



BUSINESS AS MISSION
GLOBAL THINK TANK

SPECIAL REPORT

Mission Agencies

Challenges and
Opportunities for Business
as Mission

bamthinktank.org

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With thanks to the approximately 30 individuals from over 20 mission agencies who contributed to this brief report. Although they chose to remain anonymous for security reason, we thank them for sharing their experience and hope that this report will be a helpful resource to other mission organization leaders.



Executive Editors
Jo Plummer and Mats Tunehag

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† Preliminary list as of October 1, 2013

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Foreword

The Global Think Tank on Business as Mission has opened up a unique forum for collaboration among practitioners and leaders from around the world. When we began this second Think Tank initiative, we focused on a key word: *invigorate*. The purpose of the Think Tank has been to invigorate the global business as mission movement, to equip and encourage those who want to serve God and the common good in and through businesses—among all peoples.

To that end we launched over 30 national, regional and international working groups. Some of these groups focused on a particular issue in the BAM movement, and others were concentrating on BAM in and from a particular region or country.

The objectives for these groups were to listen, learn, share and connect. We developed tools and templates for the working groups to effectively collaborate through virtual meetings, as well as face-to-face consultations. Each group has produced materials, including papers, analyses, case studies, tools and resource directories, as a result of this dialogue.

To enable a meaningful and constructive conversation in and between groups, we have used the following working definition of business as mission:

Business as mission is:

- Profitable and sustainable businesses;
- Intentional about Kingdom of God purpose and impact on people and nations;
- Focused on holistic transformation and the multiple bottom lines of economic, social, environmental and spiritual outcomes;
- Concerned about the world's poorest and least evangelized peoples.

This definition emerged from the first Think Tank on BAM, which among other things produced the Lausanne Occasional Paper on Business as Mission, as well as the BAM Manifesto: http://www.lausanne.org/docs/2004forum/LOP59_IG30.pdf.

The Think Tank project has resulted in a massive global gathering of both intellectual and social capital for the BAM movement. As well as the written materials, we have built networks and have gathered together in person at the working group Leaders Forum and at the Global Congress on Business as Mission, both held in Thailand in April 2013. The intention is to now share and disseminate these gathered resources as widely as possible.

This report is one in a series of papers from the 30 plus working groups. Hundreds of leaders in the BAM community, from every continent, have contributed to these reports. Additional Think Tank reports may be found at <http://bamthinktank.org/reports>.

These reports are not the end or the final destination of the BAM Think Tank, but should rather be seen as important reflections by BAM practitioners and other leaders who will continue to journey together. We need to continue to grapple with issues, and address

needs and gaps. Some groups will continue and new initiatives will emerge. The BAM movement is on the move!

It has been a privilege to facilitate this unprecedented and global collaboration over the last two years. Looking back we can see that at times we have achieved less than we have hoped and planned for. But we have also witnessed that God is able to do more than we could have ever imagined.

Our sincere thanks goes to all those who have co-laboured with us to bring the Think Tank initiative to fruition. We want to especially thank the Steering Group, the Issue and Regional Group Leaders, the Support Team and our spouses Mark and Jennifer for their steadfast support.

We pray that these papers, case studies, tools, recommendations and resources would go out widely, and encourage and equip you as well as invigorate the global BAM movement.

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen” (Eph. 3:20-21, NIV).

Jo Plummer & Mats Tunehag
Co-Chairs

September 2013
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Executive Summary

Mission Agencies Challenges and Opportunities for Business as Mission

Mission agencies are discovering the unique opportunities and challenges of doing business as part of mission strategy. Some agencies have done business as mission (BAM) from their inception, others have come to it lately or after a lengthy consideration of business as part of their mission. Several agency leaders who were working on the complex issues of for-profit business inside or alongside a non-profit agency began to talk together at the beginning of the BAM Global Think Tank process. We agreed to meet at the April 2013 BAM Congress in Chiang Mai, Thailand to continue the conversation face to face. After the Congress there was an ongoing dialogue utilizing electronic media. This Special Report is written as a summary of those conversations.

While the individuals and agencies involved have wished to remain anonymous for security reasons, we have had participation of around 30 individuals from 22 agencies at various times. We are clear that each agency will have their own solution to the issues of doing BAM, this report simply outlines our discussion to identify some of the key issues that commonly arise.

This report identifies issues in three main areas:

1. Worldview

The attitude of the agency towards business, and the tensions caused by differences between business and mission culture and between old and new ways of approaching mission.

2. People

The challenge of recruiting and mobilizing people with the right skill-sets, creating robust teams, followed by providing the appropriate kinds of support and accountability to those people.

3. Financial and legal

The complexities surrounding ownership, funding and financial transfers, as well as the legal complexities created by agencies and businesses often operating across national borders.

This report is written for agency leaders who are grappling with BAM issues within their existing structures and processes. While we have no perfect solutions, we have outlined the major issues that should be addressed by agencies doing BAM as part of their mission strategy. It would also benefit BAM practitioners who are working within agencies to dialogue with their agency leaders on these issues.

Mission Agencies: Challenges and Opportunities for Business as Mission

Introduction

Mission agencies are discovering the unique opportunities that business can open up for mission work, but also some unique challenges. Some agencies have done business as mission (BAM) from their inception, others have come to it more recently or after lengthy consideration. Different mission agencies have different cultures, structures, goals and methods, so there is not a 'one-size fits all' approach to doing business as mission. However, there are some common issues that agencies come across and our goal has been to identify those.

As a result of several Skype conversations an initial group of nine agency leaders dealing with business as mission agreed to meet at the BAM Congress in Chiang Mai, April 2013. We prepared a survey to understand the issues participants wanted to discuss. The data fell into three areas:

1. Worldview

- a. Old and new models
- b. Handling the tension

2. People

- a. Recruiting and mobilizing
- b. Robust teams
- c. Skill-sets
- d. Training
- e. Accountability

3. Financial and legal

- a. Ethics
- b. Support
- c. Ownership
- d. Complexity
- e. Capital and funding

Approximately 30 representatives from over 20 mission agencies attended the session at the BAM Congress, where we dialogued on the above three points. After that meeting a number of people participated in a SWOT Analysis and an ongoing conversation by electronic means. The results from the SWOT Analysis can be found in the Appendix.

This Special Report is written for agency leaders who are grappling with BAM issues within their existing structures and processes. It is intended to outline the major issues that should be addressed by agencies doing BAM as part of their mission strategy.

Issue Areas

Worldview

The meta question for this section is: How does the worldview of the agency and its workers affect how BAM is viewed? In many Christian circles there is a separation between what is considered “sacred” and what is considered “secular”. This bifurcation can create tension between business people and traditional missionaries. It can also create tension *within* the missionary who is doing business. Worldview speaks to the issue of why we are doing business in the first place. Does an agency promote BAM to get access to a country or people group, only as a means to an end; or does it consider that business has a Godly purpose in and of itself?

The issues we identified in this section include:

- Each agency is trying to embrace the BAM transition in different ways according to their history and ability to change. Business can be perceived as a threat to “old” strategy.
- There are often tensions between traditional approaches to mission and a BAM approach.
- Business tends to move at a faster pace than mission.
- Business decisions are made with different criteria than mission decisions.
- Within an agency it may be difficult to create synergy and cooperation between BAM practitioners (BAMers), and traditional missionaries.
- Often the agency agenda for the business is “B4V”, i.e. doing business for a visa to plant churches, this can clash with the need to do robust business.
- There is difficulty with identity: the difference in perception between being a missionary or a business person in another country.
- Before our group met there was little cross agency discussion.

While this was a less concrete discussion than the other issue sections in this report, addressing worldview is foundational to resolving some of the polarities created by BAM. If an agency holds an unexamined worldview that BAM is simply a “necessary evil” to get access to a country or people group, little space will be given for the real power of Godly business to change a community in ways that bring Glory to God.

People

The meta question for this section is: How do we get the right people in the right positions and then support them effectively? Many agencies mobilize from Bible school circles rather than from business circles. Having people inexperienced in business start and run companies in developing countries can be a drain on an agency’s resources and may create unintended liabilities. It can also create some opposing views within the agency regarding how their vision, mission and values should be carried out.

The issues we identified in this section include:

Recruiting and mobilizing

- How best to get business people in the home countries engaged in what is happening in the field.
- Engaging expats who are already overseas.

- Equipping and discipling the next generation to use their professional skills and business experience to God's glory in business.
- How to recruit resource people or subject matter experts (consultants).

Training

- Training and mentoring in specific business skills or general business systems.
- Mission skills for business people.

Member care and accountability

- Member care for BAMers versus traditional missionary workers can be different.
- Perceived lifestyle inequity or other potential inequalities between BAMers and traditional missionaries.
- Who is in authority over the BAMer the business board or the mission agency? Who is the BAMer primarily accountable to and for what?

Agency issues

- Relevancy of traditional agencies for BAMers.
- Joint agency cooperation in a business.

While mobilization is the first issue, retention is a close second. If the bureaucracy of the agency has too heavy handed, business people will not be able to make critical decisions in a timely fashion. The differing criteria for business decisions may also create tensions within an agency.

Financial and Legal

The meta question for this area is: How do we best do for-profit business inside or alongside non-profit structures? This can include how to finance a BAM business, how to hold the ownership of the business or how to deal with donor supported missionaries running for profit businesses.

The issues we identified in this section include:

Financial

- Start up capital: Can or should non-profit monies be used or only "regular" monies? How should get financing be secured for a business that has a higher level of risk than most?
- Accountability for use of time and money: the worker usually has a dual accountability in order to make the business run well and to accomplish the mission work they came to do. In this case, how should they be held accountable for the use of time, funds, profit or losses, etc?
- Ongoing support of mission workers: can or should the mission agency personnel draw a salary from the business or should they continue to be funded by donor support – or in some cases, draw a salary from the mission agency?

Legal

- Transfer of funds: how should funds be transferred from country to country as well as from the agency to the business?

- Ownership of the business:
 - Most BAM businesses are registered in the name of the worker on the ground.
 - What processes and strategies should be employed if the worker is a supported missionary?
 - What tax liabilities are created for the individual worker both in their home country and field country
 - When a Joint Venture with a national or local entity is required or chosen, what issues should be researched?
 - What differences in trust levels or cultural processes of running Joint Venture business, i.e., bribery, should be reviewed?
 - What are the liabilities for the agency in this process?
- Different legal jurisdictions:
 - Differing legal requirements in both “home” and “field” locations create complexities that require variable models of ownership and transfer of capital.
 - Little real research by international attorneys has been conducted in these legal areas.

Some agencies are using Memorandums Of Understanding (MOUs) to preserve their charity status, reduce their liability and/or to structure accountability with the BAM practitioner. However, as with any solution inserted into an on-going system such as a non-profit agency, an MOU may create its own problems.

An MOU often proposes to shift liability from the agency to the worker. It can also formally structure the accountability of the worker for the use of funds. Our group felt that could change the worker’s motivation: is the worker as committed to the business if they don’t have the ability to profit but have the liability for the losses? We saw that an MOU can create questions over who gets the upside or who is responsible for downside of the business.

Other solutions for financial or legal issues include creating separate organizations and structures to hold the agency’s BAM efforts. This requires sophisticated legal and financial advice that understands cross-border issues. Smaller agencies often do not have this kind of resource available.

Finance and legal issues create the most risk for the agencies and it would be foolish for an agency to do BAM without considering these issues. Each agency is grappling with how to resolve the legal and financial issues in their own way, but learning from each other has been important. Although various solutions were shared, our purpose has not been to find the one perfect solution for all, but to better understand the risks and identify the important areas for consideration.

Further issues relating to strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats faced by mission agencies engaging in business as mission can be found in the SWOT Analysis in the Appendix.

Conclusion

Business as mission is a significant strategy in contemporary mission work. Mission agencies today have an unprecedented opportunity to mobilize business people, see missional enterprises launched and utilize the great potential for business to do good in the world. Agencies may begin pursuing BAM for pragmatic reasons, but come to see the unique opportunities that business can open up for workers on the field and the positive, holistic impact that companies can have in a community. These opportunities also come with a number of challenges for mission organizations. While we have separated the issues into three main areas, the reader can see that they are all interlinked.

Alongside the increasing propensity to use business in mission work, there are other tensions and pressures. The world has changed since 9/11 so agencies come under increased scrutiny for how they use non-profit funds and how they move money. Mission agencies fall under several legal jurisdictions: home and field countries; further complicating BAM work. There are few attorneys or accountants qualified to provide clear solutions across national borders, and many agencies are underfunded to seek such advice. Allowing missionaries who are inexperienced in business to start and run businesses in developing countries makes agency leaders nervous. They try to control the legal and worldview issues with various structures and MOUs, which can further complicate the matter. All these issues and others need to be addressed and overcome by mission agencies.

With this paper our goal is not to present the perfect solution, but to identify the issues an agency should grapple with when engaging in BAM to further its work. Knowing the issues, an agency can make informed decisions according to their own comfort level of risk.

The working group for this report hopes to produce further resources in the future as the conversation continues. Those wishing to communicate with the author or the contributing group regarding this report may do so at info@bamthinktank.org.

Appendix – SWOT Analysis of BAM and Mission Agencies

The SWOT Analysis for the BAM and Mission Agency group was put together by three teams, each focusing on one of the key areas we addressed: Worldview, People and Financial/Legal.

Worldview

Team: AA, SC, RR, MDR, M

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing practitioners and existing curriculum • Church planting and BAM experience, • Organizational strategy leadership experience • Chinese business and registration procedures • Biblical, dedicated to reaching the lost, salvation through faith in Christ • Holistic - both are needed in the Body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networking and integration weak • Tendency to discount the value of business as a legitimate area for ministry • People don't see this worldview as gospel • Fundraising and recruiting • View that business is human effort vs God • View that business is sinful and businesspeople as well • Clergy and laity separation • Traditional approaches have worked so far • Different paradigm and misunderstanding about new paradigm
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large pool of committed Christian business people • Leveraging church missions and city conference on missions • Marketplace evangelism is well accepted and more practiced • The challenges of Creative Access Nations mean that agencies are looking at BAM • More mature people are joining the mission force with their wealth of working experience • Working together for a Kingdom view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional agency leaders not understanding that BAM is not simply a means for obtaining a visa, but also a bona fide venue for sharing Christ with others. • Lack of connection between of Business, Missions and Church • Lack of connection between mission agency and business people • Business people don't have BAM mindset or are not tapped • New wineskin theory means mission agency 'should be' hands off from BAM • Disunity

People

Team: AB, MR, JC, CM, MB, ML

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experienced people are motivated for BAM • Agencies have good connections with churches, colleges and conferences that enable us to mobilize people • Mission agencies have strengths in cross cultural relations, church planting, language learning • We also know how to train and prepare people for effective spiritual ministry in cross-cultural settings • People are being called and equipped by God • There are people going out as BAMers! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are unaware or unmotivated to work with mission agencies • Businesspeople and other professionals don't understand how they can fit their skills and abilities into a BAM project if they have to "jump through the hoops" of joining a traditional mission agency • The agency I'm with has no experience training and mentoring business people or BAMers • Lack of business training or little work experience in recruits • Mission agencies may not understand the relevance of BAM to their core mission • Agencies may not have business skills and networks or entry strategies to train and recruit business people
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team of variously skilled people could be very successful • Mission agencies can train and coach businesspeople and professionals in areas such as language learning and disciple making • Mission agencies can offer fellowship and member care to businesspeople and professionals working in cross-cultural locations • The agency has a good structure that is adaptable • We can move out into new groups of people • Cooperation between agencies and business practitioners and associations to establish a team approach to company and mission • Incorporating agency and business strengths • Interagency collaboration to this end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission agencies not working together • Businesspeople and professionals may feel they don't need the kind of training and help mission agencies provide. • Or they choose not to put themselves in these kinds of accountable relationships. • Mission agency pre-field training is viewed as too time-consuming and expensive. • If we don't mentor the BAMers well, we may lose them • Agencies becoming paralyzed because this is a new and unfamiliar area • Agencies and business sectors continue to operate in silos and the work progresses slowly and inefficiently

Financial and Legal

Team: DN, DW, HUF, BJ, BL, AVD, JP

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong internal control policies and fund management • Strong bookkeeping capacity • People in place, there are replicable businesses that can use funds • Existing network of relationships with churches and believers in target countries • BAM has a more acceptable identity than traditional missions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited understanding of country requirements • Greater CFO and finance management capacity needed • It may compromise ethics and law to meet ministry objectives • Structures and processes to provide capital • BAM practitioners may feel tension over "serving two masters"
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop strategies, infrastructure, capacity and network • Opportunity to leverage USA-based funds for Kingdom work • Possibility to create dynamic models of ministry and funding • BAM may lessen dependency on donor funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ever changing statutory environment • Non-friendly governments • Limited options and treasury function to move funds • Government regulations (USA and other) • Possibility that BAMers will be kicked out because of association with a mission agency • BAM could be tainted by high profile ethical failures, especially if the "Christian" identity of the business is highlighted