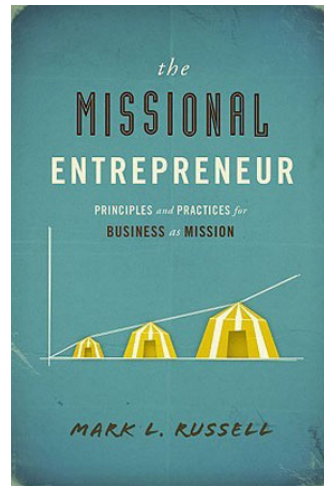


Book Summary



The Missional Entrepreneur

Principles and Practices for Business as Mission

by Mark L. Russell

Summary in Brief

The relatively recent direction of the globalization of business has led Christian entrepreneurs who are also committed to missions to re-evaluate their approach to the Great Commission. We live in a world of brokenness...economically, socially, environmentally and spiritually. This brokenness needs repair. We have the awesome opportunity to be a part of the repairing process.

Many are re-evaluating their approach to missions, both due to the giftings of people and because of the restricted access to countries. In acknowledgement that our world is broken, the Christian needs to be committed to being a part of bringing wholeness. BAM, or Business As Mission, is a method that is exponentially being pursued as a means to integrate both economics and a relationship with God. There has been confusion on the term BAM, and there are a variety of approaches to actively engaging in BAM. The author seeks to clarify what BAM really is and also address a number of issues that those wanting to engage in BAM should consider in order to be a tool that is valuable globally.

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What is BAM Anyway?

Missional, although perhaps not a word found in the dictionary, aptly represents the mindset all Christian businesses should have to approach the foundation of their work, regardless of where the business operates. BAM offers a down-to-earth, hands-on, approach to missions by making a difference in repairing communities economically, socially, environmentally and spiritually. This takes spiritual matters from a Sunday venture to a place where it integrates every area of life all week long. Bringing business into a broken community affords a tremendous opportunity to bring healing in these four areas.

Business is a place that sells goods or offers services and depends on profit to continue, as well as to grow. Although using business as a means for mission has critical aspects to address, historically it has had an incredible valuable influence on communities, and the influence of BAM continues today.

Genesis 1-3 provides the reader with Scriptural truths in regard to work and the appropriate approach one should have in partnering with God to care for His creation as well as fulfill one's eternal purpose. The benefits from hard work (profits) are not solely for the worker, but also to enhance the partnership through caring for His people through understanding and anticipating the needs of others and how those needs can be met. This takes business from a selfish endeavor to one that becomes eternal and compassionate.

Shalom, a Deeper Meaning

Shalom, usually defined as "peace" is more indepthly defined as "a worldview where all things function in harmony". It is a perfect descriptor of a community going from brokenness to healing. BAM takes a vital role in the process of Shalom. If you answer the question "Who is my neighbor?" from this worldview, you will realize that the world is your neighbor, and the mandate "Love your neighbor as yourself" applies to loving the whole world.

"Business as mission reflects a desire for the Kingdom of God to be manifested in a substantial way in the present age. When business fulfills its spiritual mission it can contribute significantly to creating economic shalom for many of the world's peoples."

The perspective of wealth changes with BAM. Wealth becomes not a means to live a more comfortable and privileged life, but an opportunity to serve others. As a result the concept of large financial bonuses to executives needs to be re-evaluated in terms of the overall health of the business and the atmosphere this creates in the work place.

The Apostle Paul and BAM

The life of Paul is examined closely and thoroughly with a clear evaluation of his approach to business and how he integrated business and mission throughout his life. His background lent itself to developing the ability to identify with many nationalities and classes. He was highly educated but also worked as a

tentmaker. He was not deterred by weakness. Paul was committed to working and providing an income to cover his needs and to set an example to others. He was able to do this regardless of where he was at the time because he had acquired a "nomad's skill". He saw his work as an opportunity to share the Truth with whom-ever he was working, whether other tentmakers or the business elite. By being able to provide for his needs, he was able to preach with freedom and without obligation to donors. He would accept financial help only under specific conditions being careful that his message was not tied to money.

Current Trends

As stated earlier, historically BAM has been in existence for a long time. The present trend is "the triple bottom line" (people, planet and profit). There is a push to give back to the community, whether by individual business or in cooperation with other businesses. As well, colleges and universities are adapting business codes that reflect the triple bottom line.

The author addresses the current approaches to ethical business by discussing the 9 principles of Fair Trade, the 3 methods of doing Green Business and the emphasis on Social Entrepreneurship. All three focus on more than merely profits by seeing business as a way to transform communities.

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Legitimate vs. Fake

There are many advantages to legitimate BAM. An operational business is a means to obtain a visa. It also puts one in a position to gain respect and credibility in the community and freedom from scrutiny by government officials. The business owner has a solid and truthful story to share about his life. The business gives a natural environment for relationships that can build due to the amount of time spent together.

The dangers of developing "fake" businesses center around expense and integrity issues. These are developed well in the book, but living a lie is obviously the antipathy to Christian values. Not only does it challenge integrity but also leads to suspicion by the very people to whom the Truth is being told. Legitimate business including profits and the transformation of communities is the strongest recommendation, whether through entrepreneurship or obtaining employment in an already established business. Another very viable yet different option is to live in a neighboring country and travelling in and out as a tourist.

A Great Tension

One of the greatest tensions of BAM is finding the balance between running a quality business and spending time in relationship. "To navigate these tensions and to thrive in BAM, missional entrepreneurs need to value both relationship development and the integrity of running a quality business enterprise. They

cannot sacrifice the business for the sake of relationships; but neither can they sacrifice intentionally influencing the Gospel of Christ for the sake of business. Being intentional on both fronts is required for a missional entrepreneur to succeed holistically. “ This is a tension that BAM entrepreneurs will face continuously and will always wrestle with prioritizing their time.

Blessing and Converting

There are “blessers” and there are “converters”...According to the author’s definitions blessers are open and forthright with their purpose and identity as well as committed to working with the local Christian community and learning to adapt to the local culture. Converters work independently, are primarily interested in the actual conversion and do not put priority on adapting to the culture. It comes as no surprise that statistically, the ratio of those impacted by the Gospel by Blessers and Converters is 48:1! Each culture is unique and the approach to each culture with the Truth will also be unique.

Essentials to Success

In Chapter 12, entitled “Setting A Course”, the author develops 4 essentials to going forward with a successfully as a BAM entrepreneur. The 4 essentials are:

- Setting Goals
- Strategy
- Mission Statement
- Vision Statement

In working through these 4 areas, it is important to know them thoroughly and reiterate them at any time to keep what is important in the forefront of the entrepreneur’s mind and actions.

Setting goals is defined by the author as “determining what success looks like”, and strategy as “what needs to happen to meet those goals.”

Prior to setting goals and strategy, one must develop both their Mission and Vision statements. Why does the business exist in the context that it does and what does the entrepreneur want the business to develop into?

It’s important to dream big and yet be reasonable in how you start. There is a fine balance between aggressively going forward and developing the business and being reasonable in how quickly the business progresses. Longevity will require working through this tension and grow in increments that allow the business to flourish.

In addition, the business aspects of the plan will need to be fully integrated with the missional aspect of the business to the point where one cannot exist without the other. Once the 4 essentials are developed and business and mission are integrated, the entrepreneur will have his Master Plan. This Master Plan will be the driving force behind any and all decisions.

The Value of Cultural Adaptation

Vital to the picture of BAM is the understanding and adaptation to the culture in which the business “lives.” The 15 foundational

concepts of culture, as studied by the author through cross-cultural theorists, are explained and are worth absorbing and applying to the culture of the business in order to truly understand the people. Although it may seem overwhelming at first read, the value in this information cannot be overstated.

The 15 areas are:

- Concept of Self
- Concept of Responsibility
- Concept of Reality
- Concept of Time
- Concept of Past, Present and Future
- Concept of Activity
- Concept of Control
- Concept of Communication
- Concept of Face
- Concept of Power Distance
- Concept of Uncertainty
- Concept of Work
- Concept of Productivity
- Concept of Status
- Concept of Context

A summary of a book does not lend itself to fully discussing each of this, but in just a couple of brief examples, the importance of valuing the aspects of culture will be obvious.

Take, for instance, the opportunity to reward workers for excellent work done. Does one reward those who have done the most work or the best work, or does one reward the entire work force collectively for the success of the business? When encouraging a worker to

change the method of his work, does the business owner confront the worker directly or indirectly? Is it more important to produce more work or ensure harmony in the work place? These are all extremely important questions to ask when conducting a business in a new culture...and there are many more questions just like those!

Author Description

Mark L. Russell

Mark’s academic accomplishments include a PHD in intercultural studies from Asbury Theological Seminary, a master of divinity degree from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and a bachelor of science degree in international business from Auburn University. He has lived in Russia, Chile and Germany, as well as has travelled to over 70 countries with the intent purpose of BAM, addressing poverty and helping new BAM entrepreneurs. He is a well-published author and currently speaks to many audiences in regard to the topics thoroughly covered in this book.

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Embrace Failure

One striking statement by the author worth quoting verbatim here is: “People who succeed at BAM tend to be very comfortable with failure.” Failure is not a word that most business entrepreneurs find comfortable. Being able to face failure and continue forward is vital to long-term success as a BAM entrepreneur. There is risk, challenge, redirection and mistakes in starting up a new business. Learning to deal with these is a long-term process.

Who Should Send You?

Another vital part of this whole endeavor of BAM is the entrepreneur’s relationship with the sending organization. Due to a different approach than the traditional missionary, it is important to relieve misunderstanding and unmet expectations, and it is important to have a written agreement on the relationship, the vision and the financial set up. There needs to be clear understanding on how the business and ministry integrate, what role the sending organization plays, and how personal finances, profits, losses, salaries are handled. Working through this with the sending organization will positively impact the level of success in starting a BAM. The author offers 6 possible business approaches to help with the discussion between the sending organization and the entrepreneur.

Leadership and Off-Shoring

Lastly the author addresses two unique topics that would be of interest to the BAM entrepreneur: the characteristics of leadership and the controversial subject of off-shoring.

How does one lead well in a BAM environment? The growth in this area is a lifelong process and the author sees this role in 7 steps:

- Spiritual
- Scriptural
- Solidarity
- Serve
- Sustainable
- Situational
- Strategic

These areas are key to leading people to have the impact they desire on the people they interact with.

Off-shoring, although it has many negative connotations, has great potential to be a win-win situation if done with the intent of growing economies. With the underlying premise that God wants to bless ALL nations, it is then concluded that business entrepreneurs have a responsibility to encourage this mandate to “love our (global) neighbor” as ourselves.” The author spells out the potential advantages of off-shoring and dispelling the impression that off-shoring only has disadvantages.