

Six Steps to Planning a Successful Mission Trip

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Where do you start when planning for a short-term mission trip? Often times the church has sent out its members ill-prepared and ill-planned for mission trips. Here are six simple steps that can help any church or association plan a mission trip.

Step One – Team Vision – (8-6 months before the trip)

How do you get a team vision? This will come as you turn to God and get your church praying that God will speak and reveal where your church needs to go. This was the method the Apostle Paul used in Acts 16:9-10.

- Identify where God is sending you – Get the location right!

Before planning a trip you need to know **WHERE** God is leading your church. This is not the time to play “pin-the-tail-on-the-map.” But it is a time for you to seek God’s direction for the church.

- Connect with the right leadership – Get the connection right!

Have you talked with the IMB missionaries from that area? Have you talked with your state convention or associational leaders? Have you connected with the local church leaders in the area you are going too?

- Set dates/locations – Get the time-table right!

What time of the year will your church people be available to take part in this mission trip? What is the best time of the year to go to that location? Remember, some areas have typhoons, hurricanes, rainy seasons, etc.

- Promote the trip – Get the right people on the trip!

Once you know **where** you are going and **when** you are going and **who** you will be working with then you can start promoting the trip. Which church people would best benefit the team? I must be honest; there have been a few people that I had to ask to not go on a trip! It could be health issues, the type of mission ministry you

will be doing, the size of the team or even the danger level of your trip! Everyone is not called to go on every trip!

- Gather culture info – Get the right information

In order to promote the trip properly you will need to know a little bit about the culture of that country. You may need to get this information from a missionary or local church leader in the country.

Step Two – Team Pre-field Preparation (4-6 months before the trip)

- Passports, visas & paperwork (consent forms, immunizations, etc)

If you are going outside of the USA you will need to have a passport. You may find that many countries will require a visa before entering their country. You will need to check on what is required in order to go to that particular country.

- Connect with local leadership about logistics (hotels, meals, travel, etc)

Where will you stay, what will you eat, how will you get there? All of these questions have to be sought out so you know the cost of the trip and what to expect when you get there.

- Travel Arrangements (air, train, bus or boat)

What mode of transportation will the team use to go on the mission trip? What kind of vehicle will be needed once you arrive in country? How much will it cost and which airline company will give you the best price?

- Support Prayer Team

Every person going on the trip will need to put together a prayer support team. This is extremely important! This team is not just praying for you while you are on the trip but they are praying for you before you go and while you are preparing. They will be praying for you after you get back when you are sharing in churches.

Step Three – Ministry Team Training (1-4 months before the trip)

- Identify Mission Objectives – “What needs to be done?” and “What can you do?”

- “Team Unity” not “Uniformity” (team conduct code)
- Team Prayer Walking Training

Have them practice in your church area before you send them on the mission trip. Every person on the team can do “Prayer Walking!”

- Team Evangelism Training

Every person on the team needs to know how to write out their testimony and share it with others. This is something that the team can practice doing in your church before going on the trip. If people do not want to witness on the trip, why are they going?

- Team Devotional Time

Teach the team to have devotional time **NOW!** They do not need to wait until the mission trip starts. Prepare your team members with devotional material to use while on the mission trip.

- Team Cultural Training – (Understanding “World View of the Country”)

Every team member needs to understand at some level the culture and world view of the country that you are going to. The team leader must train the team in the “Do’s” and “Don’ts” of culture. Teach your members about indigenous mission principles and dependency ministries.

Step Four – Team Traveling (1-4 weeks before you leave)

- Team Packing List (baggage allowance, proper dress, toiletries, etc)

What do the team members need to take with them on the mission trip? What do they “**not**” need to take? Most people will over pack!

- Team Travel Procedures (maps, airports, customs, immigration, etc)

Provide your team members with maps of the country you are going to. You will also want to help your team members understand the immigration and custom procedures that they will experience once arriving in the country.

- Team Safety Issues (emergency contact, documents, safety tips, etc)

Prepare your team concerning safety and security issues while on the mission trip. You will need to gather this information from the IMB or a contact within the country. What are the emergency contact numbers for each person going on the team? What phone numbers or email contacts will family members need in case there is an emergency from those left behind?

- Team Last minute details

Every team will have last minute details that you will need to get out to the team members.

Step Five – Team Blast-Off (The Mission Experience Time)

- Teamwork – Mission trips are not vacations.

Keep the team focused on the main work that is set before you. It is easy for teams to get distracted from the main work.

- Team Meals – Drink right and eat right

In some places around the world good food and water can be hard to find. There is nothing that can set a work behind more than when the team gets sick because of uncooked food and bad water. Train the team to always be careful in these two areas.

- Team Attitudes

On every trip there will be some “bumps” in the road. Most of those bumps are due to poor attitudes from the team members. Some of this comes from the change of time zones, change of food, lack of sleep, etc. The golden rule of team relationships is this: **“Be hard on yourself and easy on others!”**

- Team Re-entry time (packing for return trip, U.S. Customs & Immigration)

On the return trip there are always some last minute details that need to be taken in consideration. There are certain kinds of food, plants, and gifts that the USA customs department will not let come into the USA. If you know what they are before going, you know what you can buy and you should not buy to bring back as gifts. Usually the guy on the street selling these items will say that you can bring

them back to the USA. He is just trying to make a few dollars. Don't risk it. Just check it out first.

Step Six – The Return (Home Again)

- Team Debriefing (what to say and not to say)

Before you give a mission presentation to your church, you will want to help your team know what to share and what not to share. Be honest in telling what happened on the trip. Do not embellish the story and boast about things.

- Team Presentations (How to Present a Non-Boring Mission Presentation)

There is a good article on the MBC website on the Partnership Missions Page called “How to Present a Mission Presentation Without Boring Your Audience.” You will want to get a copy of this article.

- Team Challenge (Keeping the vision alive and inviting others to go on the next trip)

End your presentation by challenging your church members to get involved in mission work in a greater way. Invite them to go with you on the next trip. Be positive and enthusiastic about what God is doing on the mission field.



Recommended Books:

Successful Mission Teams – “A Guide for Volunteers” by Martha VanCise

Help! We're going on a short-term trip! By Larry Ragan of Culture Link Ministries

Basic Training for Mission Teams by Jerry Rankin & Phyllis Tadlock