

## **What I Have Learned in 4 Years & 500+ Personal Interviews**

### **A Webinar for The Mission Exchange**

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## **4 years in a motorhome**

- 500+ “One: on one Interviews
- 30+ States pr year
- 100,000+ Miles
- Assignment from the Mission Exchange Board
  - Encourage Mission Leaders
  - Cross-pollinate the Mission Ecosphere
  - Assist where possible

## **Three Main Topics for Reflection**

- The Context in which we do missions
- Our Mission Ecosphere
- The Mission Leader’s Pilgrimage
- *9 Tentative Recommendations*

## **Reflections on the Context of US Missions**

Technology  
Growth of the Global Church  
The Situation in the US Church

## **Technology**

- Travel / Electronic
- Technology melds the here / there
- Inability to truly segment and target communication
- The demise of info. “float”
- Urgency miss-match between leader and field staff
  - Technology changes fast
  - People change more slowly
  - Fields and HQ have different perceptions of change urgency

## **Growth of the Global Church**

- Optimism abroad
- Question: How do we relate to the new global context?
  - In a relational world, what is the right structural response?
  - Others occupy the space which was our own.

## **The Situation of the US Church**

- Our traditional constituency is shrinking
  - Age
  - Ethnicity
- The Church that is growing sees mission differently
  - Ethnic Churches
  - Emerging Churches
  - House Churches
  - Multi- Site Churches

## **?? Question ??**

- Which of these three areas of change have most impacted your mission?
  - Technology?
  - The growth of the global Church?
  - The changes in the US Church?
- Which of these three areas will have the most future impact on your ministry?
  - Technology?
  - The Growth of the global Church?
  - The changes in the US Church?

## **Reflections on our Mission Ecosphere**

Everyone is going global  
The community is more fragmented  
We have little data outside the specialty “silo.”  
We have no composite picture

## **The “All Purpose” Agency**

- Everyone is going “full service”
- This places everyone in direct competition
  - With donors
  - With potential partners
- This dulls the cutting edge of mission
- This makes it difficult to evaluate and manage today’s mission

## **Agency Generosity but ...**

- We are an incredibly generous community
  - We will give away most anything
  - We like our contribution acknowledged
- NIH (Not Invented Here) is alive and well
  - We invent rather than adapt
  - We all have our experts (the best)
  - Wastes significant kingdom resources

## **Agency Demographics**

- Most missions are struggling to keep even
  - Small number of exceptions
  - Facilities that are monuments to the past
  - Nationals?
- Short-Term Missions Plateaued
- Non-traditional missions may be growing
  - US based, internationally focused
- Evangelical Social Action, R&D, BAM

## **Financial Pressures**

- Across the board cuts with the hope it will get better soon
- Reshaping the ministry
  - Re-focusing
  - Cutting marginal accretions
  - M & A
- This may be the new normal
  - Look at the Church at home
- Donors are exerting increased influence
  - Programmatic biases
  - Evaluation
  - Quick fixes
- Donor growth is individual not Churches

## **Theological Issues**

- Extraction / Cultural Accommodation
  - Flashpoint Bible Translation
- Word / Deed Ministry
- Traditional / Missional Churches
- Not “if” but “how far,” one way or another

## **?? Question ??**

- What do you think about this state of affairs in our community?
  - Troubling.
  - It is a natural progression.
  - It has always been this way.
- Do you think the changes are more or less than in the past?
  - More
  - Less
  - The same
- Which of the areas do you find most challenging ?
  - Theological
  - Financial
  - Demographic
  - Inability to receive as well as give
  - The increased fragmentation of the mission community

## **Reflection on the Leader's Pilgrimage**

- Time Bounded Commitments
  - Other important priorities
- More aware of the limits of “control”
- Missions are going outside for leadership
  - Lack of “bench strength”
  - Lack of development programs
- Gender Issues
  - The place of the spouse
  - Inability to assign the right person

### **Mission leaders are working extremely hard but ....**

- We are managing the present better than ever
  - We are ignoring the future.
  - We just don't have time.
- We cultivate a vision for our ministry, but spend little time on how we fit into the bigger picture.
- What God is doing outside our field of vision is often dismissed.
  - It is often deemed sub-standard, inferior.

### **?? Questions ??**

- How long have you been in your present position? \_\_\_
- Do you see yourself in this position 5-7 years from now? Y - N
- Do the following represent a serious tension for you?
  - Work / Family
  - Work / Calling
- Your mission has a plan in place to produce the next CEO? Y - N
- Your mission will probably go outside for the next CEO? Y - N

### **Nine Personal Suggestions on Possible Courses of Action**

- 1. Cultivate a broad picture of what God is doing
  - Through broad relationships
  - Through reading – Religious and Secular
  - Look for complimentary roles
- 2. Sharpen you focus, hone your area of expertise.
- 3. Realize that God is at work far beyond us. This presents us with unparalleled opportunities if we but look for them

### **Nine Personal Suggestions on Possible Courses of Action**

- 4. Use the financial crisis to focus your organization
  - Cut out that which others can do
  - Cut out the merely average, focus on the excellent
  - Build complimentary relationships
- 5, Free yourself from the myth that “big is better”
  - “God’s blessing” and “bigness” are not synonymous
  - Smaller and strategic is always better than larger and unfocused
- 6, Look for, accept, and build relationships with the new missional forms God is raising up
  - Your mission was once “young,” “radical,” on the “bleeding edge”

### **Nine Personal Suggestions on Possible Courses of Action**

- 7. Give thanks for all the potential new partners God has raised up even though it limits your freedom of action
  - Learn to play “harmony,” not merely “lead”
- 8. Develop a culture that can graciously “receive” as well as “give” gifts of expertise and knowledge
  - Make that your organizational reflex
- 9. Lastly, give thanks that you live in this the most exciting day of God’s historic mission advance

### **Conclusion: I am incredibly optimistic**

- The Mission is God’s Mission
- The quest for world evangelization is also His
- He has graciously given us a significant & unique role to play in His plan for drawing His people from every nation
- The One who calls us to Himself also still sends us in His name, to disciple the Nations

### **Thank you for your time**

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