



Center for United States Missions

Mission Moments



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The Delicate Art of Mission Partnering

By Rev. Michael Ruhl

It is no great secret at all. When resources become scarce, church planters scramble to develop *mission partnerships* with diverse individuals and entities in order to help propel their mission forward. Certainly the intention is noble and God-pleasing, but the consummation of inappropriate mission partnerships can have the opposite effect and diminish the redemptive surge of the mission. Mission partnerships can be a cost-effective way to promote and expand your mission, as long as you do not compromise your confession or give away more than you get.

Here are four simple suggestions for being *wise as a serpent – but innocent as a dove* (Matthew 10:16) when it comes to creating mission partnerships to advance your mission.

1. Target partners that will excite your audience

Be sure that the potential partner does not have core values which openly (or privately) contradict the core values of your mission. Your constituents will be energized and excited about shaking hands with a mission partner which is known for authentic Kingdom impact and creative approaches to mission.

2. Allow both partners to fill gaps in the other's mission

Look for opportunities to bless and encourage each other in the partnering relationship. Simply drawing on name recognition of the partner to advance my local mission is inadequate and will be a short-lived partnership. Likewise the simple granting access to one another's clients is also inadequate. Partnerships work best when *iron is sharpening iron* (Proverbs 27:17).

3. Don't endanger your ministry reputation

As a high-integrity Church Planter, you must know when to say 'no'. The mission partnerships you consummate speak volumes about who and what your ministry is – and is not. Therefore it is always important to *guard the flock* (Acts 20:28) from shame and dishonor resulting from establishing strategic alliance with partners which are not biblical and Christ-honoring. Be cautious about tying the reputation of your ministry to someone else's reputation.

4. Define the terms of the mission partnership – and walk if they are broken

Be crystal clear about who is doing what in the partnership. Know exactly what benefits you expect to receive – and what encouragement(s) you are poised to give – or if you are at risk of doing too much work for too little return (or vice versa). Evaluate the partnership on a regular

basis and be ready to terminate the partnership if God is not glorified, one or both of the partners are not being blessed and the mission is not advancing to the glory of God.

There is something inherently appealing about the old saying: *You scratch my back – and I will scratch yours!* Yet there are some ‘loopholes and landmines’ in the enlistment of inappropriate mission partners. Surely the Holy Spirit (the Counselor), Prayer and the Word of God can guide the Church Planter – and any Biblical Mission Society – in God-pleasing alliances with godly mission partners.



Rev. Michael Ruhl is the Director of Mission Training for the Center for United States Missions. You may contact him at mike.ruhl@cui.edu.

Moment Extras

Questions for Discussion

Personal or Group Reflection

1. List the **Mission Partners** which are helping to advance the mission of your congregation or mission society.
 2. How are each of your Mission Partners encouraging/supporting the advance of your mission?
 3. How is your congregation or mission society encouraging/supporting the missional advance of each of your Mission Partners?
 4. How do we evaluate the mutual benefits (win/win) in our relationships with Mission Partners?
 5. What realities would cause you to ‘walk away’ from a Mission Partnership which has become dysfunctional?
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Resources You Can Use

Related Books and Links

The Tricky Art of Partnering by Erin Geiger Smith – This article provides tips for navigating marketing partnerships. Read the article in Inc. Magazine, April 2015, pg. 22.

[*Finance Business Partnering: A Guide*](#) - This report from the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales provides practical advice for those considering business partnering initiatives and those looking to improve their approach.

Partnering: The New Face of Leadership – In this book by Segil, Goldsmith and Belasco, they reveal that the future of business growth is in the partnerships that companies and their executives form. *Partnering* explains how critical it is for business leaders to "partner" effectively.

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For more information contact the Center at [952-657-2182](tel:952-657-2182).

Center for U.S. Missions

office@centerforusmissions.com

Rev. Dr. Peter Meier, Executive Director; peter.meier@cu.edu

Rev. Michael Ruhl, Director of Training; mike.ruhl@cu.edu

Kathy Meier, Coordinator; kathy.meier@cu.edu

Mil Behnken, Office Manager; mil.behnken@cu.edu