



# Starting Something

by Rodolpho Carrasco

“If you build it, they will come.”

That’s what Andrew Sears and I believed. We were two urban ministers who loved tech and wanted to address the digital divide. It seemed odd to us that there was no national network of Christians who used technology programs as a core of their ministry. So in 2000, at a Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) Conference in 2000, we stood in the booth area and made launch plans for TechMission.

Today, six years later, TechMission ([techmission.org](http://techmission.org)) has more than 500 member organizations and is widely known as the premier faith-based technology network addressing the digital divide.

That’s the short version of the TechMission story. But when people ask me for advice on starting something, I give the whole story, which includes doubts, fears, errors, opposition and unintended consequences.

Consider:

**Strengths:** Andrew and I were already technology consultants to numerous urban ministries around the country. We had the contacts.

**Weaknesses:** Neither of us had operated a network of the scale we were discussing. We had no budget. We were both very busy already.

**Opportunities:** A huge vacuum existed in the area of networking people bringing tech skills to the poor. With

a relatively small investment, we could develop something big.

**Threats:** Our existing work could suffer if this national initiative took more resources than we expected.

There comes a moment when you’ve talked a matter through and it’s time to make a decision. Either you do it or you don’t. At the conclusion of our conversation, we determined we had everything in place to make a reasonable attempt. Only one thing eluded us: The guts to move forward.

Then I thought of *Urban Family* magazine. In early 1992, I was part of a team of five people that launched a national, minority-owned Christian magazine. We were save-the-world types

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working in a racial reconciliation-oriented parachurch ministry. No one had ever run a magazine, but lack of experience didn’t stop us. We worked hard and produced an issue.

A major challenge came when we learned that many prominent church leaders in America would not embrace our effort. What hurt me most was when Latino brothers and sisters whom I respected took me to task for a variety of perceived shortcomings. In those moments, it took guts to simply persevere and not wait for the approval of those I believe misunderstood our efforts.

The perseverance to continue in the face of opposition paid off. From start-up to questionable launch to national acceptance, the magazine went on to become a minor success.

What amazed me most was that, years later, some of the people who had stood back, or even publicly criticized us, turned around and contacted us. Like Nicodemus in the night, they now wanted to be involved with *Urban Family*, some even asking, “Why didn’t you guys ever contact me?” My prayer in that moment was not to bear a grudge nor nurse a wound, but to embrace anew.

I remembered all this when Andrew and I were talking about TechMission that November day. We needed guts because we could imagine the opposition we would face if we didn’t “consult key leaders” in urban America. We wanted to do everything properly. But we had little time, no money and a big dream.

So we went for it.

This next part doesn’t happen often. I’ve seen many internet-based ministries fail. But for some reason, TechMission stuck.

The day came when Andrew and some TechMission board members walked into a high-charged meeting with a technology company. Their presence was announced: “Ladies and gentlemen, I’d like to introduce you to the premier faith-based digital divide network in the country.”

Success was never guaranteed. But we did our due diligence. Besides assessing the need and planning ahead, due diligence also required some guts to step into the unknown.

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