TRUSTEES

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When I was the director of Wycliffe Bible Translators, my working relationship with the board of trustees wasn't always smooth.

However, I was always very grateful for the work that theÂ trustees did. It was theirÂ job to ensure that Wycliffe was meeting its goals, was in good organisational health and wasn't doing anything illegal. These are heavy responsibilities. If some of us on the Wycliffe staff had decided to rob the charity or to engage in some illegal financial transactions; the trustees would have been held responsible. They brought checks and balances and a wealth of outside experience to ensure that we stayed on the straight and narrow; and they did a great job.

Sadly, boards of trustees don't always do such a great job. The recent high profile cases of Kids Company and Barnabas Trust are sad examples of where trustees, for one reason or another, have not kept adequate control of the charities they were responsible for. To be fair to the trustees of both of these organisations, they were dealing with charismatic and powerful founders of the organisations, a situation which can often prove difficult.

However, itÂ is another aspect of the trustees' role that I want to briefly focus on. Effectively, the trustees need to ensure that the charity is well placed to fulfil its purpose on into the future. As I've said on more than one occasion, the world in which British missionary agencies operate has changed massively and agencies are going to need to change the way they operateÂ in the next few years (or try this post).

If you don't believe me, then let me repeat this quote from respected missionary scholar David Smith:

> *â€œWhat is clear by now is that both the concept of mission as a one-way movement from Christendom to the un-evangelised world, and the structures devised at the close of the eighteenth century to facilitate that movement, have been overtaken by a historical developments that render them increasingly irrelevant and redundant.â€*

The problem is, that the changes we need to see are of such a magnitude that they lie outside of the responsibilities of the day-to-day leadership of the agencies. In fact, most agency leaders that I talk to are so busy trying to keep the show on the road, that they don't have the luxury to think through some of the big changes that may need to be made in the short-medium future. This is where boards come in; we need mission boards who are engaging with the way in which the world Christian scene has changed and with the way that the church in the UK is changing and who are prepared to grasp the nettle of major organisational change. I don't know what these changes should be; they will be different from organisation to organisation, but I do know that they will need the input and sanction of charity trustees if they are to happen.