

Focus on Training: *It's Not Just for Clients!*



One of the greatest gifts the Lord gave to mankind is the ability to learn. It's amazing. You sit down with your newspaper and coffee in the morning and read an article about something you know nothing about. Twenty minutes later you've had a miniature education.

Even more amazingly, you can pass this knowledge along to someone else. What a gift the ability to learn is. We can learn more about ourselves, our lives, and our world.

Most importantly, we learn more about the incredible God we serve. King Solomon is said to be the wisest man

***Let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance.*** PROVERBS 1:5

that ever lived. How did he get that way? He asked God. God was so pleased that Solomon sought wisdom above all else

that He gave him far more than he had asked.

It makes sense for us to follow Solomon's example of pursuing wisdom. If we feel we haven't got anything left to learn, we become prideful and unteachable. That's a bad place to be.

Modeling Top-Flight Staff Development

The specific vision that drives Integra forward every day is business-as-mission in Central and Eastern Europe. The heart of that vision is the training in biblical business principles we provide to aspiring entrepreneurs.

A critical part of this main vision of training budding business owners is training our own staff. We challenge our clients to care for their employees. Doesn't it make sense for

By Jenna Sveen

Integra Staff Practice Walking in the Client's Shoes



Funded by a generous donor dedicated to developing our team, our 2nd annual staff training was held in Bern, Switzerland. In January, nine of our leaders from Russia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania joined Integra board members and friends for a pivotal week of professional development.

The training team included board members and business leaders whose passion for kingdom values in the marketplace makes them a perfect match for Integra's mission. Integra US Board members, Deloris Thomas and Joe Feth, along with businessmen Dave Sveen and Ray Thomas, shared their wisdom and expertise.

All have close knowledge of Integra's mission in addition to their professional talents. The sessions pushed the staff deeply into the workplace topics explored in last year's training.

“I enjoyed every part of it. I feel privileged that I can be a part of such a group. Definitely, I would like this to happen again. I think that the combination of seminars, workshops, spiritual content, fellowship and fun is unique for these meetings and I like it!” — ALENKA MILOSAVLJEVIC

Ray Thomas, using his background in marketing, had participants create television and radio commercials, design store layouts, and think through employee manuals. He pushed them to establish business goals and objectives, as well as identify target markets.

His premise was, “How can we anticipate the needs of our clients if we have never gone through the process we are asking them to go through?” Divided into two teams, the staff labored at these projects, then presented their ideas to the three judges, businessman Dave Sveen, board member (and businessman) Joe Feth, and Bob Kuhlman, Integra's president (also a former businessman!).

At the end of the day, the judges chose a winning team. But of course, all the staff were winners, benefiting greatly from the exercises. As Integra Bulgaria's Senior Manager, Dessislava Chalamova, put it, “I could really see the various challenges and thought processes entrepreneurs must pass

“The whole week was so pleasant. Everyone went out of their way to help, train, and encourage us. We are very thankful for it. The seminar was very practical for our work in Bulgaria, and we would like the next seminars to continue being done in a practical manner.”

— INTEGRA BULGARIA STAFF



through in order to build a successful business.”

Board member Deloris Thomas then unpacked the challenges of fund development and project management. Divided by country, each team was assigned a potential “donor,” obligingly played by Bob Kuhlman, Dave Sveen, Joe Feth, and Ray Thomas. The teams were given an assortment of situations to role-play, applying best practice strategies and principles of donor relations. Once again, the staff planned and presented their programs, this time struggling to engage a potential donor.

“For me, the fund development presentation was much needed,” admitted Alenka Milosavljevic, from Integra Slovakia, “and I received the overall picture as well as new ideas for our programs. It was also great because [the training] was Bible-based, not just technique- and methodology-driven.”

Of course an Integra training event also included the inspiring challenge to see the team members grow in their walk with Christ. Dave Sveen challenged everyone each morning, with sessions on Character, Communication, Comprehension, and Competency.

This training week was outstanding. Everyone attending was stretched to



grasp and understand new concepts, or see old ones in new ways. We look forward to future opportunities to grow and develop in our ability to serve the clients of Integra.

To learn more about how Integra trains its staff, and to find out how you can get involved in our dynamic business-as-mission work, give us a call at 1-800-472-1828 or email us at integra@integrausa.org.

“It was food for our minds, souls and bodies and we are grateful for it! For many of us it was one of the best times of the year.”

— FLORICA CHERECHES
PRESIDENT, INTEGRA ROMANIA



Zach Fallon

INTERN CLOSE-UP

Zach Fallon

Zach Fallon has two main interests: sports (he is a pitcher on the Wheaton College baseball team) and international

missions. He has traveled to Kenya, working with AIDS victims and seeking to inspire others to become involved. He learned of Integra when Bob Kuhlman visited an economics class at Wheaton. Zach and Bob met for lunch (mentoring!) and in January, Zach jumped in as an intern.

Since joining the team, Zach's responsibilities have included donor relations and editing training materials for Integra seminars in Eastern Europe. "Since coming to Integra," he shares, "I have appreciated the ministry more by learning about the kind of impact they are interested in making in Europe."

Zach will finish school in May, with a degree in Business/Economics. After getting married, he'll move to Detroit to work with a hedge fund group. We'll watch to see how God will use this experience in shaping his future plans.



Jeremiah Hillebrand

INTERN CLOSE-UP

Jeremiah Hillebrand

Jeremiah Hillebrand, a senior at Wheaton College, needed a six-month internship in a developing

country. Through courses on poverty alleviation he had met Bob Kuhlman. Bob connected Jeremiah with Integra Bulgaria, and before long he moved there for an internship.

Jeremiah worked as an assistant to Dessislava Chalamova, Integra Bulgaria's senior manager. He helped research and write grants, communicated with foreign ambassadors, and conducted a research project, interviewing 30 entrepreneurs about the effectiveness of Integra's training.

He was also challenged through Integra's orphan program, which helps orphans integrate into society. "My role was neat in that I simply spent time with the young people, hanging out or teaching English," Jeremiah explains. "I enjoyed their friendship and still communicate with a handful of them."

We are grateful for Jeremiah's efforts during the time he spent with us, and trust he will reap the rewards of this experience in the years to come. In Jeremiah's own words, "My internship... has shaped my career path. I... have decided to work in the for-profit business world for a few years. I feel a desire to pursue work in the non-profit world, which will shape the direction I move in the business world. I have learned a lot at Integra and am grateful for the experience!"

It's All about Encouragement

By Christy Schweigert

As an intern with Integra Bulgaria, I do a variety of things, from teaching English and tutoring in our orphans' program, to helping to plan business training. These are the things I expected to learn and do here—to be like one of the staff.

What I didn't expect from my time in Sofia was to identify just as much with the at-risk women we work with as with the staff.

As a 22-year-old, fresh out of Wheaton College, I have many decisions to make, and I need a lot of encouragement about what direction to go. Just like the women we work with, I came to Integra with education, potential, and a desire to make something of myself. I see these traits in the Bulgarian women in my Business English classes. They come regularly

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with their homework, they study, and they hope to learn something new and improve themselves.

At a recent business club meeting, I talked with a woman who had worked her whole life as a seamstress, but had only in the last year officially started a business with a loan from Integra. She works extremely hard, often staying up all night to finish projects, because it is what she loves to do. But, she makes time for English class and Integra's training because she values the practical advice as well as the social outlet

this community of women provides.

Like this woman, all the entrepreneurs we work with are talented and capable of building successful businesses. So why do they come to Integra?

What I have seen is that Integra's most valuable service is encouragement to the entrepreneurs in our program—encouragement to improve themselves and to do better what they already do well. Integra offers this encouragement through practical training, as well as through real relationships developed over time.

One English student came to class recently with a poem she had understood from our lesson on the words "good," "better," and "best." I think this poem is reflective of the work of Integra with the people here in Bulgaria, and of the kind of person they have *encouraged* me to be:

*Good, Better, Best
Never let it rest
'Til your Good is Better
And your Better, Best*

As an intern I get to have one foot on each side of the fence—to *do the encouraging* in my English classes and tutoring (the most rewarding activities I participate in here), and to *be encouraged* myself to venture into new things, to be independent, and to be a life-long learner.



Christy Schweigert (left) supported Integra's work with youth-at-risk in Bulgaria on her internship.

us to model that? Of course it does. We want to ensure that Integra staff members accelerate their ability to accomplish their jobs.

Through the generous support of some of Integra's Silent Partners we've been able to offer top-flight training sessions for staff. In this newsletter

We challenge our clients to care for their employees. Doesn't it make sense for us to model that?

you'll get a glimpse of the inner workings of our second annual staff training event, which took place in January.

Our leaders from across Central and Eastern Europe gathered for a week of high-impact workshops designed to target their areas of greatest need. In planning the material we listened to what the staff wanted, but also gave them a lot of what we know they need.

Was it a success? Well, here's what Alenka Milosavljevic, one of our staff in Slovakia, thought: "The workshop was very well managed, inspiring, and enjoyable, with a lot of practical input and competition. It was really a joy to take part in it." Sounds like she appreciated it!

I think we do an excellent job of training our people. That will be our strength during the tough times. And remember, this was possible because of *your* support.

Growing a New Generation of Leaders

Another avenue of training we've established is our internships for college and post-college students. Developing future mission leaders is critical and that's something many organizations don't bother with. Who

will do the work of ministry in the next generation if we don't challenge young people today?

Jenna Sveen is an example of this process coming full circle. She joined us in 2007 as an intern in Bulgaria, and now serves on staff. Here's what she says about her experience:

"...I know the importance Integra places on investing in the next generation. I came with no experience, but had a desire to learn. I grew so much during my internship in Bulgaria that when I graduated, I began working for Integra."

Jenna works part time for us while she's in law school (studying international law because of her interest in missions). She's a valuable member of our team, helping to coordinate communication flow with clients and staff in Europe.

To date, we've had five young interns. All of them have been outstanding and grown in their commitment to business-as-mission. It's actually a sacrifice for students to accept these unpaid internships, but this program is having an incredible impact. In this issue you'll meet three of the young people we have had the privilege of working with over the last year. Read on to learn more about their experiences.

At Integra, our goal is growth and development—to get sharper. Let me end as I began. Solomon wrote, "...the wise *listen*, and by listening learn..." What about you? (What about me?) Are we willing to listen....to learn? I hope so. It's the doorway to growth and maximum impact for God's kingdom. What more could we ask for?

Bob Kuhlman, President

Integra USA Appoints New VP of SME International Development



Peter Tashev

After a long search, it is with great excitement that we announce the appointment of Peter Tashev as Integra USA's new Vice President of SME International Development,

effective January 2010.

Peter is one Integra staffer who knows what business-as-mission is from the inside. As a young Bulgarian entrepreneur, he has launched several businesses since the fall of communism in 1989. One, a law firm, employs 8 attorneys. On Thursday mornings, Peter and his partner hold a weekly

He's passionate about painting a picture of ministry for American businessmen and women. He hopes to challenge them to apply these principles in their own companies, and to grow the circles of business leaders who are "taking their faith to work" in new and creative ways.

prayer and Bible study time for the staff. All are welcome to attend, but not all do. Work doesn't begin until 10:00 am, and staff members know they are free to come early and join the study, or arrive later as the workday begins.

It's these sorts of business development habits that Peter has picked up from dynamic Christian businessmen who have mentored him over the

years. It's what has made him a great Executive Director for Integra Bulgaria for the past nine years. He's passionate about painting this picture of ministry for American businessmen and women. He hopes to challenge them to apply these principles in their own companies, and to help him grow the circles of business leaders who are "taking their faith to work" in new and creative ways.

In his new role, Peter will help IVUSA serve our partner agencies in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkan region, as well as their SME (small- and medium-sized enterprise) staff and clients, more effectively. Our desire is to strengthen the SME programs and do so in a way that serves the specific needs of the partner agencies.

Specific responsibilities will include leading the strategic planning process, evaluating business opportunities, mentoring and training staff members, providing technical assistance in business consulting, marketing, and planning to SME clients, and facilitating clear communication between IVUSA and partners in the region. Peter's role will also include serving as the liaison for the involvement of US investors and mentors with the programs and clients in Europe.

PRAYER POINT

- **For Peter in this time of transition, as well as for Integra Bulgaria as they seek a new Executive Director.**



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