

InterAct Ministries
Executive Director's Report to the Board
August, 2012

Most of us recall the impact made by the book, Experiencing God, by Henry Blackaby. One of the key principles presented was the need to discover where God is working and then join Him there. Historically, InterAct has found many of those places where God has been actively working. At other times, as with several of our former training institutions, when it appeared He was no longer active we would change our focus to other ministries. This was and is an appropriate means of allocating our God-given resources. To some degree, this flies in the face of modern business wisdom. It almost feels like the antithesis to proactive planning, a passive “wait and see” mentality. Rather, done properly, I believe it would be actively praying, researching, asking questions, listening to people and waiting on God.

Maybe I'm a little ahead of myself, so let me back up a little. Ideally, the board report from the executive director, the board's one “direct report,” should give as clearly as possible, the present state of the organization. Like a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), it should give a comprehensive view. Although this view will always go through the executive director's personal grid it should seek to be as accurate and fair as possible. So let me take a stab at doing just that.

When first coming into the role as director, I stepped into a wounded organization. In some places trust was at an all-time low. Two key leaders, who oversaw more than two thirds of the field ministry, were gone. Some of those in leadership were tarred with the brush of distrust due to association with the outgoing administration. Some of the staff had resigned and moved on to other organizations, some faded into retirement and others just slipped into various forms of survival mode. I did not receive the baton of leadership with high trust in place. Obviously, the urgency of the situation called for a focused strategy of “high touch” seeking to rebuild lost leadership credibility. It appears that the investment of significant time visiting staff face-to-face and listening to their hearts is reaping dividends. Of course, the down side to this strategy is slower progress in establishing administrative structures. Still, I couldn't bring myself to seek administrative excellence at the cost of further alienating staff. I am confident that in the long run this strategy is proving appropriate.

The second step, carried out concurrently with ongoing efforts to rebuild trust, was seeking to establish a renewed sense of hope and direction. With a high level of autonomy communicated to the fields, the struggle was to cast some comprehensive vision without impinging on each field's self-determination. The **Five P's** (**Prayer** – seeking His direction, **Partnership** – recognizing we are better together, **People** – necessary to advance His mandate, **Public Profile** – announcing what God is doing and **Perspective** – facilitation) were an early step toward providing God-honoring and comprehensive direction for the whole organization. The

leadership team, in respective areas of responsibility, began encouraging and influencing advances in the Five P's. Although there is room for ongoing growth in each of these areas, it is gratifying to see significant progress already being made. As you read the reports from the fields and office you will see the fruit of the leadership team's focused effort in each of these arenas.

Third, my intention is to help InterAct identify more clearly who we are. Something that is sensed by all of us is the critical need to have clarity about "why" we continue to exist as an organization. Why is God continuing to leave this entity, InterAct Ministries, in operation? I am convinced we need a clear answer to that question. Having the goal clearly in mind is essential if we are to arrive at our destination. Toward that end, a group comprised of three board members, three field directors and I met two days ago to begin wrestling with our purpose, mission, etc. (A report of this meeting will be forthcoming.) InterAct has become much broader in the scope of its real estate, people groups to whom it ministers and its models of ministry. We need to find and clarify the things that hold us together – and give us direction. Our context has changed and we need to determine, "Who is InterAct Ministries in 2012 and beyond?" The answer to that question has significant implications for donor involvement, mobilization, strategic planning, goal setting and much more. Our overall effectiveness, and I believe ultimately God's glory, is contingent on clearly answering that question.

As you read the field directors' reports I am confident you will be encouraged by the forward movement being made. David Joseph tells the account of a pivotal partnering gathering in Alaska, the Alaska Networking Summit. Look for Dan Mayerle and Thomas Slawson's accounts of relatively new partnerships that are developing. A strategy to move toward greater levels of partnership is reality on every field.

If we are to accomplish our calling, we need people. Retirement and other forms of attrition continue to deplete our ranks faster than they are being replaced. I believe God would have us do more than just maintain a survival level of personnel. If we are to move forward we need to begin being much more proactive in mobilizing new staff. As you will see in one of Thomas's reports we have initiated a new "non-department" – Public Ministries (Yes, I am very excited about this!). With Thomas's recent move to Oregon, he will be spending a significant amount of his time seeking to advance InterAct's public profile as well as focusing on new prospects for InterAct. In addition to John & Jen Tramm's anticipated arrival in Alaska in September, there are several prospects at various stages along the "pipeline" for each of the fields. Future plans will likely include placing one or more "youngish" mobilizers on the team to further advance our need for new people across the organization.

InterAct's public profile has slipped significantly in the past few years. Thomas's new responsibilities will be targeting a segment of the public with whom we have limited voice – a younger generation. For InterAct, this is a very necessary yet unconnected group. Our future depends on doing a better job of telling God's story to this group as well as the older generations. Roy Martin's new InterAction format appears to be getting the stories out to a

broader audience – and doing it more frequently. This is a step in the right direction. Diane Schoming continues to be a very positive face and voice for InterAct in both Alaska and the Northwest. Jerry Crosby's direct report, Jim Hamilton, recruited four young EnGage participants for the Canada summer program, one of whom has already expressed intent to have a future with InterAct.

InterAct's move toward perspective of greater facilitation will be readily seen in each of the three field reports. Our Siberia/Russia ministries have always been heavily invested in facilitation types of ministries. I trust you will find it gratifying to read of similar facilitation relationships with Alaska Freedom Journey and Anchored Warriors in Canada. Although the need for pioneer cross-cultural missions has not disappeared, our fields are on the cutting edge as they increasingly implement "behind the scenes" facilitation type ministry wherever it is appropriate.

On a more mundane note let me talk about some changes in the way we perceive our organization and our sister organization, InterAct Ministries of Canada. In April, I sent each of you an *Executive Director's Update*, describing a discussion among the leadership team regarding how we view our organization(s). In spite of the fact that we share a combined history, InterAct Ministries, Inc. is a totally separate legal entity from InterAct Canada. Roy did a comparison of the two organizations for us that proved quite informative. When comparing actual operating budgets and full-time equivalent numbers of staff, InterAct Canada is more than just a separate legal entity. It is a fully developed organization, of equal size to InterAct, Inc. Although we do "ministry" jointly we have come to recognize that InterAct Canada is no longer simply a field of InterAct, Inc. Rather, it is a full partner in ministry, with its own office, administration, payroll, accountability organization (CCCC's), audit, board, etc.

If we are to recognize and visualize InterAct Ministries, Inc. and InterAct Ministries of Canada as parallel sister organizations, I believe we need to be careful that they do not drift apart. Our common history and our Joint Ministries Agreement should provide adequate protection against that happening. However, the fear of drifting apart cannot preclude us from recognizing InterAct Canada as a partner in ministry rather than a part of InterAct, Inc. For administrative purposes their organization stands alone, just as InterAct, Inc. stands alone. Where we partner is at the ministry level. Living out this reality has some implications. The future form of organizational management structure will likely take the form of separate administrative leadership teams. InterAct Canada will likely have its own administrative leadership team possibly comprised of:

- Canada executive director
- Canada field director
- Canada assistant to the field director/HR director
- Canada administrative director
- Etc.

InterAct, Inc. will likely have its own administrative leadership team possibly comprised of:

- Inc. executive director
- Inc. administrative director
- Inc. HR director
- Inc. development director
- Alaska & Russia field directors
- Etc.

Our “product,” the combined field ministry of the partnering organizations (Inc. and Canada through the Joint Ministries Agreement), will be directed by a Field Leadership Team, likely comprised of:

- Inc./Canada executive director
- Russia field director
- Alaska field director
- Canada field director
- Etc.

This group, the Field Leadership Team, will be the “heart” of the ministry done by both organizations. Ministry will grow out of and be directed by this team instead of this being done by the current Executive Leadership Team. Ministry will be conceived and directed by this joint ministry team and the country specific administrative team will care for its country’s specific administrative details. This will not preclude partnering together wherever advantageous at the administrative level, but need not be assumed.

This relatively new group, the Field Leadership Team (FLT), will have gathered briefly the day before the board meeting, August 3, 2012, to begin discussion about field ministry issues. In addition to spending a couple hours working through some leadership development items, we will have initiated discussion about one concern that is affecting every field – addiction and recovery concerns. Every people group we serve seems to have a fairly large group of believers who come to Christ and then get stuck in their discipleship/spiritual growth process due to some form of addictive behavior. Each field, in its MAP process¹, identified the need for some kind of biblical recovery ministry for the host of believers who were stuck in addictions. I believe the Bible has answers for this problem, yet our apparent inability to provide solutions has left the missionary’s church, his message and his Lord all looking impotent. Each field is independently taking steps to meet this need and the FLT will be talking about how we can work together to provide a cohesive plan to offer strategic help in this important area of addiction recovery. Are

¹ This MAP process was a brief overview, most often led by Mike Matthews, of a field, people group, team, etc. to determine its history, gifts, strengths, weaknesses, needs, opportunities, etc. This overview was used as a foundation for assessing strategic outcomes for the particular group (the desired outcome), then using these outcomes to set shorter range strategic steps toward accomplishment of the outcomes. In addition to the need for recovery ministry, both Alaska and Canada identified several common areas of need including: training, youth ministry and mobilization.

we talking about a recovery center or centers? Maybe. Are we talking about non-residential training programs like the Genesis Process? Maybe. At this point we are still exploring how God would have us step up to deal with this need. One thing is certain; we are going to need more staff, with biblical counseling training², cross-cultural skills and a heart for ministry.

Let me end by saying I have great hope for the future of the organization as I read the reports from the three field directors. We are postured to make some significant advances in the days ahead. I believe we are identifying significant places where God is working and specific places He would have us join Him. Although there is great hope, we are still teetering on a knife edge. We need to do our part to “buy up” the opportunities that are presenting themselves. Loss of focus, slothfulness or lack of cohesiveness could easily result in stillborn ministry. We are responsible to do our part. While saying that, I am fully aware that we are totally dependent on the Lord of the Harvest to advance our best efforts to produce the fruit He desires. As the board, I ask for your regular prayer for wisdom as we move forward with planning for some critical areas of ministry and as we jump in to implementation of the ministry opportunities that are already at our doorstep!

The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the LORD. Prov. 21:31 NIV

Thanks for your partnership in this ministry. I covet your prayers, your friendship and your oversight.

Respectfully submitted,

Dale Smith
Executive Director
InterAct Ministries

² Although I believe there are some excellent “Christian counseling” programs out there I committed to assuring that InterAct stay committed to a thoroughly biblical approach to counseling that does not sell out to secular/humanistic presuppositions. Toward that end I am requiring all our field leadership staff and others involved in “people helping ministries” (member care, counseling, recovery, etc.), read a foundational book: *Blame It on the Brain: Distinguishing Chemical Imbalances, Brain Disorders, and Disobedience*, Edward T. Welch, P&R Publishing, 1998. I would encourage any of you who would like further clarification on my position to read this book.