

A Scale of Church-Agency Relationships *from Global Connections, the UK Network for World Mission*

How does your church relate to mission agencies? How would your church like to relate to mission agencies?

Maybe your church has never thought about it and just related in the way the agency has stipulated.

For two hundred years, mission agencies have been doing mission and asking churches to support them. Some of the denominational agencies have insisted that they are doing mission on behalf of the churches and to some extent they are, but the independent agencies have been generally doing their own thing. Local churches have had very little say in how mission is done by either group.

But, how would your church like to be treated by agencies? If you could start again, how would you like it to develop?

Below is a spectrum of seven different ways that churches relate to agencies. These categories are explained more fully in [‘Churches and Agencies in Partnership’](#) by Bryan Knell.

How does your church relate to the agencies it works with and how would it like to?

1. **Survival Mode:** These churches don't do anything corporately in global mission because they are struggling to survive.
2. **Jerusalem First Mode:** This sort of church concentrates exclusively on the local scene—either because they see

Acts 1:8 as an expanding process or because they are convinced their local community is more needy.

3. **Do It for Us Mode:** These churches think that agencies exist to do global mission for the church, and they are prepared to support agencies to act for them. This is the way that mission agencies have related to churches for most of the last 200 years.

The Church Involvement Spectrum



4. **Inform Us Mode:** These churches expect agencies to make the decisions but would like to be informed regularly about how their contribution has been used.

5. **Partner with Us Mode:** These churches see themselves as equal partners in global mission. They want to be involved in the decision-making process.

6. **Help Us Do It Mode:** These churches believe that they should drive mission, but appreciate that specialist and experienced agencies can help them.

7. **Don't Interfere Mode:** These churches want to remain completely independent. Some think that agencies will take over if they are allowed to be involved.

Understanding Your Church

Most churches have not thought about the way they want to relate to mission agencies. They have been working with an agency for many years, and they do what they are told. They have not thought that it could work in any other way.

Some churches work in different ways with different agencies, but it is the agency that determines the difference not them. If your church relates to a particular agency in mode 3 and would like to relate in mode 4 or 5, it is up to you to ask questions and sometimes to demand to be consulted.

The situation can change. It is unwise for churches to make life difficult by demanding changes suddenly or without due warning or consultation, but churches can make a difference. One of the problems is that many mission partners are supported by a range of individuals and churches.

Mission Is Changing

Churches in the UK are generally changing in the way their want to relate to agencies. The traditional way in which churches related to mission agencies was the "Do It for Us Mode" (3). But churches are moving to the higher numbers. Churches that were 3 or 4 are now 4 or 5. That makes it more difficult for agencies because it takes more time and costs

more money to get a church's advice or to wait for a church's decision. It is far easier for the agencies if they can treat every church alike.

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Many agencies say they would like to operate in the 5 or 6 mode, but practically it is not financially feasible. Many of the churches that used to operate in the "Don't Interfere Mode" (7) are now recognising the

experience and expertise that agencies have and are keen to operate in the "Help Us Do It Mode" (6).

However difficult it is, agencies need to stop approaching churches and saying, "We are doing this and we need your support," and start saying, "What do you want to do and how can we help you?"

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Discussion Starters

For Churches

1. In which church/agency relationship mode(s) are you currently operating? What mode(s) do you view as most effective for your church's global involvement? Why?
2. What positive experiences have you had in working with agencies to function at a higher mode? What values distinguish those agencies?
3. What points of agreement need to be clarified with a mission-agency partner in order to establish a relationship in which you can function in your preferred mode?
4. What specific steps does your church need to take in order to build and sustain higher-mode relationships?
5. Assuming you want to move to a higher-level mode, how can you help your chosen agency to partner well with you in that new paradigm?

For Agencies

1. In how many of these relationship modes are you currently functioning with church partners? What percentage of churches would you estimate in each category?
2. In which mode(s) can you best partner with churches? Why? Are there proficiencies you need to develop?
3. How has your agency proved that working with churches in the higher partnership modes is well worth the effort?
4. Can you articulate the essential points of agreement for a healthy working relationship with churches in each of your preferred modes?

5. How can you share with your field staff and supporting churches more stories of how you are partnering effectively in the higher-level modes?

Interchange Postings

Catalyst's *Postings* e-newsletter is a monthly publication designed for mission agency personnel and local church leaders involved in collaborative global efforts. The practical articles highlight what churches and agencies are doing to mobilize believers, especially those of younger generations, to expand the Kingdom.

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