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Business as Mission Resources

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The blending of business with mission is as old as Paul's tentmaking work in New Testament times. However, over the past two hundred years many evangelical missions (and churches) have pushed business ventures to the sidelines. Certainly, the hostilities in the colonial era between missionaries and other business organizations played a role in that. In addition, missionaries and mission agencies were concerned that missionaries making a profit could too easily become profit-focused rather than kingdom-focused and risk being swallowed up with business decisions to the extent that their ministries would suffer.

As a result, the idea of mixing genuine businesses (as profit-making ventures) with missionary work was seen as inappropriate in many mission agency circles during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, this has been changing over the past few decades. There are four reasons why this is the case. First, the days of easy access to the unreached with any type of religious visa are gone. Second, the significant rise of a global economy — including the revolution in transportation and communication — and the multiple business opportunities that have come with that rise make it possible for people to find jobs (or start businesses) across national boundaries in ways that were not possible fifty years ago. Third, the fact that it is increasingly difficult to raise faith support has led some missionaries — especially those from Majority World countries—to explore new avenues of earning a living while engaging in missions. Finally, the idea that there is a type of spiritual hierarchy of jobs — with ministry jobs being the most spiritual and "secular" jobs the least spiritual — has been challenged, thus legitimizing business as mission (BAM) theologically (e.g., Grudem 2003).

One result is that the dichotomy between missions and business is eroding as BAM ventures thrive. Over the past several years, groups like the Lausanne Movement and the Evangelical Missiological Society have focused on these issues through study groups and national conferences and publications (Lausanne 2004; Steffen and Barnett 2006).

The Internet is a natural place to find information on cutting-edge trends, and BAM is no exception. A search on Google for "Business as Mission" (with quotation marks) yielded over twenty-six thousand hits. In this edition of Missions on the Web we provide links to numerous sources to help you think through the issues and find practical help for the questions you may have. Our resulting web page is found at www.mislinks.org/practical/bam.htm;¹ we invite you to browse it as you read the article. As usual, we found and linked to far more sites than we are able to describe in the space we have here.

DIRECTORIES/LINK PAGES

There are several good directories that offer multiple links to BAM sites. Our "blue ribbon" award for overall usefulness and comprehensive coverage goes to the Business as Mission Resource Centre (www.businessasmission.com) which is part of the YWAM connect family of mission sites. The BAM Resource Centre has three primary purposes: (1) advocating for BAM as a concept and as a mission model; (2) connecting with those pursuing business as their ministry strategy; and (3) training and networking to enable the multiplication of new business as mission initiatives. They offer six pages of topical directory links, including resource and networking sites, projects and businesses, microenterprise development, workplace ministry, training and development resources. An example of what they offer can be found on the "workplace ministry resources" page, which has links to ten organizations and three books.

The International Coalition of Workplace Ministries (ICWM) is "a fellowship of workplace believers who want to ignite leaders for workplace transformation by modeling Jesus Christ." Their website offers an International Faith & Work Directory (www.icwm.net/apps/directories/default.asp?searchid=97) with over 1,300 organizations listed in five categories (Christian CEO, Business Owner, Self-Employed; Educational Institution, College, University; Workplace Believer; Church; and Non-Profit Workplace Ministry). You can search the directory by country, category, keyword, state or city. A search of organizations in India yielded sixteen results. While all had email contacts, only seven had URLs for organizational home pages. It should be noted that more than 840 of the listings were for organizations (including schools) in the United States, rather than international BAM employers.

Urbana provides a very helpful Business as Mission Resources list

(www.urbana.org/u2006.ofb.cfm?article=15) with links to papers, BAM companies, organizations, business plan development resources and more.

Finally, Wholistic Transformation Resource Center's (www.wtrc-tmed.org) mission is to "equip Christian development organizations in their task to strengthen the local church by the empowerment of its members through transformational microenterprise programs." Their links page has a focus on microenterprise development and has twenty-one links to microfinance and microenterprise sources and forty-two links to Christian microenterprise organizations.

ORGANIZATIONAL SITES

We found several organizations that focus on BAM as their sole or main strategy. AZTEM (www.aztem.org) is an Australian organization that "exists to promote and support tentmaking as a means of fulfilling the Great Commission." They do not actually send tentmakers, but assist those who want to go as tentmakers by providing resources such as their online job list.

The Business Professional Network (www.bpn.org) was formed from interested people who attended the 1995 Global Consultation on World Evangelization (GCOWE) in Seoul, Korea. They have a five-fold purpose: (1) seek ways to encourage and support others in the task of "missions through business"; (2) connect Western world business resources with needs and opportunities in the developing world; (3) provide training to nationals in business principles and integrity; (4) administer trust funds (revolving loan funds) and help entrepreneurs find access to capital; and (5) assist and encourage other organizations working in business-related missions. Their foundation (en.bpn.ch/index.html) is an "international non-profit organization founded in Berne, Switzerland, that facilitates the development of small and medium size enterprises in the developing countries." They offer information on projects in Kyrgyzstan, Benin and Nicaragua as well as vision trips to all three locations for those who want to see the results of their interest-free loans to small businesses.

The EC Institute (www.ec-i.org) has as its vision "to see business professionals ministering, encouraging and empowering one another to use their business to glorify God, both locally and globally." In addition to an e-newsletter, they provide consulting for global businesses and MBA support through internships. Global Disciples (www.globaldisciples.org), focused on church-based discipleship strategies, has a creative access program that aims "to bring together churches, mission agencies, businesses and concerned individuals to find ways for Christians to access restricted areas."

GLOBAL Opportunities's (www.globalopps.org) mission is "to help the church to understand and engage the biblical model of tentmaking by sending committed, everyday, workplace Christians as mission workers, and to mobilize and equip these Christians to serve abroad as effective tentmakers, primarily to least-reached peoples." They are not a traditional support agency, but an organization that assists tentmakers by providing a course on tentmaking (www.globalopps.org/ltn), training resources (www.globalopps.org/resources.htm) and an InDepth section (www.globalopps.org/Associates) that links to jobs, short-term opportunities, secure email sources and more. Those who become associates are offered coaching and mentoring and connections with other local tentmakers or agency workers.

Integra Ventures' (www.integrausa.org) mission is to develop businesses which will "impact society, change communities and touch lives with the gospel." With a focus on Eastern Europe, they have local independent NGO partners in Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Serbia and Slovakia. Their resources page offers a short video that is a synopsis of their work and back issues of their newsletter (Bottom Line).

Intent (www.intent.org) is a membership-based organization whose focus is networking professionals together. Individual memberships are \$50; institutional prices vary depending on the size of the institution. They "connect and combine the experience of practitioners, enablers and sending institutions, both churches and agencies, to develop communication channels, research and evaluate criteria for serving kingdom professionals." They sponsor an annual national meeting as well as provide resources and links on their site.

Oikocredit (www.oikocredit.org) is unique in that it is a privately owned cooperative society. Investors can buy shares in the cooperative which typically yield a two percent return rate. The invested money is loaned in various microcredit ventures (especially local cooperative societies) in developing countries. They focus their work "in favour of the empowerment of people and especially women, in favour of the farming and agricultural sector in poor countries and in favour of supporting people who have great difficulties in accessing financial services from regular banks in the South." They concentrate their efforts in thirty-one countries across four regions of the world, supporting 467 projects as of December 31, 2005; their list of active projects is at www.oikocredit.org/documents/projects/PortfolioUK.pdf.

Finally, the Regent University Center for Entrepreneurship (www.regententrepreneur.com) was officially launched in December 2005, but traces its history to the 2002 Consultation of Holistic

Entrepreneurs. They offer articles, news, events, blogs and opportunities to join—from becoming a blogger to participating in a project to submitting your business plan and interning.

ALLIANCES/NETWORKS

Several of the sites we found are networks or alliances. The Canadian Tentmaker Network (www.tentmaking.org) is a national networking organization with local chapters across Canada. They sponsor events, provide links to sending agencies and offer resources. Tentmakernet (www.tentmakernet.com) has as its main focus to “find a national representative in each European nation and to assist them in developing a tentmaking missions strategy for their nation.” At the time we checked, there were eighteen links to such representatives, although not all of them were in Europe. The site also includes articles, links to tentmaking conferences and events and other resources.

Transformational Business Network (www.tbnetwork.org) is based in the UK and “is an association of business men and women who use their skills and experience to make an impact in the most needy areas of the world.” They have twenty-five active projects that are described online (www.tbnetwork.org/business/business.asp?flag3=1). They foster the development of Transformational Business Groups comprised of six to twelve business people and professionals who band together to “incubate, nurture and mentor micro-enterprises or SMEs (small and medium enterprises) in countries all over the world.” They also offer exposure trips to several countries each year.

GUIDELINES

With an area as applied as BAM, it is always important to have guidelines that offer help to those who are not yet experienced in the area. The most expansive set is found in Lausanne Occasional Paper 59: Business as Mission, which gives ten guiding principles on “The Essentials of Good Business as Mission” (pp. 32-36; www.lausanne.org/lcwe/assets/LOP59_IG30.pdf).

Tentmakernet provides a short list of Best Practices on BAM (www.tentmakernet.com/articles/bestpractise.htm) and YWAM offers an extensive set of guidelines (www.ywamconnect.com/ubasicpage.jsp?siteid=29315&pageid=328906), including definitions, parameters for BAM and YWAM policies and resources.

STORIES

Stories of people and the business ventures they are engaged in can help you work through possible ventures and head off potential problems in BAM. GLOBAL Opportunities (www.globalopps.org/stories.htm) offers stories of the lives of tentmakers working in China and the Middle East.

YWAM presents two stories of BAM projects (www.businessasmission.com/pages/YWAMCaseStudies), one in Rwanda and another in a sub-cultural setting in Australia. Most of the stories we found were examples of microenterprise development projects rather than BAM ventures.

The Business Professional Network (www.bpn.org/stories.html) offers several such stories from Moldova, Kyrgyzstan and El Salvador. Integra Ventures (www.integrausa.org/client.htm) has stories of four microenterprise businesses from Eastern Europe.

Oikocredit Projects (www.oikocredit.org/site/en/doc.phtml?p=PROJECTS3) has several stories of the cooperatives and microcredit ventures they are financing.

You can browse stories on the Transformational Business Network (TBN, www.tbnetwork.org/business/business.asp?flag3=1) by sector: production, service industry, social services and agriculture/animal husbandry. You can also view them by region of the world.

BLOGS/DISCUSSIONS

A Google blog search (blogsearch.google.com) for “Business as Mission” (be sure to use the quote marks!) turned up eighty-seven hits at the time of writing. The bulk of these, however, were people simply writing about BAM in one or two of their blogs rather than BAM-focused blogs. While we found eight BAM-focused blogs, space limitations allow us to mention only four here.

The Aquila Network (aquilanetwork.org/blog/) seeks to “develop new strategies that will bring economic, social and spiritual transformation to communities around the globe.” Recent entries provide scriptural reflection, leads to and comments on business stories in the news and wisdom from historical characters.

Business as Mission Blog (blogs.globeservebusiness.com/business-as-mission/) has numerous postings on BAM, with reasonably regular additions. A good one can be found by clicking on the

archived articles and scrolling down to the Feb 7, 2007 posting "10 deadly sins of Business as Mission." The Business as Mission blogspot (www.businessasmission.blogspot.com) is the most comprehensive and active BAM-related blogging center we found. There are ongoing panel discussions with helpful experts on a wide range of BAM issues as well as BAM-focused links in twenty-one major categories.

The Regent Center for Entrepreneurship offers multiple blogs focused on kingdom business searchable by region of the world and by specific topic (www.regententrepreneur.com/blog.html). They invite qualified people to join their list of bloggers and get into the discussions.

CONFERENCES

We found several audio and video files for conferences available. Global Business Success Foundation provides twelve presentations given at a Business as Mission Vision conference that was sponsored by APMC (www.gbsf.org/bmt/Audio.htm). The presentations are available in both mp3 and wav file formats.

Sound Word (www.soundword.com) offers over ten thousand audio resources, with conference presentations from numerous organizations on a wide variety of topics. They have twenty-six presentations from the Kingdom Business Forum (www.soundword.com/recent-conferences-kingdom-business-forum.html; no date or venue given), but the presentations are available only by mail order on cassette (\$6) or CD (\$8).

The richest conference site is the BAM track from Urbana 2006, which was called Open for Business (www.urbana.org/u2006.ofb.cfm). In addition to the conference presentations in mp3 format, they offer links to resources and sponsored a competition for college students to submit business plans for prizes (first prize was \$25,000 and was awarded to Cards from Africa; www.cardsfromafrica.com).

ARTICLES/LIBRARIES

The number of books and articles focusing on BAM has grown significantly over the past decade, and many resources are available directly online. In addition to their blogspot, the Business as Mission Resource Center offers descriptions and ordering information for twenty books (www.businessasmission.com/pages/books) and dozens of papers and articles as well as journals (www.businessasmission.com/pages/papers_articles).

The Christianity Today article: "Six Ways to Get Involved in the 'Business as Missions' Movement" by Scott McFarlane of EC Institute (www.christianitytoday.com/workplace/articles/issue11-businessasmissions.html) presents helpful, practical advice together with email links to people or organizations for each of the six ways outlined in the article.

EC Institute Articles (www.ec-i.org/Resources.html) links to articles on BAM. Among them, Wayne Grudem's exposition "How Business Glorifies God" (www.ec-i.org/How%20Business%20Glorifies%20God%20%20Dr.%20Wayne%20Grudem.pdf) lays theological foundations that make it a must read for all who focus on BAM, kingdom businesses or other forms of marketplace ministry.

The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE) offers two significant Lausanne Occasional Papers (LOP) related to BAM. LOP 39: The Local Church in Mission (www.lausanne.org/lcwe/assets/LOP39_IG10.pdf) is a two-part paper in which the second section focuses on tentmaking. LOP 59: Business as Mission (www.lausanne.org/lcwe/assets/LOP59_IG30.pdf) is an 88-page paper concentrating on BAM, including discussion on the scope of BAM, guidelines and stories, issues related to mobilization, strategic thinking and a resource list with more than one hundred resources in six categories.

The Network for Strategic Missions Knowledge Base (www.strategicnetwork.org/index.php?loc=kb) currently has more than seventeen thousand articles on missions from over four hundred sources arranged in more than 2,600 topics. BAM-related articles may be found in several categories, including business as mission, microenterprise development, professional skills in missions and tentmaking.

Tentmakernet offers forty-five links to articles (www.tentmakernet.com/articles/index.html) in six categories (tentmaking, kingdom business, work & faith, missions, biblical foundations for tentmaking and tentmaker stories). One very helpful link is to the two issues of International Journal of Frontier Missions and the twenty articles focused on tentmaking in those two issues.

Wholistic Transformation Resource Center has 108 articles (browse to www.wtrc-tmed.org and click on "Resources") that can be listed by topic or author. The articles are available in Word or Acrobat format. This is a rich and constantly growing goldmine of BAM thinking!

CONCLUSION

It is not surprising that a wealth of BAM resources and materials are available on the Web. While the links we found will provide you with a good start on getting resources, connecting with people and businesses and reading about stories of ideas that have worked, we are aware that this is a small fraction of the total available online resources. If you are aware of a site that should be included, we invite you to send us an email with the information so that we can consider including it on the MisLinks page.

References

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Endnotes

1. All URLs start with <http://> unless otherwise noted.

2. Articles labeled as "Premium" require an annual subscription to the NSM KB site of \$20 per year for full access (text and Acrobat documents).

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