

RAISING PERSONAL SUPPORT IN ASIA

By Ricky Magno

Raising support in our part of the world poses several challenges:

- In most of our countries, Christianity is in the minority behind Muslims and Buddhists. Many believers operate under severe restrictions due to the kind of government and/or predominant religion.
- Some countries do not have adequate infrastructure—banking systems, roads, telecommunication, internet, etc...For instance, how can we call up people in Myanmar when less than 1% have telephones?
- Most of our economies are struggling. That, along with the fact that most mission work has focused on villages and rural areas, means most churches are made up of people with meager resources.
- Our cultures tend not to be upfront or direct. Calling people, challenging them, asking for their decision and following up on their commitment don't seem natural to us. We have a culture of "shame" whereby people will hesitate to say "no" to any face to face request and disappoint others. They may say "yes" even if they are unsure.

But, we have several things going for us!

- We are a very relational culture. We love telling stories. We respect elders, leaders and servants of God.
- We have weathered upheavals, wars, disasters and crisis. We can thrive in difficulties and serve God with a smile on our face amidst tough circumstances.

What are the crucial components of successful support raising in East Asia?

- Attitude is key. We continually teach "Your attitude will determine your altitude". Having the right mindset has enabled our missionaries to move out of their comfort zone, call up people they do not know, set appointments with them, get their decision and follow through on their commitments.
- Missionaries need to be convinced of their call and see themselves as Christ's ambassador rather than people who just need help to survive. When God's laborers have this perspective they will give donors the opportunity to invest in the Lord's work, to take part in what God is doing, and invite them to use their resources for eternity...and be blessed by God.
- We need to challenge people to give more sacrificially and to ask for big amounts. Even in our poorest countries, the typical challenge is about \$30 per month, but we have seen partners invest up to \$300-\$600 a month! These donors are not necessarily wealthy believers, but giving sacrificially to the Kingdom.

With East Asia having such diverse cultures and religions, contextualization is very crucial. What works in one country may not work in another. We test our methods, measure stats, and determine how much a typical challenge amount should be. We figure out what is the best approach and time for contacting people and challenging them, and where the appointments should take place. Sometimes a new support raiser will say a particular approach is not working when they have only done it 3 to 5 times, so we challenge them to really study their culture, have a good attitude, and be willing to go outside their comfort zone to achieve success.

Ongoing coaching from national staff leaders who model calling and doing appointments is essential. They make calls and have appointments with new staff for accountability, feedback, and seeking ways to improve. Our support coaches are local, thus ensuring training and coaching will self-perpetuate. Here are some practical tips they give to workers raising support:

- Be very clear on the phone why you are meeting; that it's for support. At the appointment clarify their giving decision so that both you and the new donor are sure what the commitment is they are making.
- Be strategic with your time and schedule as many appointments as you can each day. Make sure you have enough contacts to call, especially ones who have both the heart and ability to give. Partners like this will usually refer contacts to you who also have that heart and ability. Some new donors will provide 20 to 30 new referrals!
- Educate your partners to send their support via bank transfer, checks, or sending in lump sums, etc...To try to go around and personally collect your monthly gifts from supporters works if you only have 5-10 donors, but we are committed to getting to 100% support, and that probably means you will have about 50+ partners.
- We need to have a commitment to excellence. Our materials and communication needs to be sharp and updated so we can confidently converse with business people and top level leaders.

Lastly, there's no need to reinvent the wheel! Many missionaries are discovering ways of improving their support raising. As soon as possible, let's share what we have learned with other workers around the world so we can try them in our own contexts, and see God raise up an army of fully-funded workers!

Ricky Magno has been on Philippine CCC staff for 25 years and is a Ministry Partner Development trainer in Asia, and other parts of the world. In the last three years he has seen the average staff support level from 800 missionaries in South East Asia grow from 35% to 107%.