

Why bother with Business as Mission, BAM?

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The collapse of the Soviet Union

Remember the Soviet Union? It was communist country with a planned centralized economy. Violations of human rights were prevalent, and it also lacked freedoms to act in the market place. I was there, and witnessed a dysfunctional state first hand. It was like a giant statue with feet of clay, and it did eventually fall over and implode in December 1991.

One country became 15 countries. One currency became 15 currencies. One grand artificial and dysfunctional economic system crumbled and 15 new nations had to re-group and try to adjust to a market based global economy.

My personal journey into BAM

I continued to travel to the now former Soviet Union, and kept working in Central Asia, in the 'stans': Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and so forth. Certainly, there were geopolitical changes and turmoil, but there were many of other changes, too. A lot of Christian agencies came to the region from all over the world. We also witnessed a quite remarkable growth of people from a Muslim background becoming followers of Jesus.

At the same time there was an exponential growth of unemployment and under-employment, on a scale that most of us find hard to fathom. With this came all kinds of social problems. How could we as followers of Jesus respond to this need? Jobs were urgently needed. But churches and mission agencies did not call upon the people qualified to address these challenges – business people.

So in the mid-90's we started to explore how we could engage, equip and connect Christians in business with the needs and opportunities in the Central Asia region. We started the Central Asia Business Consultation and ran it for ten years. The lessons learned, including developing processes and networks to listen, learn, share and connect, were foundational for the development of the global think tanks on Business as Mission.

Genocide in Rwanda

A second game changer was the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. If our sole success criterion is church planting and growth, Rwanda was probably the ultimate success story in the history of church and missions. It went from 0 to approximately 90 percent of the population becoming members of various churches in about 100 years. But in the spring of 1994 about one million people were killed in just a few months. It literally was Christians killing Christians. **Rwanda had people in church, but not church in people.** The gospel had not transformed ethnic relations, politics and media.

What is our mission?

These tragic events forced me to review our mission. What is the mission of the church? How can we serve people and nations towards a holistic transformation, believing that God can transform individuals and communities, churches and nations? What does it mean to be a Christian in the marketplace? How can we do business as mission, law as mission, education as mission, and city planning as mission? How can we serve God and the common good? What does it mean in practice and what are the lessons learned regarding seeking shalom and prosperity of cities and nations? (Jer. 29) How do we affirm, equip and deploy business people to exercise their gifts of wealth creation for the nations?

Genesis of BAM in Genesis

BAM is not a modern phenomenon or a new idea. God is the original entrepreneur. Business is deeply divine and deeply human. Doing business reflects who God is and who we are. God is the Creator; he worked and created good things for himself and others. The triune God created in community for community, which included Adam and Eve.

We are created in God's image, and thus we are to create good things - products and services. Just as God did quality control at the end of each creation / production day, and found the products good, we are to strive for excellence in business. God told Adam and Eve to work in the garden; by sowing one seed they could reap twenty. Thus they were involved in a value-add process. They received a good return on their investment, ROI, and made a profit.

Work, creativity, value added processes, profit, ROI, product development, quality control, and serving the common good - business fundamentals - are all found in the first chapters of the Bible. The genesis of BAM is in Genesis.

Rediscover Biblical roots and historical connections

We always need to stand at the crossroads of the historical and the global church. We need to learn from those who have gone before us and connect with other around the globe today. We are not the first ones in history doing business for God and the common good. Let me mention a few examples.

The astute **businesswoman in Proverbs 31** did market assessments, profitable investments, and used profit to grow her business, and she gave for charitable causes. She provided much needed employment. Verse 31 concludes that her work in and impact through business is commendable and should be recognized.

The transformative good news spread along the **Silk Road** as followers of Jesus did business. We can learn from the **Moravians** and the **Quakers**. The **Cadbury** (chocolate) family ran a business for many generations, with multiple bottom-lines for many stakeholders.¹

Hans Nielsen **Hauge** (1771 – 1824) was instrumental for a spiritual revival in **Norway** but also influential in the industrialization of the country.²

BAM is a rediscovery journey, similar to the reformation era when there was a push to go back to the sources – ad fontes. We must pursue a deeper understanding of Biblical truths and apply them today.

Martin Luther's statement is a reassuring reminder of BAM's historical roots: *"A cobbler, a smith, a farmer, each has the work and the office of his trade, and they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops, and every one by means of his own work or office must benefit and serve every other, that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, even as all the members of the body serve one another."*³

Wealth creation, sharing and hoarding

We are not just Christians doing social enterprise. We are mandated to have a positive impact on multiple bottom-lines for multiple stakeholders, and God should always be one of them. Business as Mission is not a technique. It is a worldview and a lifestyle. It is about following Jesus in the marketplace, to the ends of the earth; it is about loving God and serving people through business.

As we do business we create wealth; not only financial wealth, but also social, cultural, intellectual, and spiritual wealth. The Bible talks about wealth in three ways: wealth creation, sharing and hoarding. The last is condemned. Wealth sharing is encouraged, and often happens through NGOs and churches. But there is no wealth to be shared unless it has been created. Wealth creation is a godly gift. God says that He gives the ability to create wealth. (Deut. 8:18) But He also reminds us that the wealth creation process, done through business, should be mindful of both God and others.

We should always have this dual goal: to do business for God **and** the common good. It makes a difference. Noah and his sons undertook a massive engineering project with this perspective and it led to the salvation of mankind and creation. An equally impressive construction project was the Tower of Babel. But God was left out; the project, with selfish motives, led to the breakdown of society.

Sunday ↔ Monday

BAM is a worldview, shaped by the Bible, and includes seeing creativity in business as potentially helpful for people and society. It involves affirming, equipping and deploying business people into service.

But the sacred-secular divide is deeply entrenched in our churches and in our thinking as Christians all around the world.

Pope John Paul II said that *“There cannot be two parallel lives in their existence: on the one hand, the so- called "spiritual" life, with its values and demands; and on the other, the so- called "secular" life, that is, life in a family, at work, in social relationships, in the responsibilities of public life and in culture. ... this split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age”*.⁴

BAM is not just a minor tweak in our business techniques. It is about aligning our thinking with the Bible’s view on work and business. BAM is about connecting Sunday with Monday. Whatever we believe and profess in church on Sunday should inform our business goals and activities on Monday. God wants it and the world needs it.

Connect with global movement

20 years ago we could not credibly talk about a global BAM movement. Today – by the grace of God – we can. Since 2002 two global BAM think tanks have convened, the BAM Global Congress was held in 2013 with nearly 600 participants from over 40 countries, and 19 BAM Global BAM Think Tank reports have been published (as of March 2016). Each tool has been instrumental in bringing about a global cohesion and understanding of the BAM concept. (See BAM Manifesto enclosed below)

BAM is about serving **people**, aligning with God’s **purposes**, being good stewards of the **planet**, and making a **profit**. BAM is seeking holistic transformation of people and societies. BAM affirms that the business is an instrument, which we should shape and fine-tune to serve people and nations – to the greater glory of God.⁵ BAM recognized the importance of SME’s (small and medium-sized enterprises), since they are strong transformational agents.⁶

The BAM Global Think Tanks have also created an unprecedented national, regional, international and issue or industry based connectedness of people and ideas.⁷

Today both the Lausanne Movement and the World Evangelical Alliance have embraced BAM. A large number of significant international mission agencies have as well. There is a growing number of Master theses and doctoral works on BAM, as well as BAM courses and BAM-based MBA programs at universities and colleges around the world.

And it is a global movement, not an American one. Some of the oldest and largest national BAM movements in the world are found in Asia.⁸

Join the growing global movement of business people who are shaping businesses for God and for the common good.

The **BAM Manifesto**,⁹ published October 2004, was adopted by the first BAM think tank, which “*worked for a year, addressing issues relating to God’s purposes for work and business, the role of business people in church and missions, the needs of the world and the potential response of business*”.

Excerpts:

Affirmations

We believe that **God** has created all men & women in His image with the ability to be creative, creating good things for themselves and for others - this includes business.

We believe in following in the footsteps of **Jesus**, who constantly and consistently met the needs of the people he encountered, thus demonstrating the love of God and the rule of His kingdom.

We believe that the **Holy Spirit** empowers all members of the **Body of Christ** to serve, to meet the real spiritual and physical needs of others, demonstrating the kingdom of God.

We believe that God has called and equipped business people to make a **Kingdom** difference in and through their businesses.

We believe that the **Gospel** has the power to transform individuals, communities and societies. Christians in business should therefore be a part of this holistic transformation through business.

We recognise the fact that poverty and unemployment are often rampant in areas where the name of Jesus is rarely heard and understood.

We recognise both the dire need for and the importance of business development. However it is more than just business per se. **Business as Mission** is about business with a Kingdom of God perspective, purpose and impact.

We recognise that there is a need for job creation and for multiplication of businesses all over the world, aiming at the quadruple bottom line: spiritual, economical, social and environmental transformation.

¹ Suggested reading: *Chocolate Wars*, by Deborah Cadbury

² <http://matstunehag.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Hauge-.pdf>

³ An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility

⁴ CHRISTIFIDELES LAICI: THE VOCATION AND MISSION OF THE LAY FAITHFUL IN THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II to bishops, priests, deacons, women and men religious and all the lay faithful (December 30, 1988)

⁵ Do business like Bach! Check this short video, 79 seconds:
<https://vimeo.com/152713982>

⁶ See brief paper that elaborates on the potential danger of micro business, and the value of small and medium size enterprises, SME's.
<http://www.matstunehag.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/WEA-MC-Paper-on-Why-is-Bangladesh-poor-and-Taiwan-rich-May-091.pdf>

⁷ See www.BAMGlobal.org and the BAM Manifesto above

⁸ See also BAM material in 16 languages at www.MatsTunehag.com

⁹ <http://matstunehag.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/BAM-MANIFESTO-2.pdf>