

An Ambitious, Righteous Plan



Plugging in at an international conference takes a little creativity

I'm on a plane flying back home to Malawi. We just spent some intense days planning what our focus will be for the WELS One Africa Team in the upcoming year. We have a solid plan in place that I'm very pleased with. There's no way this plan would be as good as it is without the help of the three business minded laymen on our team. I'll tell you how they helped, but I also have a request. Pass on this post to a couple of your Christian business friends. I think they would be happy to see how business planning skills are a part of the success we are enjoying in our mission to Africa.

With apologies I'm going to let loose with my new business lingo in this article. If some of it is foreign to you, ask your business friend about it. Use it as an excuse to talk about what we're doing together in Africa.

Let me give you some context. I had set four objectives for our annual meeting. Our Spiritual Growth objective was very well met by the preaching (x6), prayers (x25),

and enjoying Lord's Supper together. Our Team Building objective was met specifically by a discussion of Trust and Healthy Conflict, plus by all the fun we had being together. We had a good run at our third objective of knocking off some Major Issues, but we got through fewer than I would have liked. With 11 missionaries and 6 board level members visiting us from the USA, it was a bit hard to have a snappy discussion.



Writing our V/TO (Vision/Traction Organizer™) for the year was the big objective, and one we could only do with a face-to-face meeting like this. That objective was accomplished. As I said, I really have to thank the three non-pastors at our meeting for help with reaching that objective. We couldn't have done it without their contribution to our team.

The newest member of our team is Stefan Felgenhauer. He was just hired as our head of Operations and will be living in Lusaka, Zambia. As a brand-new guy, he could have sat in our meetings and said nothing, but he did contribute. He said to me that the team building segment of our meeting about Healthy Conflict perfectly matched his business experiences. "That healthy conflict we talked about is just what my CEO demanded when we would have meetings. I couldn't just sit and say nothing. I had to say something to show I was really in the discussion and on board."

At one point in the meeting we were having trouble setting measurables. How do you put a number on the ministry we do? One of our meeting attendees grew up with a successful entrepreneurial father. Now Hank Hoenecke is an experienced WELS teacher at a school which uses the same organizational tools we do. He helped us see that though it might be difficult to give everyone a number in a ministerial context, it is possible.



Both formal and informal meetings help bring clarity and strengthen unity

In the final stages of our planning we ran into a cloud of confusion as we reviewed our ministry strategy. Tim Hansen, a very experienced business man made it so simple for us. He pointed at our V/TO and said, “Look guys, here’s your Target Market: the confessional sister synods we are currently working with and new contact groups. Our niche is helping with ministerial training and encouraging church leaders. Your Uniques are here. We have a Proven Process of how we carry out this ministry and we have a Guarantee, ‘We bring you Truth.’” I felt a bit dumb to have not understood it all fitting together before, but so thankful to have that *aha* moment of getting how this organizational planning tool can work for us.



The Communion Service was the highlight of the weekend

At another moment during our 3 days together, we missionaries began obsessing about limitations we have because of resources. Tim steered us again. **“Let’s come up with an ambitious, righteous plan.** We have resources and if we need more, we’ll find it.” So, that’s what we did. We are aiming big. We will pursue five new contact groups around Africa and try to get three of them through our vetting process within the next year. We’ll propose how we might continue to help our sister synods with their ministerial training, while also meeting the many requests to do training in new places. We are going to significantly and measurably advance the work started by a WELS pastor with groups in Liberia. Through these and five other one-year goals, we will do our best to serve the Lord.



WELS is working together with people in 50 countries

Soon we'll be landing back in Malawi. I'll leave it at that. I urge you again to share this with some Christian friends who do business planning. I hope they see some familiar best business practices in what we do as we carry forward our Purpose, Cause, and Passion, "**Christ for All, Great News for Africa!**"

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Please pray for those working in fields that are ripe for harvest. Share their story, engage with future news and receive updates. Go to this link to learn more about our mission fields in Africa and how the Holy Spirit is working faith in people's hearts
<https://wels.net/serving-others/missions/africa>