

YOUTH DIRECTORS GUIDE

Maintaining a Great Relationship
with Your Conference Treasurer

DO

HAVE A PLAN

FOLLOW THE BUDGET

BE PREPARED

KEEP GOD A PRIORITY

***Youth Directors Guide
Maintaining a Great Relationship
with Your Conference Treasurer***

This Youth Directors Guide is a resource created by the North American Division Youth and Young Adult Department.

Author: Randy Robinson

Cover Design and Inside Layout: Claudia C. Pech Moguel

Available from

AdventSource

5120 Prescott Avenue

Lincoln, NE 68506

402.486.8800 | adventsource.org

©2024 North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior written permission of the copyright holder.

Printed in the United States of America.

ISBN# 979-8-88628-908-4

Introduction

There is no question that the youth department (and other youth-facing departments) are among the most important in a conference. When managed effectively, these departments help shape the character of the church's youth, preparing them for adult life, including building a solid relationship with Jesus. Additionally, I've always believed that conference departments, especially the youth department, introduce the concept of serving the church as a vocation to young people.

Given the importance of this ministry, it's essential that those in youth department leadership optimize their relationships with conference administration, including the conference treasurer.

The reality of conference operations is that money plays a significant role in almost everything that's done. From my experience, youth-facing departments tend to be high users of financial resources. Therefore, it is crucial for youth directors to understand their conference treasurer, find positive ways to communicate, and orient their department to align with the overall vision of conference leadership and the financial landscape of the conference.

This guide will provide you with the information necessary to foster a strong relationship with your conference treasurer.

The information will be presented in three sections. The first section will provide general context to help youth directors approach the conference treasurer with the department's needs. The second section will outline four things to avoid when interacting with your conference treasurer. The final section will offer four key actions to take when working with your treasurer.

General Information About Your Conference Treasurer

Conferences come in all shapes and sizes. Some operate on a shoestring budget, while others have ample resources. Some are geographically small, while others are vast. Some have a relatively small membership, while others serve large congregations. Conference treasurers are no less varied. Given this reality, it's important to understand the "flavor" of your conference treasurer.

What do I mean by “flavor”? Some treasurers are primarily driven by the bottom line. In other words, they focus on creating a financial environment that ensures a positive operating outcome at the end of the year. They closely monitor every penny and do not play favorites. Departments are evaluated using specific, evenly applied criteria and are expected to operate with positive financial results.

Other treasurers may prioritize evangelistic endeavors. They are more likely to support programs that lead to membership growth and baptisms, favoring outreach initiatives that draw people into the church.

You likely won't find a treasurer with just one singular "flavor." Most have a mix of priorities, but one or two often stand out. Knowing what these are will almost certainly help you communicate more effectively, which could lead to a positive financial outcome for your department.

I want to be clear—this is not a guide to manipulating your treasurer into giving you money. If that’s your takeaway, then I have completely failed to communicate. Understanding your treasurer’s orientation or “flavor” is a wise way to align your department’s vision with the treasurer’s financial vision for the conference. When these two are misaligned, negative consequences can occur. When they are aligned, wonderful ministry can flourish!

4 Things to Avoid

Every conference treasurer I have known, including myself, is human. We are susceptible to circumstances, distractions, anger, attempts at manipulation, compliments, encouragement, and many other factors that arise in the daily operations of a conference. Since we are all human and tend to react to both positive and negative stimuli, here is a non-exhaustive list of four things to avoid when interacting with your conference treasurer.

1. *Thinking You are the Only/Most Important Department in the Conference*

We all tend to emphasize what we are passionate about. Since you are a youth department leader, I assume your passion is for the youth of our church—and that's wonderful! Don't ever lose that passion. As I mentioned in the introduction, youth-facing departments are some of the most vital in a conference because they focus on our children, which is incredibly important.

*What other departments
are in your conference?*

That said, there are many other important departments in a conference, each led by directors who are just as passionate about their work as you are about yours. The job of a conference treasurer is to take the limited resources available and distribute them across all conference ministries, of which yours is just one.

The conference executive committee and constituency, often through the president's office, will determine the conference's main vision. The administration, including the treasurer, then works to align resource distribution with that vision. Any department director who approaches administration with the belief that their department deserves a disproportionate share of resources—or that their agenda must take priority over others—risks alienating the treasurer.

Directors, regardless of their passion for their department or its importance to the conference, must understand that conferences operate with finite financial resources. These resources need to be distributed optimally across the entire ministry landscape.

There may be times when certain departments receive additional resources, but these instances are rare. Avoid the mindset that your department is more important than others or that it should receive funding at levels you deem necessary, even at the expense of other departments.

Be passionate about your department and make your case for the resources you need. However, approach this with the understanding that you are one essential part of a larger system—one cog in a wheel with many other important parts that also require resources.

This attitude will greatly benefit your relationship with your conference treasurer.

2. Ignoring Budgetary Limitations

Most, if not all, conferences operate with a budget and have a budget process. It is imperative that you familiarize yourself with the budget process that the treasurer implements. Often, treasurers will meet annually with each department director in preparation for constructing the annual budget for the upcoming year. If there is no formal time period on the calendar for you to meet with the treasurer regarding budgetary planning, I urge you to make an appointment with the treasurer to review past use of funds, the purposes for which those funds were used, and a plan for how resources will be allocated (and how much) during the new year. Treasurers usually start the budget process in late summer or early fall, so ensure your appointment is scheduled within that time frame. Being late may limit your ability to provide meaningful input to the budget process.

Treasurers usually seek input from directors during the budget process. Once that process is complete, the treasurer will rely on your input and the agreements made during the budget planning stage. Throughout the new budget year, there is a clear expectation that you will adhere to the established budgetary boundaries. Ignoring

*When will you meet
with your treasurer?*

*List the major items
in your budget*

To ensure smooth management of budget expectations, make sure to do the following:

- What projects should I talk with my Treasurer about?*

[illegible]

The challenge with this reality is that not every department in the conference can fundraise for their cause. For example, while the IT department is critical to the operation of a conference, rank-and-file members are far less likely to be excited about contributing funds to purchase a much-needed new server than they are about donating to a scholarship fund to send kids to youth camp.

I am not suggesting that the youth department should refrain from fundraising. That would be foolish! We need to give our members every opportunity to support as many ministries as possible. What I am saying is that when you can raise funds beyond your budget allocation, coordinate the process with the treasurer—preferably during your regular budget discussions—so it can be factored into the overall budget expectations. Your ability to raise extra funds might even make it easier for the conference to provide funding for that much-needed server, which, in the end, will help support your department as well!

4. *Going Behind the Back of the Treasurer*

We are all familiar with the tactic of children going to one parent, asking for something they want, and when that parent says no, they go to the other parent to see if the outcome can be changed in their favor. While I believe most directors would not intentionally use this approach to secure more resources (such as going to the president after the treasurer has said no), many inadvertently use variations of this strategy.

For instance, halfway through the year, a director might realize that the budgeted amount allotted to their department is not sufficient to complete a program. Instead of approaching the treasurer, the director goes directly to the president to request additional resources. Another common approach is when one director “partners” with another to secure funding for a program that they feel requires more support.

These are just two examples, but I strongly urge directors to avoid using such approaches when seeking additional funding. Whenever your department needs extra resources, always go through the treasurer. Skipping this step creates confusion within the treasury and can damage your relationship with the treasurer. Since the treasurer manages a finite pool of funds for all departments, directors who approach other directors for funding disrupt the equitable and planned distribution of resources throughout the organization.

To maintain fairness and clarity, avoid seeking alternative funding routes that do not involve communicating with the treasurer. Allow the treasurer to provide input on any arrangements between departments or additional income streams, so an equitable distribution of funds can be maintained.

*Jot down an outline of
your financial plan*

[illegible]

4 Things You Should Do

A good conference treasurer will establish a clear vision for the financial health of the conference, aligning it with the overall vision set by the president and the executive committee. We've reviewed some things to avoid when working with your conference treasurer; now let's look at some things you should do to align yourself and your department with the treasurer's vision.

1. Have a Specific Plan

I have interacted with department directors who assume that the intrinsic importance of their department is sufficient reason to expect the funding they desire. However, no matter the department or its importance, nothing could be further from the truth. Your conference treasurer will appreciate a well-thought-out financial plan that is laid out logically and within the context of the conference's financial capabilities.

For instance, if you oversee the operations of a youth camp, which typically requires substantial funding, it's important to approach

As you craft your plan, be both realistic and flexible. This ties back to understanding the “flavor” of your treasurer and being familiar with the general financial landscape of the conference. If your plan stays within those parameters, the likelihood of a successful outcome for you, your department, and the conference as a whole is very high.

I know I've already mentioned this from the opposite perspective, but it underscores the importance of the issue: Follow your budget! No treasurer likes dealing with a director who comes to the budget meeting asking for more money for next year when they've been unable to stay within the agreed-upon budget guidelines for the past year. We all know there are ups and downs and unexpected events that can cause overruns. The best course of action is to involve your treasurer when these occur (don't wait until the budget meeting) and seek their advice on how to resolve the issue.

Keeping your treasurer in the loop throughout the year helps ease more difficult conversations that may arise during budget meetings. When issues come up, review your budget to see if there's flexibility to cover the cost from another area within your existing budget. If that's the case, communicate the plan to your treasurer. They may be able to adjust the budget accordingly. If there's no way around an unexpected expense, inform your treasurer and consult with them on how to handle it. Being transparent with your treasurer is almost always the best approach.

3. *Be Prepared at Budget Time*

6 Youth Directors Guide

Once you've gathered this information, consolidate it within the format provided by your treasurer. When you attend the budget meeting, it's ideal to bring the staff members responsible for portions of the budget so they can explain their needs firsthand. If that's not possible, you need to be well-prepared to explain the financial needs of each area, along with your overall perspective. A detailed explanation of the needs will be greatly appreciated.

Who will you involve in gathering information for your budget?

People with a passion for something usually want to take ownership of it—that’s human nature. But for those of us working in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we have a higher calling. There’s nothing wrong with being passionate about what you do—never lose that! However, it’s important to remember that we defer to God. He is in charge. This is His church, His ministry, and the youth are His. We are His. He is in control, and we are His agents to accomplish His purposes.

Approaching your ministry leadership in this way will also help you better understand your treasurer's position when finances are tight or when funding falls short of your expectations. This is God's church, and He doesn't need a single penny to accomplish His will. Yet, He chooses to work through human abilities and structures, which have inherent limitations, to fulfill His purposes. Therefore, connecting with Him daily, asking for discernment and wisdom to lead your ministry, must be your top priority. He will provide what you need to lead, whether resources are abundant or scarce.

Conclusion

May God bless you as you passionately lead your department and help spread the message of our soon coming Savior!

About the Author

Randy Robinson was fortunate to be educated in Seventh-day Adventist schools from first grade through his college degree. After his marriage to Denise Halenz, he began his career in the employ of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a business intern in the Nevada Utah Conference in Reno, NV. After spending almost 10 years there, completing his two-year internship and then serving as accountant and Assistant treasurer, he was invited to serve as secretary/treasurer of the Illinois Conference. He spent 4 years there at which time he accepted the position of treasurer of the Oregon Conference. After 10 years, he was called to be treasurer/CFO of the Southern Union just outside of Atlanta, GA. After 11 years, he accepted the invitation to serve as treasurer/CFO of the North American Division, from which he retired in August of 2023. He lives in Central Florida with Denise, his wife of 41 years. They have two grown, married sons.

“The youth department and other youth-facing departments are among the most important in a conference.”

The reality of conference operations is that money plays a significant role in almost everything that’s done, and youth-facing departments tend to be high users of financial resources. Therefore, it is crucial for youth directors to understand their conference treasurer, find positive ways to communicate, and orient their department to align with the overall vision of conference leadership and the financial landscape of the conference.

This guide will provide you with the information necessary to foster a strong relationship with your conference treasurer.



AdventSource