

Strategy Coordinator— The Outside Catalyst

Guiding Collaboration to Bless Frontier People Groups

By **NEILL MIMS**

Since 1989 Neill has been involved in missions in South Korea, Vietnam and many South and Southeast Asian countries. He worked in the role of a Strategy Coordinator (SC) from 1995–2002, and then he moved into supervising, training, mentoring and coaching Strategy Coordinators. Some now call this position an Outside Catalyst among other titles. Contact Neill at: MrNeillM@gmail.com.

Lord, how could everyone in this people group hear Your Good News? What would it take for 90%, or even 20%, to follow You? How many of my people group will hear the Gospel today?

Outside Catalysts and *Strategy Coordinators* pray such questions as we develop strategy for a movement among a people group.

Before I arrived in Vietnam in 1995, I served two years in a traditional outreach to university students in South Korea. I was eager to learn how believers in Korea had grown over a century from a few hundred (<1/10th of 1%) to 11 million in 1990 (26%). Here are some examples:

- hours of passionate prayer—early mornings on many weekdays and sometimes all Friday night.
- bold evangelism—even if persecuted or despised!
- a strong emphasis on church-planting.
- “macro-impact” through decades-long development projects to help society and share Christ, including clinics/hospitals, all levels of school and university.
- Bible training offering Bachelor, Masters and Doctoral degrees.



From the 1950s to the 1970s most Bible school and seminary graduates started small churches. However, by the time I arrived the multiplication of believers and churches was slowing due to these factors:

1. many Bible school graduates no longer started new churches but were just replacing retiring pastors of 30+ year old churches or becoming staff to larger churches
2. the skyrocketing cost of church buildings in a booming economy
3. the diminishing “micro-impact” of clinics and schools as God blessed Korea spiritually and economically

How many of the earlier believers were discipled well to use their spiritual gifts and share their faith with others?

Thirty years later Korean Christians were just 2% more of the population.¹ How many of the earlier believers were discipled well to use their spiritual gifts and share their faith with others?

¹ ‘Minari’ Is About Korean American Faith as Well as Family (2021) ForeignPolicy.com/2021/05/09/minari-is-about-korean-american-faith-as-well-as-family

In 1995 my wife, Margit, and I felt led to a less reached people group. We arrived in Vietnam in a role originally described by David Garrison as the “Non-Residential Missionary.”² However, many were finding creative ways to get visas and live among their assigned people group, so the name was changed to *Strategy Coordinator* (SC).

There were several dozen SC teams globally when we arrived in Vietnam in 1995. Bill Smith and his wife Susan were among the first SC couples in East Asia, and he became my first supervisor. Bill is a great trainer, strategist and role model. He led by example and asked great coaching questions.

In 1995 each SC was responsible to develop a strategy to address the questions at the beginning of this article. Qualifications included: Could I work with many local churches, many mission agencies, pray, abide joyfully in Christ myself, cast vision and help develop a plan to pursue what Paul prayed for in 2 Thessalonians 3:1... *that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored?*

This gave me great faith that God is already working in every life and heart, and His message can still spread rapidly, even in “restricted access” countries.

By 1995, five of Vietnam’s then 54 people groups had movements—ranging from 10% to 50% professing Christians. One of them, the Hmong, had grown an estimated 350,000 believers in 1996 to perhaps two million believers today!³ This gave me great faith that God is already working in every life and heart, and His message can still spread rapidly, even in “restricted access” countries.

Our strategy in 1995 included: pray a lot, get others to pray for Vietnam and its people groups, cast vision with Vietnamese Christian leaders for what God might do to start many more house churches (the Communist government would not allow new



Photo by International Mission Board

church buildings), develop partnership among mission agencies (which continues to this day), develop simple discipleship and leadership training material (borrowing and adapting where possible), work with multiple local networks of churches (open and underground), and develop, print and distribute high-quality evangelism, discipleship, and leadership training materials to help believers share the Gospel. Although the country was “closed” and tried to restrict Christian growth, we felt like Peter and John: *we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard* (Acts 1:20). *We had to find a way to preach/spread the Gospel, and to help all believers—new or old—to receive healthy discipleship to obey everything I have commanded you* (Matt. 28:20).

How many of my people group will hear the Gospel today? This question drove us crazy and pushed us to continually re-evaluate our use of time and resources.

For instance, I realized the funds to print a few thousand books to sit half-read on the shelves of existing Christians could instead pay for thousands of radio programs, videos and tracts for more accessible evangelism and discipleship. We found creative ways to get these in the hands of both believers and non-believers. Then we created leadership development material, including a *Church Leader’s Guidebook* for Bible study with believers to share their faith and use their spiritual gifts. This was just a small part of what the Holy Spirit did through many for His message to spread rapidly!

² The Nonresidential Missionary: A new strategy and the people it serves: David Garrison, 1990 (MARC).

³ JoshuaProject.net/countries/vm.

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The SC role has been adapted in many mission agencies under many labels—Team Leader, Team Strategy Leader, Outside Catalyst, etc.—all including prayerful collaboration to catalyze movements among a single people group. Giftings required for these roles include: casting vision, networking, creativity and developing a residential team among the people. Many identify this role as “apostolic” (Eph. 4:11–16), which I describe as *the calling and gifting to start multiple churches and to involve others over time—foreigner or local—to fill the other roles listed in this passage.*

SC activities increase as the Lord adds new believers and new churches.

- 1) Personal prayer and enlisting others must remain a top priority.
- 2) Vision-casting and evangelism are also early activities, complemented with discipling new believers to do these.
- 3) Next is leadership training for healthy church formation, and discipling others in all these things and more. Eventually the SC must hand over most of these roles to locals and become a “movement servant” to serve local leaders.

We are blessed to have a host of trainers and networks that can help you become an effective SC. Some of which are: Curtis Sergeant. (MetaCamp.org), David Watson and his son Paul (ContagiousDiscipleMaking.com), Stan Parks and his brother Kent (Beyond.org), the No Place Left network (NoPlaceLeft.net) and the 24:14 Coalition (2414Now.net). Many of us have worked together to develop cohort training for experienced missionaries to develop as Outside Catalysts by discussing videos and other materials without reliance on another “trainer” (CoveredMinistries.com/outside-catalyst-training). Remember the starting point for every SC and Outside Catalyst is a simple prayer: *Lord, how many in this people group will hear the Gospel today?* 

Strategy Coordinator Wanted



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