GOFEST THOUGHTS

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Some thoughts about an excellent weekend mission conference and a little rant about the way some mission agencies approach the public in these contexts.
Category: Observations

This weekendÂ GoFest, the UK's largest Christian event devoted to world mission, was held at Busltrode, the headquarters of WEC in the UK. As is the way with these events, there was a large marquee for the main gatherings, a worship band and some big name speakers. From what I hear, these were excellent. Between the main sessions, there are a number of seminars, which is where I was involved. Over the weekend, I gave a couple ofÂ seminars on the Bible and Mission and will repeat one of them this afternoon. Much of the content has appeared on Kouyanet at various times, so I'll not go into detail about them here.

What I did want to mention was the 'Global Village'; basically a large marquee fullÂ of stallsÂ with mission agencies, training colleges and other organisations setting out their wares. Many Christian events have an area like this, but, in my experience, you could die of loneliness manning a stall at some conferences. Â At GoFest, however, the Global Village was buzzing, with lots of people wandering around, talking to the exhibitors and learning about what God is doing in the world; it was great!

For me, events like this are often a chance to meet friends. I generally can't go far without bumping into someone I once met on a trip to Burkina, or a mission leader that I've hung out with at various conferences. It's a lot of fun. Yesterday, it was wonderful to meet two people I knew from university who are now working in HR with another mission. The last time I saw them was at their wedding; and they've been married for 35 years.

It's always interesting to wander round the stalls and to see what different groups are doing and saying. The Wycliffe boothÂ seemed to be gathering some interest, which was great. I had a nice chat with the guys from MedAirÂ (did I mention that you can sponsor me to run the High Wycombe half marathon for MedAir?)

However, I have to say that I was rather bothered by the way that some of the people manning stalls approached me. I won't mention names, but as I wandered around, looking at the different presentations, a number of people more or less jumped out at me and gave me their pitch for their mission without ever asking whether I was interested, what my connection to mission was or even my name. It was rather sad and a touch worrying.

It bothers me, because this sort of aggressive publicity tends to alienate, rather than attract people and I really hope that this is not a reflection of the way that these groups work when they are sharing the Gospel.

And to the group who thought that clipping a clothes peg with their URL onto my laptop bag while I wasn't looking was a great way to share their message; it wasn't, it was just slightly irritating.

GoFest has been a brilliant event, and you should put the dates in your diary for next year as soon as you can.