



How to Develop a Strong BAM Identity?



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“Christian Witness vs Professional Identity”

Over the past 13 years of living in the Arab world, I have talked with a lot of “Kingdom Entrepreneurs” who struggle with the idea of balancing business and ministry. They wonder how much time they should invest into their business and how much time into proclamation. Do you struggle with those same questions? Those are great questions to wrestle through, but today I would like to ask you to look at it from a slightly different angle.

How are you perceived by your host culture?



Two sides of a coin

As you enter into your host culture, the government, your friends and neighbors will be trying to figure out what box you fit into. They will be watching everything you do; from how you run your business to how you interact with your family. They will listen to your words; whether you are proclaiming the truth or how you react in difficult circumstances. We have seen that there are 2 key areas of your life that will help define the host culture’s perception of you. We will call them your *Christian Witness* and your *Professional Identity*.

Striking the balance

As we have observed different tentmakers, we have realized that one can fall anywhere on the spectrum from low to high on each of these axes. (*see diagram above*). The ideal tentmaking identity would be someone who falls high on the Christian witness and also high on the Professional Identity. Let take a look at each of the 4 quadrants...

1. Respected Businessman who Loves Jesus

The person who is boldly Christian while developing a strong business identity is what I consider the ideal BAM identity. Your host culture will not only see you as a hard working business person, but will also see you as being religious – a follower & lover of Jesus. There will not be a question of your credibility which will allow you to make the most of every opportunity to proclaim truth.

From what we have seen, people that fall in this category can be very bold without drawing huge attention from the host culture.

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2. “Moral” Businessman

For those who have an excellent professional identity, yet are low on the Christian witness side will be perceived as “Moral” businessmen. Your host culture will easily fit you into the box of someone looking to make money but will not see you as religious.

I have seen that these people are well-liked in the host country yet miss out on many opportunities that are presented to them to share.

3. “Missionary” Perception

There is the third group that is very high on the Christian witness but has not done a good job developing their business identity.

Your host culture will perceive you as a missionary. We have seen that there is distrust and skepticism towards these types of tentmakers.

They are very bold and even have opportunities to proclaim, but the long term effect will be that your friends will see you as coming only to convert them. Is this a bad thing? On a side note, your sending culture will be happy with you.

4. Ineffective

The final group should really consider their calling and perhaps decide it is time to go home. These people are low on Christian witness and are low on business identity – ineffective.

Both the host culture and your sending culture would see this type of person as ineffective.

The host culture would not trust them at all and this ultimately ends with a negative witness.

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Long-term outlook

Ultimately our goal is to honor the Lord and be used by Him to proclaim his name. None of us have arrived at the perfect identity, but we can all continue to grow in each of these areas. For those looking to last for the long haul, I would encourage you to continue to develop your Christian witness – proclaiming more effectively. At the same time, I would also encourage you to maintain and grow your professional identity which will open up new doors of respect in the community -offering opportunities to proclaim.

One more thought...

Actually, there is one more key ingredient to a STRONG BAM IDENTITY and that is being Culturally Sensitive. Think about someone who had a strong professional identity and loves to proclaim YET is constantly offending people culturally. Do you think they will have a long-term effective ministry?

Picture a Christian business woman in the Arab world who is wearing miniskirts and drinking alcohol! Although she may be a strong Christian and very professional, she has killed all chances of being effective.

What are the questions you need to be asking yourself about your identity?

For other Business as Mission articles and resources, please visit www.bam360.org. The purpose of BAM360 is to empower and equip the next generation of Christian entrepreneurs to make a positive spiritual and economic impact in areas lacking a Christian witness.

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