



## Challenges of Small Publishing Teams

By Emilio Morales

Small teams are often involved in desperate struggles for their publishing houses' survival. With seven employees, six or eight books published a year, and income that barely exceeds expenses, what more could you expect? But it is not a matter of survival. Rather, we want to triumph in our respective endeavors.

I'd like to know how great publishing houses came to be great! What difficult situations did they experience? How did they manage to overcome them? Small teams still have a long way to go to become what they long to be, and this is truly a challenge. What are those challenges that, instead of frightening us, spur us to dream big?

Define the success you want to achieve. Ramon Rocha III, of OMF Literature Inc., in Manila, Philippines, asks: "How do you measure publishing success? By the quantities of books sold (business) or by the readers with transformed lives (ministry)?" I think there must be balance, however the ministry, guiding readers to Christ, must always be more important than sales. This must be clear from the smallest of beginnings, so that it is not forgotten when the organization grows larger.

Be a team open to learning. It is essential that we encourage learning by all the members of our team in all spheres of our publishing house. We must value learning as basic to our organization, and promote team development to implement new publishing practices. This implies seeking the greatest benefit from the collective experience,

talents and abilities of each person to learn how to succeed together.

Learn how to make important decisions. Peter Cunliffe, president of Christian World Publishers, notes that this is crucial with regard to obtaining sufficient capital, choosing which books to publish, how many books to publish, how many copies to print for each title, and how to determine the correct sales price. I believe it is necessary for the team to have sufficient resources so that, upon observing and analyzing the realities of publishing, [the team can] perform constant evaluations and promote critical decision-making based on the facts. Also, "one of the best ways to achieve commitment among team members is involving them in decision-making," recommends Eduardo M. Ramírez, of the Youth Ministry Department at Eastern University in St. David's, Pennsylvania, United States.

Concentrate on a specific market segment. Let us configure the publishing house to reach a special clientele being ignored by large publishing houses. For example, Buena Tierra Publishing House (in Lima, Peru) arose to meet the needs of a group of Sunday school teachers who desired high-quality, inexpensive Bible materials for children and teens that would be appropriate in their context.

Adopt new publishing management techniques. Let us emphasize leadership that adjusts to the needs of the publishing house, and that strategically seeks to create a "community of leaders" to allow the

resolution of problems and challenges through combining the solutions proposed by team members with differing roles and leadership styles.

Network with other small publishing houses. For our publishing house, membership in Letra Viva, a network of evangelical publishing houses in Latin America, has been a highly rewarding experience thanks to the opportunities it affords for us to participate in training, the international shipping center, relationships with other publishers, new places to promote our books, the exchange of information and experience, and the development of joint activities.

Make an effort to be creative and to innovate. Albert Einstein reportedly defined insanity as “doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” Let us develop our capacity to mobilize our knowledge, skills and publishing experiences, successful or not, towards creating new or improved products, processes and services. Sometimes it is necessary to invite [the input of] a creative person outside the team who can see things with a different perspective. I congratulate those editorial groups whose creativity and good stewardship of financial resources (which are often very limited) have led them to be competitive, not through imitation, but innovation.

Establish strategic alliances. Let us share information and experiences with other

publishing groups. Let us initiate new projects. Let us move distribution forward with complementary products. Let us obtain the support of organisms and institutions that promote publishing businesses. Let us consult with and seek technical know-how from large publishing houses. Let us analyze their models for growth and development, and apply to our publishing house those which best fit our context.

When I read *Leap of Faith*, by Norman Grubb, it challenged my faith. “Great leaps of faith have been made all these years, but they all have been the result of small steps,” he says, sharing the extraordinary story of the start of CLC International. That encouraged me to take small steps of faith, trusting God for the results. When I agreed to be part of the Publishing Committee for Scripture Union in Latin America; there were only three people, in three countries, working long-distance, without a salary, with only bills to pay, but sharing one same passion: making the good news of God known to children, youth, and their families, and encouraging people of all ages to meet with God daily through the Bible and prayer.

What steps of faith have you taken until now? Perhaps they are small, unperceived by many--though never by God. I challenge you to continue walking by faith. When you least think of it, you will be ready to make “the great leap of faith.”

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