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that he could have been the source of contacts and relationships with dozens, possibly hundreds of Muslims in the country. Within the wider partnership in the country, these contacts could have been successfully nurtured by a number of other sensitive and committed tentmakers who could have greatly extended this one man's impact.

Conclusion

Partnerships are a helpful context in which tentmakers can effectively work. They provide a "team" from the global Church so that the tentmaker is not working alone. Partnerships allow the tentmaker to see how their "part" contributes to the "whole." Working in Partnerships allows the tentmaker to forge strategic alliances with like-minded individuals accomplish efforts impossible for a person "going it alone." Partnerships can provide encouragement, prayer support, and on-going relationships in what is often a lonely and spiritually-daunting task.

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to obtain a special status permit which allowed him to hire any national workers without restriction, including those members of the minority population that he was targeting.

Business has been extremely difficult and costly in the two-and-a- half years since Mark has returned to his target area. Since this people group lives in such a remote place, few Western businesses are willing to risk

investment there. Mark and Roger are able to sell products produced by the other TFI factories and are working on establishing more business projects. Despite the difficulties, TFI has enabled them to become a secure, long-term presence in this area. Mark and Roger and others like them need the support of Christian businessmen willing

to invest capital without seeing an immediate gain. An established manufacturing plant in this location not only allows Mark and Roger and their colleagues to share the Gospel, but also creates opportunities to raise the standard of living of the local people.

Case Study #3

Recently, TFI was able to establish a foreign-owned joint venture and place two TM managers. One of these was at the stage one level; the other was at stage two, having previously worked in this same country but having had to return to the U.S. because of difficulties in obtaining a long-term visa. In 1994, a large U.S. firm was seeking to establish a cellular telephone manufacturing plant in an Asian nation. This company needed high-quality components manufactured in-country. TFI conducted initial feasibility studies, wrote a business plan, formed a new company in partnership with a Christian-owned antenna manufacturing firm, and recruited and trained the key management personnel. Partnering with a mission sending agency, a search was made to intentionally locate the factory in a district that was primarily composed of the Hui Muslim people group. Today, this wholly foreignowned joint-venture has exceeded all budget expectations for profits and sales, producing ten thousand cellu-

Success will depend on much, much prayer. Also solid two-way partnerships between businesses and mission agencies are crucial.

> lar phone antennas per day, employing seventy-five national people, and providing the full salaries of both of the TFI management personnel.

> Despite the success realized by this project, there have been obstacles. Since the joint-venture has a contractual relationship to a large multinational firm, the TM managers are less able to dictate their schedules than if they were running an independent operation. This leaves them less time for family and ministry. The factory is located in an area where the government scrutinizes foreign activities intensely. Also, TFI's goal of hiring a majority of Hui workers has not yet been realized. However, this project is providing a solid entry platform for TFI's managers, has a great potential for creating more openings for TMers, is leading to a greater Gospel presence and, eventually, to a church planted among the Hui.

Conclusion

These three scenarios are a sampling of TFI's activities throughout Central and Eastern Asia. In the eight years since its founding, TFI has trained thirty-four people and invested nearly a million dollars to recruit, train, set-up, and maintain tentmakers in their target areas. There are many ways in which the company could improve and we need to learn from our mistakes. We have

had management problems, break-ups of families, exaggeration and overestimation of our ability to provide a legitimate business that will sustain a team of expatriates. TFI has also been slow to adapt to changing market conditions. There has been much spiritual warfare and Satan has amplified our weaknesses.

But many lives have been changed and some churches have been planted. Of the thirty-four people trained by TFI, twenty-five of them remain in their target areas either with TFI or in some other business. Success will depend on much, much prayer. Solid, two-way partnerships between businesses and mission agencies are crucial. Capital is needed to enter the newly emerging market economies located in unreached people areas. A tension-creating profit motive is a key element to viability.

Are businesses integral to the cause of world evangelization? There can be no question that international businesses are here to stay and can and will be a factor in world missions. Mission executives, are you as effective as can be in strategies to reach the unreached? TMers, are you doing all you can to prepare to stay for the long haul? Christian businessmen, are you willing to risk capital for the sake of the kingdom?

Some individuals arrive at TFI in Stage One, having had no previous experience with their target people group. Their first objective will typically be language-learning and they will be involved in studying for at least two years. Others have been working and studying among the people already, much like Robert in the scenario given earlier. They usually have some degree of fluency in the language and have been involved in some ministry but have no means of staying in their target area. We refer to these people as being in Stage Two. Our goal is to help each person reach Stage Three. In this stage, a TMer would be fluent in the language, involved in significant ministry, and have an appropriate, stable, and longterm means of securing a visa. From TFI's perspective, this means establishing a business.

Case Study #1

The year was 1989, the Berlin Wall had yet to fall and the Soviet Union was crumbling before our eyes. Brad was with a large denomination which was targeting the peoples of Central Asia and seriously looking at the means whereby he could get individuals into this area. Brad had heard about TFI and even though our company was new and had limited proven experience, we had made several significant manufacturing equipment deals in a large country in Asia just the year before. A survey trip was planned and it was determined that Frunze (now called Bishkek), the capital of Kyrgyzstan would be the best location to set up a business platform.

At the time there were less than 10 known Christians and no known Christian witness among the Kyrgyz people. There were no Western businesses operating in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. Based on its performance making several major manufacturing

and assembly equipment deals in other Asian nations, TFI was able to gain entrance into Kyrgyzstan and a business office was set up in Bishkek by September 1990. The office was manned by three people representing two different sending agencies. All were at the Stage One level.

To date, each office with TFI has been started in a similar manner which is to develop a business plan tailoring the approach to meet the needs of the local area. The Bishkek office chose to focus on two major activities: international education and engineering. A proposal was submitted to US AID and eighty thousand dollars was granted to bring in foreign experts to teach English, business, and finance. In the first year and a half, the TFI Bishkek office was able to support fifteen expatriates from five different Western countries and three different sending agencies.

The educational services operated in conjunction with a Kyrgyz partner. The International Education Center was opened to initially offer small, intensive English courses. Eventually, partnerships with corporations, businesses, and the Kyrgyzstan Academy of Sciences opened up the opportunities to provide business and finance classes. The caliber of teaching was unmatched in the Republic due to the emphasis on developing relationships with individual students.

In the time since the office first opened, a total of twenty-three Westerners have been supported by the TFI Office and five remain (stage three) to operate a business which has been much less than successful and has been a significant cash drain for TFI. A small, compact fluorescent lamp factory employing ten nationals is currently still in operation. While the business side has not flourished, the impact of the ministry cannot be diminished. Through the establish-

ment of the TFI Bishkek office, over four thousand people have come to know Christ and a number of Kyrgyz churches have been planted. The transition from stage one to stage three has successfully taken place. This effort could not have been established and maintained without effective partnership between a business and a variety of mission sending agencies.

Case Study #2

Mark and Roger were at Stage Two when they came to TFI. They were fluent in the language and were involved in significant ministry among their target group. However, Mark and Roger were having a difficult time finding a way to stay in their chosen area. Mark considered teaching but found that that was not a good strategy for long-term work. The government in this area routinely sends teachers home or transfers them to other areas if any spiritual fruit is seen. As God has called these men literally to the ends of the earth, starting a business would be a challenging endeavor. However, this was deemed necessary if Mark and Roger were to stay. Roger spent six weeks at TFI's training headquarters. Mark had no business background but he did have an entrepreneurial spirit and a "gogetter" attitude. He extended his sixmonth TFI internship to one and a half years in order to learn the ins and outs of international business. During the time of his internship he was able to secure a major contract for another TFI branch in the same country. His language fluency was a great help to him at this time. Mark and Roger were able to set up a branch sales office to sell products produced by TFI manufacturing plants elsewhere in the same country. Because TFI was already well established in this country, Mark was able

How Business is Integral to Tentmaking

The function of Tentmaking Franchises International is to assist Christian professionals develop a profitable business return in creative access countries. Three case studies are presented emphasizing the importance of good business practices in tentmaking as well as long term commitment and accountability to mission agencies.

by Dwight Nordstrom and James Nielsen

obert has just received word that his visa will soon expire without hope of being renewed. He prays and wrestles through his thoughts of what to do next. Robert has been living, studying, and ministering in a creative access nation for four years. He spent several years gaining fluency in the local language and developing relationships with the people. He is actively discipling a small group of seekers and believers. Now he is faced with the question of how to maintain a credible presence in this restricted country. He first turns to teaching English, as have several of his colleagues. Robert quickly finds that he is neither a gifted teacher nor one who enjoys the teaching profession. He thinks back to his career prior to his missionary calling. Robert had been a successful engineer with six years of experience at a major chemical company. When he first began exploring options for overseas service, no one encouraged or even suggested that he might be able to go as a professional, using his already established career and skills as a ministry base. Instead, Robert went the traditional route of earning a ministry degree and being appointed by a mission board. As he struggles

with the question of how to stay in this nation that he has grown to love, he wonders if his old skills might be useful to him now.

Tentmaking Franchise International

Robert is an example of many people who came to Tentmaking Franchises, International (TFI) which operates as a Great Commission company with goals to enable Christian professionals to do strategic and significant Great Commission work, reaching unreached peoples; to reproduce other Great Commission companies in creative access nations; and to find a mutually agreed upon rate of return for investors. Established in 1989, TFI is a for-profit company providing business consulting services to creative access nations. TFI has established six joint ventures in Asia making such products as energy-efficient lighting, electronic assemblies for original equipment manufacturers, and antennas for major telecommunications companies. People like Robert come to TFI to receive international business training and assistance in establishing a franchise office in an unreached people area or country.

Case Studies

In this article, we will provide three case studies which we hope will stimulate your thinking concerning the importance and application of business in tentmaking (TM). First, the TM issues we will deal with are best considered in light of the following assumptions:

- 1) This article addresses TM only among unreached people groups in creative (restricted) access nations.
- 2) Business is only one of many options in the realm of TM. However, we maintain that it is an important and often overlooked avenue of entry and ministry for the TMer.
- 3) TM is most effective when a long-term commitment and presence is maintained. We suggest a minimum of three years.
- TM produces cogent results when intentional and measurable evangelism, discipleship, and churchplanting occur, and
- 5) The TMer is most successful when he is accountable to and interacting regularly with a mission sending agency.

Those who come to TFI arrive in many different stages of experience and preparedness for the TM task.