ESSENTIAL STEPS FOR THE FUTURE

Posted on March 1, 2023 by Eddie

When was the last time you sat down and listened to someone who was critical about the work that your agency does?
Category: Mission Agency Futures

This post is aimed at mission agency board members and leadership teams, though I hope others will read it too. Please feel free to share it around.

I'd like to ask a question.

When was the last time you sat down and listened to someone who was critical about the work that your agency does?

I don't mean people who are opposed to mission in general terms, but people who have strong theological or methodological reservations or criticisms of your work. If you don't think that such people exist, then you are probably spending too much time in an organisational echo chamber. Your critics may be Christians, they may come from the development community, or they may be found somewhere else, but you do have critics.

A second question.

If you are not listening to your critics, how do you expect your organisation to grow and adapt to the challenges of the 21st century?

British mission agencies face a multitude of challenges. Perhaps the most important one is finding their place in a world where Western Christians are in the minority and our place is less significant that it was (or than we think it still is). Added to this, there are the challenges of increasing secularisation at home, the growing complexities of charity law and the realisation that outside interventions are not always as helpful as they might seem at first.

If the only voices you listen to come from within your organisation or from like minded people, you will struggle to grasp the level of change which is needed (which is why many people will wonder what on earth I'm talking about). Listening to critics helps you to get to grips with issues within your organisation that you may not have been aware of and brings to light factors in the environment that you have not yet considered. Of course, having listened to your critics, you may decide that what you are doing is fine and there is no need to change, but at least you will be making this decision on the basis of better information than just listening to your friends.

The world in which we carry out our mission is changing and our organisations need to change with it. Old ways of doing business might allow us to carry on functioning into the future, but we may no

longer be relevant to the people we believe we are serving. If we are to matter in the future, we need to learn to think in new ways, and one of those is to listen to those who disagree with us.