

on establishing churches. At some level, organizational leaders acknowledge that mandate, but often don't know how to proceed, so the intentional work of providing clear descriptions needed to achieve success is left undone. My study¹ confirmed research results from the mission community (2006, 110), and correlated interestingly with comparable findings from the world of business and development and management. The responses to a survey I conducted demonstrated that church planters are more likely to be motivated to continue if the following are in place:

- a clear definition of the criteria for success;
- a clear description of tasks required to plant a church;
- training, coaching, and mentoring in tangible church-planting principles; and
- consistent encouragement and feedback from the mission agency and team leader/supervisor.

Let's consider implications of the four components.

Success: A Clear Definition

Clearly defined criteria for measuring success need to be in place in order for the agency and its church planters to know when a job has been done well. A clearly defined job description is also necessary so that the missionary knows what tasks are to be performed. What are the organization and its missionaries seeking to accomplish? If they do not know, how will they accomplish it? As David Garrison says, the first of the seven deadly sins for church-planting movements is blurred vision (2004, 239-240). If church planters don't have a clear vi-

sion for what a church-planting movement should look, likely they will fail.

A Clear Description of Tasks Required

The definition and design of the church-planting task will significantly influence the church planter's success. Ferdinand Fournies (2000, 94) surveyed twenty-five thousand managers and supervisors from around the world regarding the poor performance of their employees. He listed sixteen of the top responses he received (see box on page 85).

The majority of these problems relate to the managers/supervisors not doing something right in supervising their employees. There are also a number of problems that can be traced back to a lack of clear direction and/or a lack of feedback, similar to the points that Thomas Gilbert made in his human competence model (1996).

Fournies' study relates to the question, "Does the employee know what is supposed to be done?" He reports, "The most common missing information which causes project failure is they don't know what finished is supposed to look like" (2000, 120). Another way to say it is that there is confusion concerning the process and tasks involved in doing the job. Failure to know what a good finished product looks like emphasizes the need for job descriptions and performance outcomes. Fournies states,

Every business consultant and professor I have ever heard talk about increasing worker productivity has preached, "Tell people what you want them to do; give them good job descriptions." And business has flubbed that advice because most job descriptions don't describe the work;

Reasons for poor performance

- Employees don't know what they are supposed to do.
- Employees don't know how to do it.
- Employees don't know why they should do it.
- Employees think they are doing it (lack of feedback).
- There are obstacles beyond their control.
- Employees think it will not work.
- Employees think their way is better.
- Employees think something is more important (priorities).
- There is no positive consequence to them for doing it.
- There is a negative consequence to them for doing it.
- There is a positive consequence to them for not doing it.
- There is no negative consequence to them for not doing it.
- Personal limits (incapacity).
- Personal problems.
- Fear (they anticipate future negative consequences).
- No one could do it.

they describe the job responsibilities. Unfortunately, you can't do a job responsibility. (2000, 121)

The worker doesn't know how to do his or her job; he or she is confused and it shows in his or her performance. This problem is equally significant for church planters—they need a description of their work to help them in achieving agreed upon outcomes. The church planting survey findings indicate that the church planter's perceived lack of a definition for the criteria for success in church planting does lead to more dissatisfaction. Also, if the church planters perceive that they have received a poorly defined task description, this leads to increased discouragement. Statistically, this was one of the most highly significant findings in the overall study.

Training, Coaching, and Mentoring

While following sound wisdom and principles learned along the way, church planters work hard and depend upon Christ and his Spirit to pro-

vide the increase. The practical issue that frequently emerges is the mission agency's inability to achieve the success it desperately longs to see. They do not adequately educate their church planters concerning how to achieve their purpose. Gilbert posits that when results are not being achieved, the ultimate cause lies in the organization's management (1996, 81). His table for "Creating Incompetence" (1996, 87) graphically tells the story of how organizations desert their people by lack of information, instrumentation, and motivation. Obviously, the supporting environment affects behavior positively or adversely. Gilbert's framework also takes into account the person's knowledge, skills, and attitude he or she needs to succeed. The steps (1996, 179) shown in the box on page 86 help in organizing information for clear criteria for success.

The results of the church planter survey indicate a strong correlation between the preparation and ongoing training and coaching of the church planter and a subsequent sense of support and direction experienced. When

church planters did not feel supported by their mission agency, they almost always felt discouraged enough to leave the field.

Consistent Encouragement

Team leaders and supervisors are critical in forming and maintaining strong church-planting teams. Marcus Buckingham insists that supervisors are key to building a strong workplace environment (Buckingham and Coffman 1999, 32). In fact, immediate leaders may be the single most significant factor in determining whether employees have a successful experience in the working environment. Employees are likely to leave the organization if their experience with their immediate supervisor is poor. Buckingham states,

We have discovered that the manager—not pay, benefits, perks, or charismatic corporate leaders—was the critical player in building a strong workplace. The manager was “key.” Competent leaders are needed. If you have a turnover problem, look first to your managers. (1999, 32-33)

Paul McKaughan agrees that attrition is often related to management

inefficiencies. He says,

Often, rather than evaluate and admit our organizational guilt or ineptness, we mission leaders abdicate our responsibility and too easily write off the individual as somehow not having measured up—another casualty of missionary attrition. Individuals become the problem, not the management or system which misused them. (1997, 20)

This is the proverbial elephant in the room that everyone sees, but no one is willing to talk about or deal with directly.

Mission field team leaders may believe they are too busy with their own work to give assistance to church planters. Jerry Gilley states,

Performance standards also are not used because managers are too busy managing and workers are too busy working. They don't have the time to identify the standards. Quality is another thing jeopardized during this period. (Gilley and Boughton 1996, 8)

Too little time is spent thinking what the end product should look like (in this case, a healthy church). As a result, church planters learn how to

Clear criteria for success

- Identify the expected accomplishments: mission, responsibilities, and duties.
- State and explain the requirements for each accomplishment.
- Describe how performance will be measured and why.
- Set exemplary standards, preferably in measurement terms.
- Identify exemplary performers and any available resources that people can use to become exemplary performers.
- Provide frequent and unequivocal feedback on how well each person is performing; usually expressed as a comparison with an exemplary standard with good and bad consequences made clear.
- Supply backup information to help people troubleshoot their own performance and those for whom they are responsible.
- Relate various aspects of poor performance to specific remedial actions.

do the job through the school of hard knocks. Gilley states,

Distress and confusion are words connected with periods of growth and expansion. Managers may miss opportunities to reduce employees' distress by not clearly communicating expectations. They should also provide feedback while employees perform their jobs. (1996, 9)

According to Gallup research, only twenty percent of people in the workplace believe they are in the right role where they are doing what they do best every day. This likely means there are a lot of frustrated people, and this phenomenon affects missionaries as well. Missionaries are often called on to do numerous activities, some of which are not their area of strength. If missionaries end up with too many tasks that they are not good at, then they will become frustrated. It is important to know where the missionaries' talents and gifts lie and capitalize on these.

Recommendations

Below are four recommendations for mission agencies and team leaders as they think about success and church planting.

1. Mission agencies and team leaders/supervisors must provide a clear definition of the criteria for success. Since the study indicated that church planters are more likely to be encouraged if they have a clear definition of the criteria for success, mission agencies and team leaders/supervisors must provide those definitions. Do church planters know what a successful church plant looks like? If not, this needs to be described and defined for church planters as they take up their ministries. One church planter I sur-

veyed commented:

The job description is vague at best. There is absolutely ZERO accountability when jobs are changed, both before arrival on the field and during time on the field. The expectation is that we all need to be “flexible.”

Mission agencies dare not neglect to provide up-to-date job descriptions. It is also true that certain mission fields are more difficult than others, but that is not an excuse for unclear task descriptions. The church-planting ministry I visited in India had simple, but very clear, descriptions of what church planters needed to do in order to plant a healthy church. This fostered confidence in the church planters. It gave them cause to celebrate, and they deliberately took time out to praise God for what he was doing among them.

2. Mission agencies need to provide for a clear description of tasks required to plant a church. Mission agencies should take the time to study the most basic and important tasks necessary to plant healthy, biblical churches. That will help them describe these tasks to church planters. For example, what does evangelism look like in the context in which the missionaries are working? When church planters understand the tasks and desired outcomes to be achieved, they will be more confident and motivated.

3. Mission agencies need to provide training, coaching, and mentoring in tangible church-planting principles. Church planters are likely to be more confident and motivated if they receive training, coaching, and mentoring in church planting. One church planter commented, “Early on in my ministry I was discouraged