

The Mission of Business: CSR+

Introduction

Business as Mission, BAM, is a relatively new phase but is based on Biblical concepts. The term BAM may not be ideal. However, the issue is to a large extent: what is the mission of business? God is the original entrepreneur who created good things in the physical arena. He told Adam & Eve to be involved in business – value added processes – tilling the garden. Business is about creating products and services in the physical arena and being involved in value added processes.

Everyone on this planet relates somehow to business and is dependent upon business activities and profit. Business also has very strong transformational powers and the capacity to meet diverse needs. Thus we need to ask what the mission of business is, or in other words: what is business as mission? I will suggest another term, CSR+, and explain it later.

What water?

Do fish know that they are swimming in water? Probably not. The water is a given, a framework within which they operate – their paradigm as it were. The non-profit paradigm is the water in which the church swims. We are not even aware of it. Our usual response to meeting needs is through a non-profit system, through an NGO of some sort. We collect money here and give away a service or product over there. BAM is not an added activity or program within that framework. **It is a different paradigm.** BAM is also responding to spiritual, social and economical needs but through business. What is the purpose of the church, missions and business? We are to demonstrate the Kingdom of God through the church and in the market place. Churches and Christian NGOs are non-profit entities, whereas businesses need a profit. There are both commonalities and differences related to these:

Churches / NGOs

- * Glorify God
- * Serve people
- * Meet various needs
- * Not for profit

Businesses

- * Glorify God
- * Serve people
- * Meet various needs
- * For profit, but not exclusively

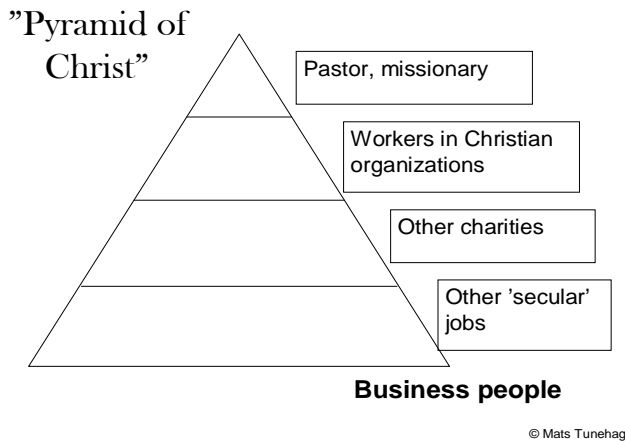
Tear down that pyramid!

The dichotomy (divide) between sacred and secular, between spiritual and physical realms, is not Biblical but stems from Greek Gnostic philosophy. It has been deemed to be a heresy by the Church. Nevertheless it still permeates our thinking, our theology and our mission strategy.

Greek Gnostic Dichotomy

• <u>Good</u>	• <u>Bad</u>
Spiritual	Physical
Sacred	Secular
Clergy	Laity

This has also resulted in a flawed view of the church and its members – “the pyramid of Christ” – instead of the Biblical concept of the Body of Christ. This non-biblical view is very common and influences most churches on all continents. The Greek Gnostic thinking values people with “spiritual vocations” and looks down upon people dealing with business. To be a pastor is often seen as a higher calling, a spiritual ministry; we even use the term “full time ministry”. So if one really wants to serve God one should aim at climbing the pyramid, towards the “higher callings”. Thus business people are often viewed as not serving God but rather dealing with Mammon, not even making it onto the pyramid. We have – as it were – turned the Body of Christ into the “Pyramid of Christ”.



A Biblical Role Model: A Businesswoman

Business people are NOT second class citizens in God’s Kingdom. The Bible even portrays a businesswoman as a godly example of how to serve others and meet various needs. Let’s briefly look at Proverbs chapter 31:

16 She considers a field and buys it;

She does a market assessment and invests

Out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.

She makes a profit and reinvests

18 She sees that her trading is profitable,

She keeps books and manages cash flow

24 She makes linen garments and sells them,

She is involved in manufacturing and retail

and supplies the merchants with sashes.

She has set up a supply chain

20 She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.

She uses part of profit for charitable work

15 she provides food for her family

She is the breadwinner of the family

and portions for her servant girls.

And provides employment

31 Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

Her work in business should be recognized and is certainly commendable

Aid vs. Trade

In these days of global economic crisis it may be good to remind ourselves about some good news. The percentage of the world population living in extreme poverty has decreased significantly from 42 % in 1990 to 25 % in 2005. Where there has been more trade and less aid, more people have been lifted out of poverty. China is one prime case in point: 1990 about 60 % lived in extreme poverty; in 2005 approximately 16 %. India: 51 % in 1990 to 42 % in 2005

Does aid help long term? In the past fifty years, more than \$1 trillion in development-related aid has been transferred from rich countries to Africa. Has this improved the lives of Africans? No! Many would in fact say that the recipients of this aid are not better off as a result of it, but worse—much worse. Aid tends to:

- undermine the integrity and dignity of the people
- create dependence, fuel corruption, undermine democracy and stifle development
- governments become accountable to Western donors
- damage entrepreneurship, and decrease innovation

Yet the church and mission agencies are still very much a part of this industry, steeped in the non-profit paradigm. Even major international Christian conferences (Lausanne, WEA, Call2All) still swim in the same water with little reflection on the assumed paradigm and its long term effectiveness.

Freezers to Eskimos and heaters to Sahara?

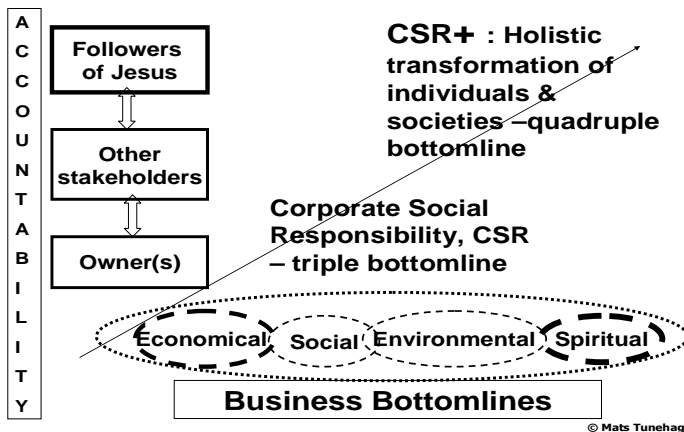
Is the church a group of people who have all the answers to questions nobody is asking? Is Christian sponsored aid addressing symptoms instead of root causes, providing services which are neither reproducible nor sustainable? I hope not, but fear it often does. Part of the reason is that we seem to be stuck in a non-profit paradigm.

When we do a market analysis of the world which Christ sends us to, we can observe that the non-profit response to various needs is insufficient. Where you find the poverty stricken people, you'll frequently see unemployment ranging from 30 to 80 percent. Looking ahead – in the same areas, hundreds of millions of young people are coming into the market place looking for jobs. The name of Jesus is rarely heard in these regions. Rampant unemployment makes people vulnerable to human trafficking; little prospect of decent jobs creates high risk environments for trafficking and prostitution. These evils and dire needs correlate.

We can never have long term, sustainable and relevant solutions unless we address economic issues and business development. BAM gives an extraordinary opportunity to demonstrate the love of God among *the least, the lost and the lowliest*.

BAM = CSR+

The only global, extensive and fairly comprehensive assessment that has been done in the global BAM movement was the global BAM think tank which worked during 2003 – 2004 under the Lausanne auspices. Its report and understanding of BAM provides an important framework for most BAMers around the world. Most would understand BAM to be *about real, viable, sustainable and profitable businesses; with a Kingdom of God purpose, perspective and impact; leading to transformation of people and societies spiritually, economically, socially and environmentally – to the greater glory of God*. To that should be added a major focus on people and areas with significant spiritual, social and economical poverty.



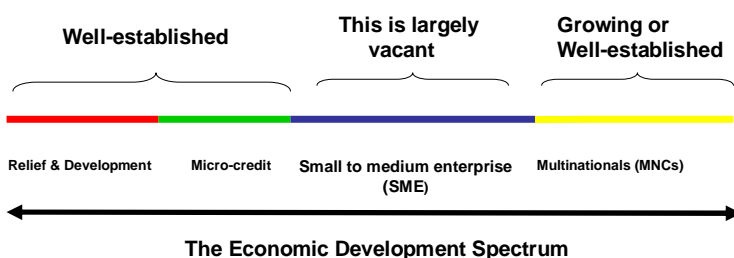
*In a limited business paradigm the primary or sole focus is on maximizing profit for the owners. The growing **corporate social responsibility (CSR)** movement emphasizes accountability to society as a whole for the “**triple bottom-line**” impact of social and environmental outcomes as well as financial results. **BAM** affirms all of these but also includes a **4th bottom-line**, intentionally revealing and honoring Christ and seeing Him transform lives through business. **BAM is CSR+**, as it were. **The + can also be seen as a cross – putting everything under the Lordship of Christ.***

Other observations on BAM:

1. Why not micro finance?

Short term one may see successes for individuals and families through micro businesses, but long term it risks keeping societies in poverty. Microfinance accelerates the proliferation of the informal sector like traders, kiosks and subsistence farms. We also know that SME’s (Small Medium Size Business) are a key to the development of economies. This sector is largely vacant in poorer countries and areas.

Globally the role of SME is profound



- ❑ Typically SME generates 85 – 95% of a developed nation’s employment
- ❑ SME provides as much as 90% or more of a developed nation’s tax base
- ❑ SMEs are strong transformational agents

2. BAM is not Business for Mission

BAM is not a fundraising strategy. It is not an alternative and new way to financially support traditional Christian ministries.

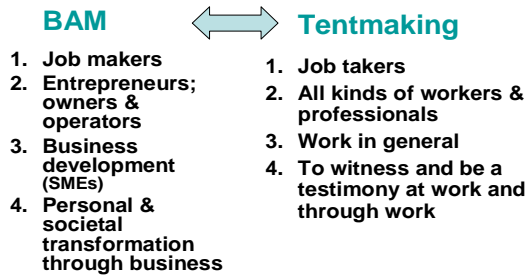
3. BAM is not fake business

BAM is real business, not Christian charity in a business disguise. BAM is not fake businesses which exist solely to provide visas for missionaries to enter countries otherwise closed to them.

4. BAM is different from but related to tentmaking

The term tentmaking is linked to the apostle Paul who made tents – had a “secular” job and thus supported himself and at the same time worked in “the ministry”. (The terms, their use and implications, often reinforce the sacred – secular divide that is contrary to the Biblical holistic concept.) In mission circles tentmaking often means someone taking up a job with a company in a foreign country, and that gives opportunities to share Christ with colleagues and others. It is a good and valid concept but is not to be confused with BAM, although some overlap exists and they have complementary emphases.

Complementary Emphases of BAM & Tentmaking



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Looking ahead: needs, gaps & challenges

In the last 15 years the BAM concept has spread across the world and the number of BAM initiatives has grown dramatically. However, there are still major needs and gaps in the global BAM movement. Below I will attempt to identify and briefly elaborate on a few of them. The following points can be used for prayer, discussion, planning and action.

1. VISION IMPARTATION

We have many reasons to rejoice and praise God for the growth of the global BAM movement. But there is still a major need for further and wider vision casting. Since BAM is a triangular drama which involves church, business and missions, the BAM vision needs to be imparted among these three constituencies, especially targeting church and mission leaders and Christians in the market place.

2. CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

Unfortunately there is sometimes a confusing misuse of the term BAM. Let's be clear: BAM is not 'Business for Mission', a fundraising activity facilitated by the profits generated by business. Neither is BAM 'Business as Platform' i.e. an attempt to obtain visas to do "real ministry". Rather, genuine BAM is the practice of business as a calling and ministry in its own right, a manifestation of the Kingdom of God.

3. EDUCATION & TRAINING

The gap is significant: there is a definite need for BAM to be taught in Bible colleges, mission courses, theological seminaries, liberal arts colleges, etc... BAM needs to be taught and researched as it relates to economics, business, theology, and missiology.

4. CAPITAL

One of the biggest hurdles for BAM businesses around the world, especially in and around the so-called “10/40 Window”, is securing investment capital. BAM is not built on traditional models of charitable fundraising and donations, but on a foundation of the disciplined allocation and return of capital. One of the biggest challenges for the global BAM movement is the lack of BAM investment funds - capital managed with vision, professionalism, excellence and integrity.

5. MENTORS

Many BAM practitioners (BAMers) want and appreciate mentors, people with business experience and knowledge, who share the passion for the least, the lost and the lowliest, and who are willing and able to serve and come alongside. Because BAM companies strive for a holistic impact, the movement needs mentors with expertise and skills regarding all four BAM bottom lines.

6. PRAYER

We mustn't underestimate the power of and the need for prayer, which is even more critical as we enter into the market place with a Kingdom of God invasion strategy. BAMers must have prayer partners who intercede for them, their businesses, their employees, their many relationships, and their impact on people and communities. Furthermore, pastors should be encouraged to ask business people, “How can we pray for you and your business this week?”

7. BAM & HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Report after report from the UN, the US State department, the OSCE and others show that unemployment makes people vulnerable and creates high risk areas for trafficking. Adequate **prevention** must include job creation through wholesome, intentional business development focused on these people and areas. We also face the question, “Out of trafficking (most often for the sex industry)...into what?” Without jobs in healthy environments there can be no **restoration** and holistic transformation of individuals.

8. CASE STUDIES

God's people have been involved in business throughout history and all over the world. But there are many untold stories, even in the history of the church and the history of missions. We also need to document contemporary BAM initiatives. We owe that to ourselves and posterity, for qualitative development of BAM, as a basis for prayer, for vision impartation and for training. Historical and contemporary case studies are part of a review process, which will help the global BAM movement to learn, revise, regroup and sharpen praxis. **Please note that a large part of BAM initiatives are in Asia and their stories may be told in Korean or Bahasa. We mustn't be fooled and believe that the Internet, books and conferences in English fairly reflects what is going on.**

9. EVALUATIVE TOOLS

There is a need to develop instruments using agreed key indicators of personal and societal transformation which will help measure this quadruple bottom-line impact. BAM requires more than Christians in business alone; among others, we need academia to assist and be an integral part of the BAM movement as it wrestles with a wide range of issues.

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