MISSION AGENCY FUTURES: PROCESS

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If agencies are to react to the issues that face them, they will need to spend significant time reflecting on what is going on in the world, what the Bible teaches and their own practices. Short-term fixes won't do.
Category: Observations

This is the third in a short series of posts looking at the way in which mission agencies will need to change in the future. The first post looked at what mission agencies are and the second considered the pressures that are pushing them to change. This post will look at the process that agencies need to consider in order to make the sorts of changes that the future will require.

The first thing to note is that simply making changes in order to attract more supporters, financial donors or to recruit more missionaries is not enough. These sorts of changes may ensure the viability of the agency in the short term (but see this post), but they do nothing to address the underlying issues which were raised in yesterday's post. Although agencies may have significant problems regarding finances or recruitment, these are not the most important things that they face. It would be possible for an agency to have a stable financial situation, without it dealing with the underlying issues of demographics, theology, mission and power that I outlined earlier. In this situation, the agency would be viable, but it would not be relevant to what God is doing in the world today.

What agencies (W=when I say agencies, I mean their leadership teams and boards) need to do is to engage in what is sometimes calledÂ *missiologigical reflection*. Though this sounds rather jargonish, it simply means taking time, to reflect and pray together about the significant issues that the agency is facing. The reflection needs to be done by bringing in input from a number of fields; Scripture and mission theology are clearly key issues, as are current trends in worldwide mission and the activities which the agency itself is involved in. The process should be corporate, involving a group of people and it should eventually lead to action in some form or another - and this action should eventually be the subject of a new round of reflection.

The actual process itself can take on a number of forms. It could be as simple as reading a missiological text together (say The Cape Town Commitment) and reflecting on the way in which the agency's field work is (or could be) shaped by the ideas in the book. Or it could be a much more complex facilitated process involving receiving reports from the agency's workers as well as reports from other agencies and considering them in the light of Scripture and changes in the global church.

The key is to take time and to draw together information and concepts from a variety of sources. If the process does not challenge some long-held traditions and does not make people uncomfortable, then it probably isn't going deep enough!

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