



More Than Motivation

by Rodolpho Carrasco

The Silicon Valley dotcom fever infected almost everybody in California, including urban youth. At Harambee, our youth outreach ministry featured a research and development division. The same optimistic fervor that drove investors to pour millions into fly-by-night companies like WebVan and eToys—as well as into future behemoths Yahoo and eBay—led us to try lots of experiments.

Like a high-particle proton accelerator, we repeatedly sent tech initiatives crashing into urban youth culture. Once, we charged a flat fee to build a Web site for a nonprofit organization serving pregnant women. Another time, we took a pile of donated computers and tried to construct low-priced computer systems to sell in our neighborhood.

We tried hard. Our profit was a lesson. Dotcom fever—you may call it motivation, dream, desire, *ganas*—is not enough to sustain a community outreach initiative.

Before our crash, we soared to significant heights. We talked an association of urban ministries into letting our youth post its organizational directory online. No cost, I said, unless you like the work, in which case we ask for seven bucks per page. The deal in place, the technology secured (nearly Earthlink donated a computer lab and high-speed Internet

months previously), we went for broke: “OK, guys. Seven bucks a page. Do as many as you can, as fast as you can, perfectly. When your pages are signed off, you’ll get paid, in cash, right away.”

It would’ve warmed the heart of every parent, teacher, pastor, counselor and coach in America to see our black and Latino youth set off in a buzz of activity. Tap, tap, tap, went the keyboards. Within a couple of weeks, the project was completed, and the youth paid and happy.

During that project, a teen we hadn’t seen for a year materialized out of nowhere. He took the prize, completing 50 pages in a few days. He turned out to be talented, moving quickly from simple Web page creation software to

did, I learned he hadn’t completed the assigned pages. I prodded him, but he continued to make himself scarce. Finally, he admitted bluntly: “I don’t want to work that hard.”

His simple honesty left me speechless. I was also left holding the bag. I had promised on my own name that the pages would be on time. With this young man off the job, I had to turn away from my myriad responsibilities and complete the task myself.

Afterward, I stewed. An incredible opportunity had gone down the drain. But on reflection, I realized that motivated teens need more than motivation. They need good managers who will assess their weak spots and help them to grow into success. My guy needed

someone to instill in him a work ethic. He needed to learn the importance of fulfilling a promise.

I believe we all desire to do outreach that lasts. Motivation is a critical start. But personalized fol-

low-through by good managers, coaches and disciplers will always make a deeper impact. My attention now is on ensuring good management in all the right places.

When you think about community transformation and outreach ministry, chances are, being a good manager of people and their time and talents isn’t the first thing that comes to mind. But I’ve learned that, apart from love, it may be the most lasting.

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Dreamweaver, the industry standard.

A friend of Harambee at the Writer’s Guild of America, 20 miles away in Hollywood, heard about his work and called me with an offer. Each month, the WGA’s monthly print magazine had to be repurposed for its Web site. At \$50 a page, our friend would hire this youth to do the job.

I did the math. Oh, man. For an urban youth in northwest Pasadena, that kind of money looked like gold. I connected with our talented young man, he agreed to the terms, and he got started.

But, after two weeks, things changed. I had trouble finding him. When I

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