



Dichotomizing Work and Ministry | BAM360



“One of the many faulty foundations in BAM”

A few months back, I had the opportunity to consult with a young tentmaker who was struggling at getting established in his business. A normal practice for me is to start the initial session off with some basic questions about business philosophy and values.

Shortly into the conversation I asked this man, “So how much time are you willing to give to your business?”

He thought for a minute and then replied, “I can really only afford to give 25% of my time to the business. I have my ministry that gets 25%, my team leader responsibility gets 25%, and my family gets the other 25%.”

Assuming that he was talking about a 40 – 60 hour workweek, he was saying that he could only commit to 10 – 15 hours per week on his business.

Something was wrong with his foundation; one of his core values was faulty.

Like so many other BAM entrepreneurs, this young man was dichotomizing his work and ministry. He was convinced that his ministry fit into one time slot, his work into another, team leadership in one more, and his family in the last. He was afraid that if he committed too much time in his business, he would need to reduce time in ministry.

Let me ask you a question:

Do your business and ministry need to be separated?

Absolutely not!

“Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.” (1 Thess. 2:9)

I believe that our very lives should give glory to Jesus. Everything that we do should be declaring His name! Whether I am working in my office, drinking a cup of tea in a café, or spending time with my family, my life should be declaring Jesus.

Most respected men in a creative access community will go to work. So should you! Your business should not take you away from ministry but should thrust you further into ministry.

When you begin to separate out your business time from your ministry time, something quickly happens. You will begin to look at your work as a waste of time — valuable time that you could be using for ministry.

This is a faulty assumption!

In reality, if you don't have a valid professional identity, which includes working, you will lose your credibility. Ultimately, you will lose the opportunity to minister. The beauty of having a place of work to go to is that it will open up the door for natural relationships with your host culture.

Your business will provide you wonderful opportunities to interact on a daily basis with people who need the light of Jesus.

Remember that discipleship can start even before conversion!

If you have employees or people you work alongside, you will have the opportunity to disciple them every day through your business dealings. They will see how you respond to failure, financial challenges, and difficult interpersonal issues. They will be watching to see who is your Master and how you choose to follow Him.

One of the comments that I hear often is:

"If I am at work for most of the day, when will I have time to disciple people that aren't involved in my business?"

My response has become, "Don't the people that you want to disciple also have work?" In my experience, when I wanted to meet with a workingman, we had to meet after his work hours. He could not just take off time from work whenever he wanted to come for discipleship.

Most BAM business people I have met love to disciple! They love it so much that they will drop everything, including their work, at any time to meet with people who are asking for discipleship.

What are we modeling to our local friends?

I believe a better model is to explain that you have work, but would be more than willing to meet after business hours. Yes, this means having guests after a long day at work, or heading out in the evening, but it communicates the value of learning together about Jesus and also working to take care of our families (for a living). Once your new seeker becomes a follower of Jesus, you will want him to disciple other seekers from his own culture.

If you have not modeled how this can be done while working, how do you expect him to work and do ministry?

“We worked day and night...We did this not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow.” (2 Thess 3:9)

Another question you might be asking is:

“So how much should I work?”

I don't think there is a cookie cutter answer to this question. There are as many different kinds of jobs as there are people, and the time requirements will vary. I would recommend looking at your host community and see how much a respected businessman spends at work.

Please hear me correctly! I am not saying how much time they spend out of the home, but how much time they spend at work. I would encourage you to spend no less than 80% of that amount of time in your business.

So for example, if a normal businessman puts in 40 hour each week in his business, I would recommend spending at least 32 hours per week at your job.

One thing for sure, we need to keep the main thing the main thing!

We need to make sure that we continue to proclaim Jesus through our business and not get sidetracked with just making the business financially successful. I try to make it a point to sit down with all of my key business contacts and explain my business values, which are based on Christ. I want them to know that there is a difference between nonbelievers and believers, and that difference is Jesus.

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