**Keeping Your Discipleship Engine Running**

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In the No Man Left Behind Model, sustaining momentum is the third “gear” in the [engine that runs the conveyor belt](https://maninthemirror.org/2019/04/29/harness-the-power-of-the-discipleship-engine/). It is often the least exciting of the three parts of the Create-Capture-Sustain strategy. And yet it is here that the majority of spiritual growth takes place, and how you can best make sure no man is left behind.

Before we look at how to connect men to “sustain” activities, and the result of this over time, let’s review: [The key to sustaining momentum](https://maninthemirror.org/2019/08/05/the-key-to-sustaining-momentum-in-the-long-term/) over the long term is getting men into authentic relationships with other men and the regular study of God’s Word. The goal of the sustain step, then, is to accomplish those two goals.

Be sure to communicate to the leaders of your [capture steps](https://maninthemirror.org/2019/07/08/the-next-step-mindset/) that their job is to help men make a seamless transition to your sustain activities. For example, consider this scenario: your capture step after an activity is a six-week follow-up group; your sustain step is to get men and their spouses into an ongoing couple’s class on Sundays at church. In the third or fourth week of the follow-up group study, the leaders begin introducing the idea of the men coming with their wives to the class on Sunday mornings.

At their last meeting, the leader might say something like this, “Guys, this has been a lot of fun. As I mentioned before, our next step is a couple’s class on Sunday mornings. The teacher is John Thomas who does a great job. The next three weeks he’s talking about divorce-proofing our marriages. My wife and I would like to invite you and your wives to meet us for the class and then come to our house for lunch after church. We’ll meet you at the south doors to the education building at 9:10 this Sunday.”

Do you see how this is a concrete, believable opportunity that helps a man want to take the next step? Your leaders need to shepherd their men from one step to the next.

As you are planning your longer-term sustain opportunities, don’t lose sight of the [Portal Priority](https://maninthemirror.org/2019/03/11/is-making-disciples-your-churchs-1-priority/). Make sure that all of the ongoing activities you are offering for men are helping them become disciples and grow in their faith. Don’t let them become places to stick men to keep them busy. Make sure all of your efforts are contributing to the vision you have for your men.

**Achieving Long-Term, Sustainable Growth**

The conveyor belt can’t stand still; it needs to keep men moving forward in their spiritual journey. When they have gone through the cycle of Create-Capture-Sustain, it will soon be time for another create opportunity. A 12- or 18-week small group study or Sunday School semester is great, but that sustaining activity needs to propel men forward to the next phase of their spiritual growth and overcome complacency.

It’s important to note that even when you use the Create-Capture-Sustain strategy, centered around a compelling vision, you will have men drop out at each step. Remember the parable of the sower ([Matthew 13:3-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%2013.3-9))? Three-fourths of the seed falls on ground that, for one reason or another, is not the right soil for growth. Some men will inevitably fall off.

Others will need several “cycles” of create-capture before they’re ready for the longer-term spiritual growth of sustain. But by the end of each cycle, you will also have new men staying involved in your discipleship process and growing together. The graph below shows the net effect on your ministry—long-term, sustainable growth.

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**Be Flexible**

Graphs like the one above make it seem very neat and orderly. Create always leads to capture and then to sustain. In reality, though, these processes often overlap and intermingle. When a man is earlier in his spiritual journey, you have to keep creating compelling reasons for him to be involved in the discipleship process—even if he doesn’t understand that’s what he’s doing.

And although you will most often make plans for groups of men, the create-capture-sustain will be in play at your church among individual men as well.

For example, the create step for one man may be the sustain step for someone else. For an unchurched guy, being on the softball team last season was a create step. He really enjoyed the end-of-season BBQ when he got to meet the pastor (a capture step). For him, the next season of softball is a sustain step. For another man on the softball team, giving his testimony at the BBQ was a create step on his path to leadership. At the same time, one member of the team recruited another member to join his new small group (a capture step).

As you’re creating discipleship pathways for your men, be flexible! There will be bumps on the path and unforeseen detours.

But keep pressing in and giving men the opportunity to grow and sustain the change. You will see transformation taking place from men studying God’s Word and building relationships with each other.

***Man in the Mirror is here to support you along the way, together in the mission to see no man left behind!***

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