



# Starting Your Business: Be Legit



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I sat with a friend today who told me about some of the problems he was having with the authorities.

## He was denied permission to operate his business!

He told me how they had not given him the reason but he was suspicious it was “religious” in nature.

As I began to dig deeper, it was clear that he had not set up a “legitimate” identity and the authorities were suspicious and denying him a work permit.

## So how can you be legit?

As I have pondered this question over the years, I believe there are 3 things that help you set up a legitimate **professional identity**: PROFILE, PROFESSIONAL & PRESENCE!

## Profile: Do you fit the business or humanitarian profile?

When my wife and I moved into a closed country, we did not fit the normal business people profile. We left our home country with our small family to start a business in a Arab country...yet we had no idea what business we wanted to start.

Does that make sense? From the word go our friends and neighbors were contacted by the authorities to find out who we really were. From there, we enrolled in a language school and received a visa as students! As I compare how we began and how my secure European businessmen counterparts began, I realize that we did things way differently.

We stuck out...we had an abnormal profile which caused lots of questions and undue concern.

**As you look to start a professional identity, carefully think through your profile and whether it is helping or hurting your cause.**

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## Professional: Is my business professional?

I once heard of 5 men who started a business for under \$5000. As investors, they were each entitled to get their residence permit from the business.

As I sat with a police friend, he said, "We are not stupid. People set up these small, fake businesses for the sole purpose of doing missionary activities." Are we professional in the way we start our businesses?

I am not saying that you need to invest hundreds of thousands of dollars to begin your business! However, I feel strongly that you do need to set something up that is professional and makes sense to the local community.

**I, personally, think that for each partner in the business, there should be at least \$10,000 of capital investment. So for a three person business, you should looking at at least \$30,000 of investment.**

As I mentioned, this is just my opinion and rule of thumb.

## Presence: How do you present yourself?

Most of us are not business people and so do not present ourselves with confidence as professional people.

**One thing that is very helpful in starting out well is to establish your story (true one) so that you can present yourself well to anyone who asks.**

First and foremost, we are Christians; however, we also need a professional identity that makes sense to the host culture. If you are a businessman, then be a businessman. Dress like one! Carry business cards. Live it out for the Lord.

If you work with an NGO, then be a NGO worker. Dress it...live it! Do not be ashamed of what the Lord has called you to be. We have found it very helpful to develop professional business cards, literature, and information which you can quickly give to friends and authorities.

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This will help them understand who you are and place you in the right box.

Starting off well can be crucial in many countries – especially those whose governments are more careful and closed.

**Spend time before the Lord, seeking his face on how to start off well.**

For other Business as Mission articles and resources, please visit [www.bam360.org](http://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.

## Do you need BAM help?

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