

Street Newz to Street Vending

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PEJ News - Congratulations to Street Newz for instilling hope in the hapless. The previous street newspaper, the not too lamented Red Zone, was mired in an abyss of pointless negativity, infighting, and all out corruption.

Your goal of instilling a sense of purpose in its vendors and giving them a much needed additional income is highly laudable. The obvious next step might be to challenge the shopkeeper monopoly on the sale of disposable items through the legalization of street vending. Visitors of Central America are, of course, aware of the existence of street vendors. These individuals can range from strolling vendors to vendors of products with blankets on which they display their items for sale to vendors in designated market areas. You get the general idea, of course.

<http://PEJ.org> Products offered range from pens, chiclets, home made candy, jewelry, combs, copal incense, jewelry, etcetera. It would seem a logical progression from vending papers to vending disposable items. Business license fees could assure zoning laws and tax evasion are monitored. Initial investments need not be large as wholesalers really do not care who they sell to. I realize this type of vending is culturally appropriate to Central America.

I realize the possible difficulties this type of economic activity entails: problems with monitoring sales lest they become simply fronts for dope dealers, the possibility of counterfeit products being sold, tax evasion, our anal evasion of anything resembling disorganization, shopkeeper paranoia at sharing a bit of wealth, etcetera. However, street vending, even after taking into consideration these risks, could be, with careful monitoring, a superb means of getting people off their butts and into the mainstream. All in all it would seem a much better project than setting up homeless camps in areas not zoned for such camps.

After 4 winters in Central America that is simply my point of view. Amazing how life in the really tough lands can change points of view. It is even more amazing how giving people a chance instead of condemning them on hearsay can change our lives for the better.