique church culture and ministry setting. The book outlines a process that will help you discover, develop, and deliver this vision through a process called the Vision Pathway. The concepts and tools of this book will develop practical applications that will take you to new levels of clear thinking, compelling communication and team synergy around your God-given vision.



Part One: Recasting Vision

Are you leading with photocopied vision or a kingdom calling that is stunningly unique?

Because it is easier to duplicate than to incarnate, many leaders often succumb to neglecting their church's unique calling. The first part of *Church Unique* shows the need for a dramatic shift in how leaders think about vision today. Will Mancini skillfully reveals how "unoriginal sin" plagues the church environment through photocopied vision. Mancini illustrates this with six "Thinkholes." Thinkholes represent the quicksand-like dynamic where, at certain times and places, vibrant thinking gets sucked beneath the surface to suffocate and disappear. To understand and identify Thinkholes at your church, click [here](#) for a one-page PDF self-assessment.

The craze of church conferencing, the fallacies of strategic planning, and the church growth assumptions of yesteryear enhance this problem of "Unoriginal Sin." Mancini exposes the weaknesses of our current vision methodology by asking, "Why do people really call their church 'home'?" In a rigorous treatment of the state of congregations "lost" without vision, Mancini identifies four substitutes for a well-balanced diet of vision that he calls "soul fast food." They fuel your most faithful people – it is how they get their hope for a better future. Unfortunately, they are also four sources of a malnourished membership identity.

The identity of most regular attenders and even leaders in the local church is one of four things that Mancini unpacks as sources of a malnourished identity:

- **Place** – The places of our God moments matter, but space is essential, not central, in the economy of vision.
- **Personalities** – The undershepherd is not a substitute for the Good Shepherd. Personalities cannot be the umbilical cord connecting their members' identity to the church.
- **Programs** – When programs exist in a vision vacuum, the how of doing the program displaces the why in the heart of the program's leaders. We need the vision to raise our sight to see the why behind the program to begin with.
- **People** – The greatest substitute for healthy membership identity is the group of people at church – whether 10 or 100 – who "know my name." "Community without a cause" is both unbiblical and a common source of identity for the churchgoer.

Church Unique | Will Mancini (cont'd)

Part One concludes by setting the stage for the discernment and development of missional vision in the next three parts of the book. The movement reflects a shift from vision as content to vision as lifestyle, represented by the chart below.

Classic Strategic Planning vs. Church Unique's Vision Pathway
• Vision as content vs. Vision as lifestyle
• Mission as statement vs. Mission as missional mandate
• Values as statement vs. Values as missional motives
• Strategy as plan vs. Strategy as missional map
• Measurement as goals vs. Measurement as missional life marks



Part Two: Clarifying Vision

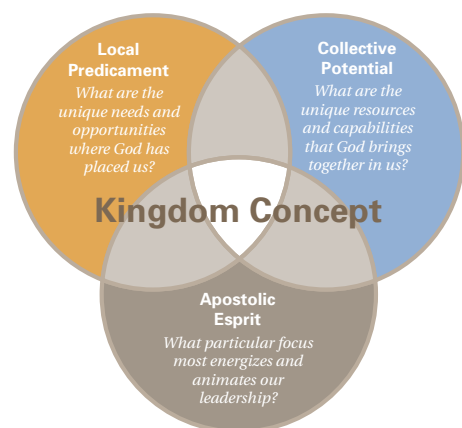
What can your church do better than 10,000 others?

Is it possible that God has a special calling for your church? For decades, books have targeted the revitalization of the church's commitment to the Great Commission. In Part Two, *Church Unique* pushes the envelope. The challenge is given to leaders to discover their "Great Permission" within the Great Commission. Or to put in another way, how does your church glorify God and make disciples? The answer is your church's Kingdom Concept.

At first blush this question of the Kingdom Concept may seem difficult to answer. For this reason, Part Two begins by addressing the essential nature of clarity. What is clarity and where does it come from? What are the prerequisites in a leader's life for clarity to be achieved? Why is it true, as Marcus Buckingham asserts, "clarity is the occupation of the effective leader."

As Part Two develops, vision is placed in a biblical context for a missional audience. Treatment is given to God's role as the Chief Visionary and the leader's identity as a "single domino" in the long chain of redemptive movement – from the utopia of Genesis 1-2 to the new utopia of Revelation 21-22. One chapter encourages leaders to "tap" into visionaries past and present for motivation and inspiration as they discover their own vision. Leaders can and should embrace clarity with passion and boldness because missional thinking nurtures humility when vision is put in its biblical context.

The culmination of Part Two is the overview of the Kingdom Concept, a tool for ascertaining vision. The Kingdom Concept is a simple diagram with three overlapping circles:



Church Unique | *Will Mancini (cont'd)*

The Kingdom Concept is what sets you apart from every other church: it's *how* you develop followers of Christ for God's ultimate honor. It is where your church's unique experiences flow as a body of Christ.

The best way to find your Kingdom Concept is to look at the intersection of three circles that represent aspects of your church's God-given uniqueness.

Circle One: Local Predicament

Your community has all kinds of specific challenges. Do you know what they are? Defining your local predicament answers the question, "What are the unique needs and opportunities where God has placed us?" Understanding your local predicament is about having an intimate grasp of the soil where God has called you to minister.

Circle Two: Collective Potential

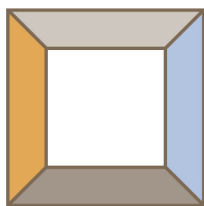
The second circle looks at the collection of individuals in your church and answers the question, "What are the unique resources and capabilities that God brings together in us?" What possibilities of cooperative potential are lying beneath the surface of your Church Unique?

Circle Three: Apostolic Esprit

A church's "apostolic esprit" is the area of focus that arouses an energetic style in its leaders. Apostolic anchors the missional mind-set: the understanding that we are "being sent." It is the empowering and direction of the Holy Spirit linked to the human side of passion and vitality that springs from team morale. What particular focus most energizes and animates your leadership team?

The three circles are simple yet profound. The real secret is not in looking for new things, but in finding fresh meaning in the familiar. It's the work of scrutinizing the obvious. The power of the Kingdom Concept is in the overlap of the three circles.

In two chapters, the Kingdom Concept is supported and illustrated with questions and exercises that equip teams for robust collaboration. To help you discover your Kingdom Concept, download the PDFs with the Kingdom Concept questions here: **Local Predicament; Collective Potential; Apostolic Esprit.**

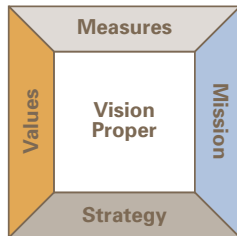


Part Three: Articulating Vision

Why does your church exist in 10 words or less?

Leaders know that "words create worlds." Part Three of *Church Unique* shifts from focusing on vision content to word choice. Why doesn't vision stick? To be contagious vision must be robust without sacrificing brevity. Some leaders only stab at the future with a few nifty slogans. Others articulate a theological treatise that acts with the potency of NyQuil. That's where the Vision Frame comes in. Packed with illustrations, Part Three walks step by step through the Vision Frame offering practical helps and inspiration for you and your team. The following section shows the operating definitions of the five components of the frame.

Church Unique | Will Mancini (cont'd)



A Framework for Missional Clarity: The Vision Frame

The central thrust of *Church Unique* is introduction of a framework called the Vision Frame. It contains five components that define your church's DNA and creates the platform for all vision casting. No leader should lead, no team should meet, and no initiative should start without a clear understanding of the vision frame.

Each part is interpreted from a missional orientation as it answers one of the five irreducible questions of leadership.

- **Mission as missional mandate:** *What are we doing?* The missional mandate is a clear and concise statement that describes what the church is ultimately supposed to be doing.
- **Values as missional motives:** *Why are we doing it?* The missional motives are shared convictions that guide the actions and reveal the strengths of the church.
- **Strategy as missional map:** *How are we doing it?* The missional map is the process or picture that demonstrates how the church will accomplish its mandate on the broadest level.
- **Measures as missional life marks:** *When are we successful?* The missional life marks are a set of attributes in an individual's life that define or reflect accomplishment of the church's mandate.
- **Vision Proper as missional mountaintop + milestones:** *Where is God taking us?* Vision Proper is the living language that anticipates and illustrates God's better immediate future.

The Vision Frame components must be *clear, concise, compelling, catalytic, and contextual*. If these five attributes are fused within the Vision Frame, amazing energy is released. It all funnels into an important reality: *the vision is contagious*.

Why the Vision Frame Works

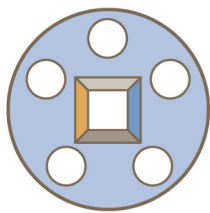
It is Mancini's unique combination of backgrounds – a chemical engineering degree, working with a marketing company, and a pastor of a large church – that give him incredible insight into process, communication, and the heart of ministry. It also speaks of why the Vision Frame works.

- **It Carries the Kingdom Concept:** Your Kingdom Concept "lives" as it is translated into the Vision Frame itself and not as a separate statement. Each church's unique Kingdom Concept finds many possibilities for expression.
- **It is Complete yet Concise:** It is comprehensive and addresses the function of the church in a real and tangible way. It is also packaged concisely, enabling the DNA of the church to be portable in the life of the church.
- **It Communicates a Missional Reorientation:** The Framework is a powerful tool to capture culture - drawing on the best of who God made you to be, drawing out your best as a people to live and serve in the community. Familiar planning words are used, but given a missional reorientation.

Church Unique | Will Mancini (cont'd)

What is your vision today?

One significant contribution of Part Three is the development of Vision Proper as “missional mountaintop + milestones.” Here vision is uncaged from the typical vision statement that becomes a “lofty one-liner” or an “eloquent page dump,” rather than a living language. Part Three concludes with a vision casting spider diagram that will be a standard preparation and evaluative tool for visionary leaders for years to come.



Part Four: Advancing Vision

Is vision casting a team sport each day or a one-man show on Sunday?

Part Four of *Church Unique* transitions from articulation to traction. How does vision really nurture a redemptive movement? How do you wage war against the status quo after a clear vision is captured and communicated? Many leaders think Sunday morning is their biggest crowbar. But is it really? What about the other six days of the week?

This section of the book walks through the under-practiced concepts of alignment, attunement and integration. Alignment is the process of bringing all of the energy and resources and nuts and bolts of the organization into harness. The book shows how to create alignment through “persistent modification” that invents the future without compromising the past. Attunement, in contrast to alignment, is about the soft stuff of people’s minds and souls. How can the hearts of your people “sing in harmony” when the vision is cast? What do you do with those frustrating saints who never seem to get it? In treating alignment and attunement, guidelines are suggested for both entrepreneurial and established churches. Particular attention is given to focus – how to say “no” when evaluating new opportunities as well as outdated programs.

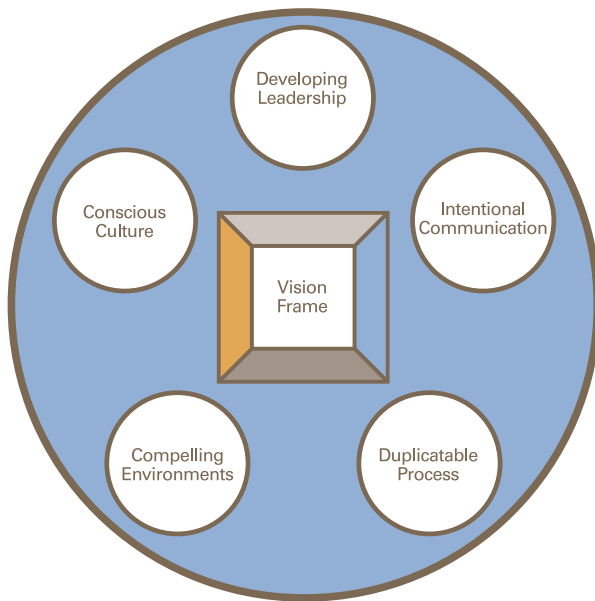
The final chapter of the book debuts Auxano’s Vision Integration Model. The model is a simple tool to equip your leadership for vision-centered dialogue and ego-free decision-making. For many teams it is too difficult to talk through the barriers of ministry “silos,” fragmented initiatives, and over-programming. The Integration Model provides a way through. The primary benefit of the Integration Model is that leaders can begin to think cross-functionally rather than departmentally. The model works equally well with traditional and emerging contexts, because it transcends the strategy and structure of different philosophies of ministry. The model has five components as illustrated below. For each component the book highlights three specific principles, providing fifteen principles of vision integration in total.

The success of advancing vision is directly proportional to the degree to which the vision is first aligned and integrated.

Integration Model

The Integration Model is not a system theory, but a conversation starting point which begins by looking at the church through five perspectives: leadership, communication, process, environment, and culture. For each perspective, Mancini presents three principles for weaving vision into the life of the church. Here is a very simple outline of the five perspectives and their respective principles:

Church Unique | *Will Mancini (cont'd)*



Developing Leadership

How will you use vision to recruit leaders, develop leaders, structure people, and divide your attention among the right leaders?

- Staff: get people who get the vision
- Structure: let strategy determine structure
- Engine: lead leaders

Intentional Communication

Daily, your church is the steward of thousands of moments of truth – communication. Members talking to a neighbor, someone drives by your facility, ministry emails, staff business card left on a desk – the church's vision is distributed countless ways. The discipline of church communications must be approached with a tremendous amount of intentionality.

- Attention: grab attention or hold nothing
- Brand: communicate visually
- Awareness: broadcast your position

Duplicatable Process

At some point your vision must transcend your skills and be deposited into the basic reproducible habits of the entire congregation. It's not about what you can do, but what you can duplicate.

- Assimilation: help people attract people
- Evangelism: accessorize the mission
- Multiplication: decide how you duplicate

Compelling Environments

The missional leader must constantly show that the church gathered is actually a time of preparation for "being the church" outside of its walls.

- Worship: refocus Jesus, together
- Connect: integrate everything relationally
- Serve: serve inside out

Conscious Culture

The missional visionary is also a cultural architect. Transforming the future is made possible because the cultural perspective is held in conscious view.

- Scripture: reveal God's signature
- Folklore: retell the story
- Symbol: mark defining moments

Church Unique | *Will Mancini (cont'd)*

The Integration Model gives you a working vocabulary for pulling your unique vision together. The vision will not move forward unless it ties into and brings together leadership, communication, processes, environments, and culture. If it does, your Church Unique will capture your culture and build a movement that flows into your community with contagious redemptive passion.

Church Unique is written as a field manual on a new kind of visioning process: to live a vision that creates a stunningly unique, movement-oriented church.

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Church Unique | Will Mancini (cont'd)

Recommended Resources

1. Check out these stories of churches who have used *Church Unique* to help them discover their Vision Pathway. **Watch** and listen to leaders of Harvest Church discuss their struggles and how the process outlined in *Church Unique* helped them clarify their vision and mission. **Read** how Northgate Community Church used *Church Unique* to discover a clear and concise picture of the “whole” of their congregation and how each part connects to and supports the other as they serve the Lord.
2. Follow Will’s blog [here](#) and his author page [here](#) for illustrations, ideas, and tools related to *Church Unique*. An excellent place to start is **The Vision Frame: The Core Tool for Visionary Leaders**.
3. **Watch** Will talk about why he wrote *Church Unique* in this brief video from the Leadership Network.
4. **Purchase** a copy of the *Church Unique* Visual Summary, a highly graphic and visually stimulating summary of *Church Unique*. Using symbols and simple language, it is intended to bring a meaningful summary to the longer field manual of *Church Unique*.
5. Take a look at the **Vision Deck**, a companion tool for *Church Unique*. The Vision Deck is a set of fifty-two exercises that will inspire your team and integrate your vision.

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Go Ahead Actions for Vision Clarity

by Bryan Rose

Vision Clarity Connection

Many pastors find themselves stuck in one place or rushing from place to place. Some are at a standstill, searching books and conferences for the “Next Big Thing” in church growth. Others are running head-long into a microwaved vision without spending critical time to develop leaders and cultivate agreement along the way.

Church Unique, by Will Mancini, provides a systematic, proven process for clarifying and articulating a vision for ministry as unique as the ridges and swirls of your fingerprint. Few books are as immediately applicable to ministry leaders in every context, from church planter, to established pastor, to seminary student.

Church Unique is your permission slip to step into the singular calling that God has ordained for the church or organization that you lead. In it, you will discover the tools necessary to ignite the redemptive passion of your people and connect them to a vision greater than anything you could ever ask or imagine.

Go Ahead

1. Build a Clarity Listening Post

Identify 3-5 key staff and lay leaders to become the clarity “listening post” for your organization. Ask them to read part three of *Church Unique* over the next month, and then empower them to be clarity filters for your leadership. As you plan visionary communication or evaluate past messages, engage these leaders to speak into how you, and the church, can most clearly and consistently communicate God’s call.

2. Ask The Right Questions

Dedicate an hour of staff meeting this week to evaluating your existing vision articulation. Have one team member pull together your most current vision-casting language. Look toward “real-time” ministry mission statements, pulpit announcements, and marketing materials, especially from last Sunday. Using the “5 Irreducible Questions of Leadership,” outlined around the Vision Frame, examine how you talk about and call people toward God’s preferred future. Based on this discussion, set aside dedicated time over the next few months to refine, redefine, and align your ministry language.

3. Live Out the Next Step

Take the necessary steps toward allowing vision to penetrate and influence the culture of your church by walking forward in the process of vision advancement with your lead staff during a day-long retreat. Using the 5 perspectives of the Integration Model in step 3 shown above, prayerfully and collaboratively prioritize according to area of highest need. Immediately create at least 3 short-term, actionable steps for the “top” perspective through the lens of your unique Vision Frame language. Assign each team member a responsibility and calendar progress updates to ensure vision advancement.

To learn more about developing your unique Vision Frame or to schedule a free one-hour *Church Unique* coaching call with an Auxano Navigator, call **800.894.0991** or visit **auxano.com**.



More About Bryan Rose

As Lead Navigator for Auxano, Bryan Rose has a strong bias toward merging strategy and creativity within the vision of the local church and has had a diversity of experience in just about every ministry discipline over the last 12 years. Bryan has demonstrated achievement as a strategic thinker with a unique ability to infuse creativity into the visioning process while bringing a group of people to a deep sense of personal ownership and passion.

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Auxano is the only vision clarity consulting group that will guide your team through a God-ward and collaborative process called the Vision Pathway. To learn more, visit auxano.com or check us out on [Twitter](#) and our [Auxano](#) and [VisionRoom](#) Facebook pages.

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