



MISSION POSSIBLE

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Equipping the Next Generation of Christ Centered Leaders

Team Member Guide

**Mission Possible Ministry Specifics**

Mission Possible is a “hand-up” not a “hand-out” organization. What this means is that our mission is to enable others to provide for themselves. We do not want to become an organization that builds dependence upon ourselves.

Steve Saint writes this in his book *The Great Omission*:

Dependency has two very dangerous characteristics. First, it can be spread with good intentions as well as with malice; it is just as deadly a poison if given by mistake. Second, it is much more difficult to stop than it is to start; the best remedy for dependence is prevention.

Giving believers in a new church the means to support their church and the skills to govern it are just as critical as teaching them to share their faith. Becoming self-propagating is natural for most new congregations. Anyone can tell someone else how his or her life has been changed, and it is natural for a new believer to want to tell others what has happened.

Learning to be self-governing is more difficult, and learning to be financially self-supporting is frequently the most difficult of all. We do missionaries a great disservice when we ensure their effectiveness primarily by the number of people in the churches they plant. The most spiritual thing they can do for a self-propagating church that can also govern itself is to help the people find jobs so that they can support the ministry. There is a bigger need in many areas today for missionaries with business skills than with advanced theological degrees.

It is a lot easier to give someone something than it is to teach them to make it, just as it is easier to give people a fish than it is to teach them to fish. If you give a man a fish, you have fed him for a day and probably created the beginnings of dependency. If you feed him for many days and then quit, he will resent you for it. But, if you teach him to fish, you have fed him for a lifetime and given him the ability to feed others. (67-68)

This is our mission, to teach others to feed themselves spiritually and physically so that they can then give others the ability to feed themselves spiritual and physically so that they can then give others the same ability.

Martha VanCise, friend of Mission Possible for many years, writes this:

And my "pet peeve" is handouts. I think the greatest abuse of mission teams has been the encouragement of a "begging society." I firmly promote a policy of no handouts - none of this giving in order to get the warm fuzzy feelings. Get a shoeshine in return for giving cash - sneakers polish up great even if the polish color is wrong. If you have stuff to leave like clothes and toys, give them to the Haitian leader in charge and let that person distribute according to needs.

On one occasion we helped rebuild a church near Jean Rabel that had been destroyed by a hurricane. We emphasized no handouts. All day long both Haitians and North Americans worked side by side. At night everyone in the community gathered around our little camp fire and we had singing duels. Those were nights rich in cultural exchange. On the last day, "love" for these new friends overruled our set policy and team members began peeling off T-shirts, watches, hats etc. and passing them out. These team members went away with lots of warm fuzzy feelings. When the next team arrived the local people had no interest in working. They immediately began putting in bids for certain T-shirts, watches, hats, etc.



Suffice it to say, when you reach your county of ministry, keep these rules in mind:

- No passing out anything, even candy, out of pity or a desire to help. No passing out anything for any reason.
- If anyone asks you for anything, respond that you don't have any for them and they need to work through the local leadership for what they need.
- Handing out money or items because someone asks or is seen of in great need encourages a begging society.
- Giving out your home address, phone number, email address, or other electronic addresses could result in problems when you get home or even problems while you are away from home.



You will see great need as you travel to Haiti and the DR. Handouts give you those warm fuzzies and seem to make the "problem" go away. In reality, handouts create dependency while "hand ups" are the better way.

Action:

Further reading on helping the poor without creating dependency.  
[http://www.chalmers.org/staging/mandate/dec\\_2007/index\\_sv.php](http://www.chalmers.org/staging/mandate/dec_2007/index_sv.php)  
[http://www.chalmers.org/staging/mandate/april\\_2008/stm.php](http://www.chalmers.org/staging/mandate/april_2008/stm.php)

Mission Possible has been traveling with teams for many, many years. The next few pages will share with you specifics we have learned over these years.

Joyce Dora, a fifteen year veteran of teams with Mission Possible, shares these seven guidelines to keep in mind as you join the ministry team.

- 1. The ultimate goal of a missionary volunteer is to communicate the love of Christ by word, deed and presence.** This is our main reason for going. We must remember to show respect and love for all the people there, even if they seem disrespectful to you.
- 2. Volunteers are guests at a mission site. Volunteers are not, however, doing the site a favor just by being there. Rather, they are coworkers with the site personnel.** We should not have the attitude that we are there to be served. We must clean up after ourselves and make it as easy as possible for the missionaries and the help. Lets also remember not to show any negativity to the food the children eat at the school, just like children in the U.S. they will catch on to that and get picky about the food. The food the school fixes is clean, healthy and very nutritional. They are also on a very tight budget so they do with what they can afford.
- 3. The volunteer seeks to serve or assist, not to boss or control.** When it comes to doing the work for the missionaries, we will do it their way. They do not need to even give us an explanation to why we are doing it their way. We are there to be servants. If you are a professional on the job that you are to do at the mission and you have some helpful input, that is welcomed.
- 4. Volunteers are to be ready and willing to modify their dress and/or behavior to fit the standards of the site where they will serve. Modest clothing should be worn. Smoking and drinking alcohol is prohibited for cultural reasons.** (Dress code specifics and current requirements will be covered with your team by your team leader.)
- 5. The display of personal wealth is generally damaging to volunteer work.** Please do not wear expensive jewelry, talk about personal wealth, or display your personal wealth.
- 6. No giving gifts unless organized through the mission.** Personal gifts to individuals can be extremely harmful. Most children never receive gifts from their sponsors, and it is very sad to see the disappointed faces when other children do receive one. Before passing out anything including candy, please get the okay from your leader. There are many things we learned through the years and passing out gifts of any kind at the wrong time or place is very harmful to the mission, for many reasons.

**7. Living conditions may not be ideal, and volunteers must be willing to adjust.**

The hotel where you may stay is a nice hotel for the country. Remember we are in a third world country and things are not as nice as in the United States, not because they don't want them to be, but because their resources are limited. The food will be different than what you are used to, but there will be something you will find that you like. You may want to bring protein or granola bars with you.

Action:

Which one or two points from Joyce Dora did you really connect with?

Which one or two points challenged your thinking?

Kurt Bishop, president of Mission Possible, shares this concerning building healthy relationships on the trip.

We want you to develop healthy relationships with those from Haiti and the DR, but they should be healthy.

- You will meet people who are desperate and it can turn into a security situation for you and the student.
- The student could be kidnapped if somebody thinks you will pay money.
- They might show up at your door someday.
- They might ask you for money and get upset if you don't give them money.
- You can get mobbed when people find out you're giving away things.
- They might try to give you their baby to take back to the US (it has happened to us).

What is an unhealthy relationship? It's a relationship that is based on what you can do for a person there: What you can give them, and what you can do for them.

What is a healthy relationship? It's a relationship based on mutual respect, one of prayer and mutual encouragement that strengthens everyone's faith. (Student sponsorship is a good vehicle for this kind of relationship, by the way.)

You will be signing a contract where you will promise you will not give anyone anything. Our national leaders have given many years of their life building ministry and empowering people, and this ministry can be ruined by careless acts on our part. They are trying to teach people that even though they are poor, they have God-given abilities and gifts that He wants them to use, and they have a responsibility to use those to take care of each other. When they rely on handouts from us, we are devaluing them as people and set them back in what God has called them to do. We

are here to give them encouragement, to serve them, to give them training or to demonstrate technology and ideas, but we are not here to give them things. We don't come to hand out anything; they have to earn it.

If you give anyone anything, you have violated the promise you will sign and you can be sent home immediately. So don't give money, food, clothes, things, your address, phone number, email, website, Facebook, Myspace, etc.

Moise, our national leader in the DR, once had a team of doctors and medical people from the US who came to do a medical clinic. They promised not to hand things out. But, the first thing they did when they got off the bus was start handing out \$1 bills to poor kids. Moise did not let them do anything; he put them right back on the bus and sent them home.

If you want to give some money or clothes or something else, give it to your team leader or the national leader to distribute as part of the church's ministry, as directed by the elders. We do our ministry through the church, not through individuals.

We are guests of the school and the church. We may not understand all the rules, but that's OK. We just have to obey them and trust they are there for a good reason.

We all are going to submit to the national leader's authority, and that includes me too. I work for them, supporting their efforts.

Action:

Does what Kurt Bishop and others offer about mission gifts challenge you to rethink the place of handouts in missions?

Tara August, Mission Possible staff member, shares this about personal space.

Personal space in Haiti and the DR is very different than it is here in the U.S. We are used to having space between us and another; especially a stranger. This is not true there. People come right up to you standing or sitting very close. There is no hidden meaning to this. This is just how they are. Having people this close to me was surprising and felt really strange at first.

Action:

What are your thoughts about personal space invasion?