

Missional Learning Experiences by Mike Ruhl

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Someone said, “*There are no mistakes in the mission field...only learning experiences.*” Even those ideas and approaches to mission that “do not work” (or “do not work very well”) can be valuable platforms of learning for improving current and future missional strategies for greater kingdom impact.

Recently a mission executive asked me, “After serving as a Mission Executive in the Michigan District for sixteen years, what would you do differently if starting all over again?” It was a fine question indeed, meant to probe and explore missional learning experiences so as to access insights that could enhance his own journey of mission advocacy and equipping.

Here is a brief summary of those *Ten Things I Would Do Differently If Starting Over Again as a District Mission Executive*.

1. Plant Larger Churches that Grow Large Too many missions start small and stay relatively small. There is ample evidence which indicates that a high percentage of larger congregations started on the back side of the 200 barrier.

2. Raise the Bar on Missionary-at-Large Supervision Weekly *Mission Trax Reporting* can be submitted by E-mail each week. *Ask the right questions* and use the data for *encouragement and coaching* ... not only accountability. What gets measured is what gets done. Meet quarterly with each missionary for *Mission Plan* review.

3. Spend More Time as a “Midwife” and Less Time as a “Plumber” Plumbers love to run around and “fix slow leaks,” as it makes them feel needed. Midwives, however, are in the business of facilitating birth and growth. This impacts where and with whom much of one’s time will be spent.

4. Be a Better Encourager Try harder to catch a Missionary *doing something right* ... than something wrong. Be *authentically involved* in each mission and with each missionary.

5. Plant Churches by Teams ... not Individuals It can be a lonely, difficult, high-risk road for the solitary church planter. Ministry Teams stimulate synergy, innovation and relevance.

6. Use Mission Subsidy for Opportunity Budget A high percentage of subsidy is consumed by *Operations Budget* (salaries, services, capital expenses) Direct most/more of subsidy toward *outreach, launch, mission promotion*.

7. Expand Mission Funding Horizon New missions can be funded by the parent church, the denomination, tithe of the core team, personal acquaintances of the mission planter, wealthy patrons and the new congregation.

8. Plant House Churches These missions are not facility-dependent ... and they reflect research which indicates that many new believers prefer churches that are small, relational and experiential.

9. Plant Churches Where the People Are Use demographics to stop planting a church where land is available, but where we have to wait for people to show up in the area. Plant churches where the people are.

10. Develop a Regional Church Planting Strategy Digest state and district demographics and then develop a *strategic plan* for new church development with a six-year reach, listing specific communities. Plan the work ... then work the plan.