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Tostes, Brazil; Parks, USA; Tiplady, UK

105 NOT OUT: CHANGE AND RENEWAL IN A CENTENARIAN MISSION AGENCY

In the great and ancient sport of cricket, played in most countries that Britain used to count as theirs (sorry about that), perhaps the worst score for a batsman (other than a golden duck, out first ball) is to be out for 99. Just one run short of a century, the bittersweet sense of just falling short can ruin what is otherwise a fine achievement. And a double century is a dream.

Founded in 1904, by 2003 ECM (Britain) was close to being out for 99. Reaching out to refugees during the Spanish Civil War, supporting persecuted Christians under communism, working

with war-traumatised families in Bosnia and Kosovo, and planting churches in some of Europe's most unresponsive regions, ECM has a long heritage of pioneering and compassionate missionary work in what was once the heartland of Christendom. But recruitment was slow, budgets were unbalanced, funds for missionary support were far below what was needed, and it was genuinely being asked whether the best thing to do...was to close.

About this time, the trustees took control. With turnover of senior staff high, an interim director was brought in for



nine months. A born trouble-shooter, he certainly shot trouble. Painful decisions were made regarding expenditure cuts and the decks were cleared for the appointment of a new director. Guess who?

Joining ECM (Britain) in its 2004 centenary year, I found an organisation doing great work but hiding its light under a bushel. Staff and missionary morale was low, but they didn't have to be. As I leave ECM six years later, we have re-

focused, we're growing in missionary recruitment and income (both general and missionary), we're starting new projects, and we're beginning to look ahead to another hundred years of serving the Lord in Europe. So how did we do it?

First, we saw God's grace at work. He brought us good people at just the right time. Different gifts and skills combined to move us forward. Home staff, trustees, volunteers and missionaries—all of us pulled together, rejoicing and celebrating as God brought new life to dry bones.

Second, we got the basics right. I've realised that clear, confident leadership (even if you're worrying that "you have bet the family farm") lends boldness to others. Good financial management, clear marketing and fundraising messages, and effective HR (human re-

sources) policies are all things that any organisation, mission agencies included, need to have.

Third, we set about changing the culture. Instead of being risk-averse, we became experimenters. "It's easier to get forgiveness than permission," I told my staff. "Better to try and fail than not try at all," I followed. Even when we failed, we learned something, even if all we learned was, "we won't do that again!"

Fourth, we set about working with others. Partnerships with other mission agencies and training colleges brought us out of our shell. We're a leading partner in the Nova European Mission Research Centre at Redcliffe College. We are the lead agency in Pole To Pole, a network that resources British churches to reach out the estimated one million

Polish people who have come to the UK since Poland joined the European Union in 2005. And we instigated, with two others, an annual conference that brings together 30-40 British mission agencies that work in Europe, to build relationships and work on common issues. If all you do is keep your head down, you end up in a rut. And the only difference between a rut and a grave is the depth.

These changes do not require rocket science. It's been about hard work. It's been about new ideas and experimentation. It's been about getting it wrong (sometimes we got it right). And it's about trusting God that the purpose for which your organisation exists—in our case, the re-evangelisation of the peoples of Europe—is still His purpose, and he's with you on the journey. We're now 105 not out. I wonder if ECM will score a double century? ●

GLOBAL DIALOGUE, Responses from leaders of agencies:

How do you partner with sending churches, mission training programs, and field-based local churches?

Detlef Blöcher, DMG, Germany

- Sending church: DMG wants to be a servant to the sending church. [We] work together with a local church to explore their capacities, develop their resources, build faith, walk with and learn from each other. The church then articulates their faith goal, laid out in an individualized trilateral cooperation agreement between the sending church, DMG and the missionary.... The resources of the sending church shall be used to the maximum and DMG will supply remaining tasks beyond the present scope of the church, and the missionary contributes.

After the term of service and during home assignment, the sending church is invited to the debriefing interview and reassessments. During reassessments, the church has grown and is now willing to take on additional responsibilities for its missionary (DMG steps back and takes on only the remaining items). ...

- Training programs: We assist in (formal and informal) missionary training programs through seminars and missiological courses and advise their curriculum development training. ...
- Field-based local churches: We strongly feel that churches in the place of service should be at the driving seat of missions – recognizing local churches can have different priorities and ways of operation. ...

Silas Tostes, Antioch Mission, Brazil

We train our missionaries, as we feel it is important to get to know them very well before they go to the fields. We only

send missionaries in partnership with local churches...

Reuben Ezemadu, CMF, Nigeria

About eighty percent of CMF leadership is involved in "extension" ministries, which assists local churches, denominations and even other mission agencies in developing their own mission sending and supporting structures. The same applies to our training programs....

David T. Lee, GMF, South Korea

We keep good relations by:

- Doing what the sending structure wants. This servant heart along with the spirit of excellence forms mutual trust and continuing partnerships.
- Respecting, assisting and equipping the field churches. National churches are to be nurtured and national leadership must be raised. ...
- Maintaining a continuous flow of information in the training centers...