

Influencing Backwards?

BY KEVIN HIGGINS

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This edition of *Mission Frontiers* is highlighting the growing dynamic of churches in the West that are trying to apply movement dynamics to their own ministry contexts. Each edition of *MF* tracks movement progress globally, of course, among the least reached. But this edition is looking back from such movements to the Western church context, and to the influence from so-called “fields” to the so-called “mission forces” (a questionable term I know, given today’s spiritual crisis in the West!).

My story ... Part 1

Coming back from South Asia I took on the leadership of the small mission organization that had sent us. We had seen movements to Jesus emerge among a number of unreached peoples and began to reshape the vision of our mission agency around that. To do so would require a new way of training and so I developed with our emerging team an initial orientation called Horizons.

We grew and developed. People caught the vision of movements. And then?

We realized we needed something more, we needed something to help those who were sent to the unreached figure out how to catalyze movements, not just plant churches. This was 2001-2002. What to use?

Part 2: From the field back ... but for the field again

I decided to adapt the training we had been developing in South Asia. Training developed not just by me but by the first believers who were becoming leaders.

“What if we trained westerners using the training we were giving for emerging movement leaders in and from South Asia?” We called it Catalyst.

It was really helpful, but again it was designed for those going “over there” to serve, not for churches “here”.

Part 3: What about “us”?

Then I was also asked to help with a church plant in California. It was a sort of tentmaking role, in some ways (word to the wise: don’t do church-planting as tent making if you want it to help support you! I ended up washing cars, doing the church plant, leading the agency, and traveling to South Asia!).

I decided to use Catalyst with our church-planting leadership.

Then, as part of leading the agency, I was asked to lead a group of Kenyan pastors in Catalyst. I was a little cautious because the idea of using movement level training, developed in a frontier setting, to train a whole region of already settled denominational pastors, seemed a little beyond the scope of the Catalyst purpose.

Day three, the bishop of the group of 60 or 70 pastors stood up. I swallowed, thinking, “Okay, now he is going to tell us what he really thinks.” Instead, he said, “my brothers and sisters, how I wish we had learned these things and seen these things in our pastoral training... our churches would be movements.”

Influencing Backwards

This edition tries to describe how influence from movements is shaping what courageous leaders in churches are trying to do. While my focus, and the focus of *MF*, is always the frontiers, I believe that there is much for the West to learn and derive from the edges of where the gospel is growing.

May He grant tremendous fruit and wisdom, and may you be encouraged, perhaps encouraged enough to try some new things yourself!

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