

The Gap Between Best Practices and Actual Practices: A BAM Field Study

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This research was sponsored by the Acton Institute

ABSTRACT: There has been a call for business scholars to do a better job equipping people for BAM. However, there have been very few, if any, published field studies among actual BAM practitioners specifically looking to determine the gap between actual practices and best practices. This qualitative field study in a restricted access nation finds most BAM practitioners do not have business plans, integrated mission plans, an understanding of the triple bottom line concept, or mentors and boards of directors among other things. An understanding of this gap will allow academic institutions to better shape BAM curriculum and courses.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years there has been significant writing regarding Business as Mission (BAM). Much of the published writing has focused on the definitions of BAM, the theology of BAM, the legitimacy of BAM being used for Great Commission purposes, and the history of BAM in missions. More recently, there have been writings from authors such as Lai (2015), the BAM Think Tank, and others that included best practices for BAM practitioners based on effectiveness. Simultaneous to the growth in the BAM literature, as well as growth in the number of BAM practitioners, there has been a call for more business instruction at seminaries and Christian institutions to help prepare BAM practitioners (Eldred, 2005). There has also been a call for business scholars to do a better job equipping people for BAM (Rundle, 2012). However, there appears to be a gap in the literature between the recommendation of best practices and the determination of what the actual practices are by BAM practitioners. By understanding this gap, Christian institutions and business scholars will be able to do a better job preparing future BAM practitioners for effectiveness. However, after surveying the published literature there have been very few, if any, published attempts at discovery based on field work among actual BAM practitioners specifically looking to determine the gaps where educational institutions can fill.

Intended Purpose and Significance of the Study

Most of the published writing on Business as Mission has been theoretical in nature or based on surveys. Furthermore, much of the literature has focused on small and medium businesses (SMB's) and multi-national corporations (MNC's) with very little explicit focus on the micro-enterprises that are common among BAM practitioners in many parts of the world. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to utilize a qualitative field study approach focusing on micro-enterprises to develop an understanding of BAM practitioners. The intent is to heed the call by Eldred (2005), Rundle (2012), and others (Lai, 2015) to adequately train future BAM practitioners. This can only be done if there is an understanding of where the gap is between best-practices in theory and actual practice on the field. An understating of this gap will help Christian institutions and business scholars improve the content in Business as Mission curriculum and courses, as well as better serve sending agencies and churches.

This research is possibly one of the first field studies of BAM practitioners with a purpose of providing a better understanding of the holistic aspect of their work, and how their actual practices may differ from best practices in the literature. This study was not meant to measure the effectiveness of the BAM practitioners, although it was observed, but rather to understand some of the practices, attitudes, and behaviors regarding BAM. The learning from this study will allow Christian institutions and business scholars to design curriculum and develop specific educational and training courses

to adequately equip the future generation of BAM practitioners. Even more specifically, the intent is for Christian institutions and seminaries to equip BAM practitioners working in a context of micro-enterprises in restricted access nations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Perspective

The theological premise behind BAM is that work is good and God-ordained (Nelson, 2011). God made humans in his image and because God is a working, we too should work and view it as good (Stevens, 2003). A natural progression of this thought is the breaking down of the barrier between sacred work and secular work (Theology of Work Project, 2015). Proponents of BAM would expound that all work is sacred, and therefore, business is ministry as we are all to be part of the *Missio Dei*; arguing that there is not some work that is sacred and other work that is secular (Johnson, 2009).

An example in the New Testament is Paul, who differentiated himself from Peter by working outside of formal ministry so as not to burden the churches he worked among. Paul writes to the Thessalonians that he worked around the clock to not encumber the church. The book of Acts describes that he was involved in the specific trade of making tents. Suter (2003) states that Paul travelled with his business of tent making to most of the places that he went. In fact, when he travelled to Corinth we learn that he stayed with Aquilla and Priscilla because they were both involved in the same trade of making tents. Paul even encourages the leaders of the church in Ephesus by reminding them that he supported himself by the work of his own hands. This appears to be an attempt to establish greater credibility among them, and to remind them that he was not attempting to profit by his ministry.

Aquilla and Priscilla, who were involved in the making of tents, also hosted a church in their home (1 Cor. 16:19). They had a center of ministry through which they discipled Apollos, another individual influential in the growth of the New Testament Church (Acts 18:26). Finally, Lydia, an early convert, mentioned in the book of Acts, was a merchant selling purple cloths (Acts 16:14). Many speculate that she was instrumental in establishing a house church in her city (Suter, 2003). Baer (2006) acknowledges that even though there is

no mention of praise for her profession and business, it is not criticized either. Baer describes many others in scripture; the early disciples, Philemon, Amos, the craftsman in the Old Testament that contributed to the building of the temple; who were all involved in business, and business was not disparaged.

Furthermore, the launching of new businesses, entrepreneurship, is often a significant part of BAM. Sirico (2009) argues that the parable of the talents found in Matthew 25:14-30 gives a strong argument for the use of capital, investment, and entrepreneurship. Finally, Bates (2011) also has found that the BAM literature builds on servant leadership and loving your neighbor as biblical concepts that are needed for a successful BAM enterprise. So, while some of these examples may not be examples of Business as Mission they are biblical examples of the people of God engaging in business while being about the mission of God.

Business as Mission

“Business as Mission” (BAM) is a term used to describe many different aspects of Christians involved in business, including cross-cultural business (Lai, 2015). According to Johnson and Rundle (2006), many people use the terms Tentmaking, Marketplace Ministry, and Business as Mission synonymously causing confusion in the discussion. However, these terms can also have distinct meanings, and, therefore, it is important to clarify at the outset the subject of this research. Thus, in regards to this research, the term “Business as Mission” will be defined in a way that is consistent with the first think tank held on BAM in Thailand which lays out the following four distinctives (Tunehag, McGee & Plummer, 2004):

- Profitable and sustainable;
- Intentional about Kingdom of God purposes and impacts people and nations;
- Focused on transformation and multiple bottom lines; and
- Focused on the world’s poorest and least-evangelized.

Even more specifically, Rundle (2012) reports that there appears to be a consensus around five additional key elements which are that BAM is (1) self-funded, (2) laity-driven, (3) intentional, (4) holistic, and (5) cross-

cultural. Because of these distinctives, what we are not discussing is the Christian business person who simply works for a company (local or multi-national) in a cross-cultural context. This definition excludes businesses run by Christians unless they are being intentional about transformation. Finally, this definition also rejects businesses that Christians establish as a cover, front, or means to have access to a people. Rather, these businesses are run by individuals who see work (and business) as ministry because of the lack of a distinction between secular and sacred work (Grudem, 2003).

In many ways, BAM can be viewed as a subset of Social Entrepreneurship. The goal of Social Entrepreneurship is starting an organization with the desire of influencing positive social change (Bosch, 2015). Yet Social Entrepreneurship, like BAM, has been elusive on achieving definitional clarity (Austin, et al., 2006). Dees (1998), who was one of the foremost thinkers in social entrepreneurship, demonstrated why there is not a clear definition of social entrepreneurship by developing a continuum where organizations can be placed between “pure charity” and “pure business.” Rundle (2014) continued in the same vein as Dees by developing a Business as Mission Continuum with the two end-points being “missionary-sending organizations” and “regular business.” However, these two continuums of Social Entrepreneurship and Business as Mission appear to intersect in Dees’ category of motives, methods, and goals in which the midpoint is one of mixed motives, mission and market driven, and social and economic capital. This midpoint appears to be where BAM, and the distinctives presented above, is a subset of Social Entrepreneurship.

Best Practices

Much of the literature on best practices related to Business as Mission has determined to use the term *Fruitful Practices*. For example, the Business as Mission Global Think Tank issued a report (Tunehag & Plummer, 2014) where they acknowledge there have been very few businesses that have helped facilitate church plants. However, they have found various commonalities, some of which are the following: (a) Contact with the focus people, (b) language and culture, (c) profitable and sustainable business, (d) clear vision and strategy—including a spiritual impact plan, (e) working with a team, (f) having a mentor, (g) involved

in spiritual activities such as prayer and scripture, (h) having excellent products/services, and (i) operating with integrity.

Another paper listed 10 guiding principles calling them “Essentials of Good Business as Mission” (Tunehag, McGee & Plummer, 2004). The paper calls for an intentional plan, preferably written, that establishes the Kingdom motivation and purpose of the business. Other principles that the paper advocated are: (a) profitability and sustainability, (b) operational excellence and integrity, (c) holistic transformation, (d) servant leadership, and (e) prayer.

In addition, several books have been written related to Business as Mission. These books do not necessarily tout best practices, however, they tend to advocate the steps needed to do Business as Mission. As such, they are declaring what they believe BAM practitioners need to be doing to be effective. For example, Baer (2006) advocates writing a kingdom purpose statement that will guide the business. Related to this idea, Baer declares that the business should be intentional, and this intentionality should flow from its kingdom purpose.

Johnson (2009) goes further in laying the theoretical foundation for Business as Mission by providing twelve chapters of how to do Business as Mission. Johnson agrees with Baer that BAM practitioners must be intentional and that their faith must be integrated at all levels of the business. Johnson also argues that BAM practitioners need to be held accountable to someone over them and their peers. The concept of a multiple bottom line is also argued for in Johnson’s book. Johnson declares that to make a Kingdom impact, BAM practitioners will need to define their multiple bottom lines in ways that are specific, quantifiable, and ultimately measurable. Johnson advocates for the writing of a business plan that encompasses a Strategic Area/Country Analysis as well as a Mission Analysis. This holistic plan would include Kingdom Impact Opportunities and a traditional business plan. After all, Johnson declares that, “Planning is critical to success” (pg. 304).

Lai (2015) argues that planning, or laying a good foundation, is essential to effectiveness. Understanding your target market is crucial, and to do that means to do research on them to understand who they are, where they are, do they want your product, and can they afford your product. Lai also recommends,

beyond understanding the competition and profiling the people and culture you are trying to impact, one should also profile themselves. The BAM practitioner should consider their skills, education, ministry, and work background. Additionally, Lai dedicates an entire chapter on the need for a business plan and how it can help the business and the practitioner. One aspect of this plan, per Lai, is a ministry plan integrated into the business plan. Throughout the book, Lai details many other areas that will lead to effectiveness; some of these are having a mentor, being accountable, and learning the language.

In summary, there is no comprehensive list of best practices for BAM practitioners, but there does appear to be some consensus on best practices for effectiveness. Prayer and spiritual maturity are clear components of effectiveness. Other items that continued to appear in the literature are the following: (a) having a mission statement; (b) an understanding of language, culture, and the people; (c) a business plan; (d) a ministry plan; (e) mentorship and accountability; (f) operational integrity; (g) profitability and sustainability; and (h) triple bottom line goals and measurement.

Triple Bottom Line

Johnson (2009) stated that at the “heart” of Business as Mission is the idea of multiple bottom lines. This implies that a best practice is pursuing business and missional strategies that impact at least three areas: Economic, Social, and Spiritual. The idea of making an impact on multiple areas is known as the multiple bottom line or triple bottom line. The concept of the multiple bottom line is one of the least understood aspects of Business as Mission and therefore, will be given more attention.

Rundle (2014) argued that there appears to be agreement among academics and practitioners that the ultimate goal of BAM is “to glorify God and to help facilitate the ‘holistic transformation’ of a community introducing true shalom.” At a minimum, as The Lausanne Occasional Paper of Business as Mission (Tunehag, McGee, & Plummer, 2004) states, one of the aims of BAM is holistic transformation of individuals and communities. This is accomplished by bringing economic, social, spiritual, and other benefits to the individuals and communities that are impacted by the BAM enterprise. Addink de Graaf (2013) acknowledges

that in the past the BAM discussion has more often centered around heavenly transformation rather than earthly transformation and issues of justice. However, this is starting to change as there has been a greater focus on the impact that business can have on job creation at a minimum, but also alleviating spiritual poverty and other social ills such as sex-trafficking.

One of the unique features of Business as Mission is this ability to not just focus on economic poverty, but social and spiritual poverty as well. The bottom line that most business people are familiar with is the financial bottom line, or profit of a business. It is important for a BAM enterprise to pursue profitability as it cannot be viable and sustainable if it is not producing a profit. This bottom line of profit is easy to calculate, quantify, and measure. However, other bottom lines are not as easy to measure.

Economic poverty can also be measured in terms of employment, wages, and the improved economic situations of employees of BAM. This impact can ripple through the local economy as individuals have increased buying power. Also, a BAM enterprise that is involved in business to business (B2B) activities may even more directly help to improve the economic situation of more individuals.

Social bottom lines, be they literacy, health, education, sex-trafficking, and others also able to be measured. Again, it is not quite as simple as measuring profit, but it is possible. However, the key is to adequately specify the issue that is being addressed. If this is not specifically articulated, it will be difficult to determine if any progress is being made. It is recommended that there be a pre-intervention assessment in order to determine the impact that the BAM enterprise has made. Oftentimes this is only done anecdotally so any longitudinal analysis is difficult.

The third bottom line that BAM enterprises focus on, and which is distinctive from social enterprises, is spiritual poverty. This is the most difficult to quantify and measure because it can very easily become merely counting how many people were “saved”, which is the work of God, or how many people did the organization give literature to, which may or may not be beneficial. Some BAM enterprises measure the times team members prayed with others, shared “Jesus stories,” and shared the Kingdom of God with others.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research is used to explore and understand meanings and relationships to social or human issues (Creswell, 2008). Furthermore, by using fieldwork, qualitative methods allow for deep and detailed studies of issues (Patton, 2001). The detailed focus of qualitative work produces a richness of information about people and cases (Patton, 2001). Kerlinger and Lee (1999) gave several reasons why qualitative research has advantages over quantitative research. First, the researcher is involved in a real-world setting making observations and asking a wide range of open-ended and closed-ended questions. Second, the researcher attempts to identify relationships between people and events. Finally, Kerlinger and Lee stated that the research is participatory, interpretive, and natural. This “people-oriented” form of inquiry allows for the researcher to get close to the individuals in the study to really understand the phenomenon that is being explored.

Research Design

The qualitative design strategy used in this research, as approved by the researcher’s Human Subjects Review Board, is a phenomenological study of BAM practitioners. Phenomenological studies are an appropriate method to use when attempting to understand the human experience and describe reality (Patton, 2001). The underlying assumption is that there is commonality among micro-enterprise BAM practitioners and that their experience, in their context, will allow for learning and insight that may apply elsewhere. The country where this research was conducted was beneficial for several reasons. First, the country is among one of the least-evangelized in the world, and is a restricted access nation. Secondly, the research took place in three different major cities and the BAM practitioners were in various stages of starting and operating profitable and sustainable organizations. Finally, the BAM practitioners were working among different language groups which allowed for a broader population. All the individuals were intentionally focused on impacting the people, their city, and the nation for Kingdom of God purposes.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher had been associated with many of the individuals in the past through being a colleague in the same sending organization. Furthermore, the researcher was involved in operating a business in a similar context with similar intentions. The researcher believes that the experience in this role, in this context, and by having an association with some of the individuals gives an awareness and understanding of the questions to ask in order to conduct this study. Additionally, this bias is not seen as an issue as qualitative research considers that the researcher becomes a part of the analysis (Winston, 2004).

Due to the nature of the aspect of the topic being discussed, particularly Business as Mission in restricted access countries, no real names of people, countries, cities, businesses, or organizations will be used. This is for the personal security of the business owners, team members, fellow workers, and organizations. Permission was requested from each person to take notes and/or record the interview.

Setting

The setting for this field study was in a restricted access nation in Central Asia. The BAM practitioners were working in three major cities with each city having a population close to one million inhabitants. This country is considered a restricted access nation because church activities are greatly restricted. There has been significant church planting activity in this country in the past decade, however, because activities are restricted, an individual cannot arrive with a missionary visa. In the past, most people with intentions of doing ministry in this region have registered as NGO’s, however, there have been a substantial number of individuals registering organizations as businesses.

The indigenous population is primarily of one ethnic and religious group, however, there are multiple ethnicities, religions, languages, and cultures in the region. Over the years, the region has gone in and out of various levels of development. The infrastructure of utilities, roads, and communication has continued to improve over the years. Yet, there have been multiple and continuous changes in the areas of rules and regulations relating to visas, customs, property ownership, and organization registration. The economy has gone through times of fast expansion and contraction as well.

Over time, the banking system has improved, but the transferring of funds into and out of the region is not for the faint of heart. Because of this, there is a thriving black market with significant illicit cross-border trade with the neighboring countries. On top of this, the country always ranks near the bottom on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions List. It is in this difficult context that these individuals are attempting to start, operate, and sustain micro-enterprises for Kingdom purposes.

Population

The sample population was eleven micro-enterprise BAM practitioners in a restricted access nation. The

study resulted in studying individuals in three different cities with various lengths of tenure in the country. All of them were the leaders of a BAM organization. Eleven were interviewed at length, however, discussions were also held with five of their spouses as well. All eleven reported that their spouses were in full agreement with starting a BAM organization. All of them, except for one, were between the ages of 30 and 50. All of them had children at various ages in the country while they were operating their BAM organization.

Table 1: Sample Population

Category	<i>n</i>	% of participants
Between the Age of 30 and 50	10	91
Registered as a Business	11	100
In Country for More than 1-Year before Starting Business	8	73
Member of a Team	7	64
Member of a Sending Agency	7	64

One organization had been operating in the country for nine years while the shortest had only operated for three and a half years. All the businesses were registered in the country as for-profit businesses, however, many of them started as NGO's and transitioned their registration to business over time. Because of this, eight (73%) of the 11 BAM practitioners were in country for more than one year before starting their business.

Seven (64%) of the BAM practitioners were on a team, of which four said that their teammates always worked in the same BAM organization while three said their teammates sometimes worked in the BAM organization. Thus, four (36%) of the BAM practitioners were without a team. Seven (64%) of the BAM practitioners were part of a larger sending agency. However, none of the sending agencies were involved in day-to-day operations or oversight of the BAM

operation. The sending agency involvement was limited to start-up capital for two BAM organizations. They did not receive the full amount of capital they needed from their sending agency, but rather a portion of it.

Data Collection Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all of the BAM practitioners in their homes, businesses, and communities. The interviewer recorded the questions and answers in notebooks and in digital format. The interviews were coded to identify significant statements and meaning units in line with phenomenological research (Creswell, 2008). Some advantages of the interview process, according to Creswell, are that participants can provide internal information that cannot be observed and it allows the researcher to control the line of questioning. However, there are

some disadvantages as well, such as that the interviewee can filter the information provided and the presence of the researcher may bias the responses (Creswell, 2008).

As previously mentioned, discussions were held with five of the eleven spouses as well to gather their perspective of the work. Some of them were involved in the operations of the organization while others were not. Additionally, due to the researcher's previous experience with several of the individuals there was previous knowledge of them individually as well as their business, their team, their organization, and their context. This allowed for deeper discussion and understanding than would normally occur in a typical quantitative research project. Again, since the method of research was qualitative in nature the researcher is the "primary instrument" where personal experience allows for greater understanding, yet must be disclosed to maintain credibility in analysis (Patton, 2001).

The Research Question

The overarching research question that drove this study is "Do BAM practitioners utilize best practices?" Thus, because of their experience in starting and running a BAM operation, the focus of the research was on understanding their perspective on some of the best practices found in the literature related to BAM. The purpose of this study was not to determine effectiveness (although some questions are related to this, and effectiveness was observed), but rather to determine if BAM practitioners of micro-enterprises were practicing those things that others have found necessary for effectiveness in BAM work. The hope is to take this information and disseminate it to future BAM practitioners so that they are more adequately prepared from the beginning. With this pedagogical end in mind, there were also broad, open-ended questions to get the BAM practitioner to contemplate and pass on experiential learning to future BAM practitioners. This was also an attempt by the researcher to remove bias from the research that, due to familiarity with the subjects, may cause topics to be ignored that should not be ignored. Thus, an example of some of the interview questions that were asked as a starting point to every conversation are the following:

- Do you have a mission statement and what is it?
- Describe your relationship with your mentor/coach if you have one.
- What is your view of work or your theology of work?
- If you did a market study, how did you do it?
- How did you profile the people, culture, politics, and religion before starting your business?
- How did you investigate the competition?
- Did you prepare a business plan?
- What role does your home sending church have?
- What role does the local church have?
- Describe your ministry model.
- What do you think of the statement that "Profitability and reaching people for Jesus are paramount?"
- What is your educational and ministry background?
- Do you wish you had more business or ministry training? If so, what kind?
- Describe your advisory board and governance?
- Are you familiar with the triple bottom line or multiple bottom line concept?
- What sort of things does your BAM organization measure?
- What do you wish you knew before starting the venture?
- What advice or recommendations do you have for others wanting to do something similar?

Data Analysis Procedures

Data was validated by collecting raw data from the interviews and then coding the data. Additional follow-up interviews were conducted with some individuals for further clarification which gave the participants an opportunity to comment on the findings (Creswell, 2008). The interviews were a combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions, and the researcher recorded the information both digitally and in the form of notes during the interview. Observational descriptive notes of individual, team life, and meetings were recorded as life occurred, and reflective notes were added later.

FINDINGS

Just as there is no comprehensive list of best practices for BAM practitioners there was not consensus among the BAM practitioners of this study. However, there were some broader trends that were discoverable. As already mentioned, the purpose of this study was not to evaluate effectiveness, but rather adherence to the best practices found in the literature. Therefore, the focus will be on the following items that seemed to be significant: (a) mission statements; (b) an understanding of language, culture, and the people; (c) business plans; (d) ministry plans; (e) mentorship and accountability; and (f) triple bottom line goals and measurement. There were other questions that were asked, but only the significant findings will be enumerated here.

Mission Statement

Mission statements are important as they help set the direction of the organization at its most foundational level. Mission statements can also function as a check to keep decision makers from taking the organization in a different direction. One interesting findings in this study is that four (36%) of the 11 businesses did not have a mission statement. Almost as significant as not having a mission statement is having a vague, meaningless one that one organization had. Their mission statement was “Help build up our region by building up the people.” Four other organizations did have mission statements, however there was no spiritual aspect mentioned. Finally, two of the mission statements were holistic in nature mentioning a spiritual aspect as well.

Table 2: Significant Findings

Category	<i>n</i>	% of participants
Had a Mission Statement	7	64
Learned about Language, Culture, and People	10	91
Had a Business Plan	5	45
Had an Annual Budget	5	45
Completed a Market Study	4	36
Had a Ministry Plan	7	64
Had an Advisory Board	3	27
Had a Mentor or Coach	4	36
Had Heard of Triple Bottom Line Concept	3	27
Profitability Measured	11	100
Spiritual Aspects Measured	2	18
Social Aspects Measured	1	9
Business had Continued Involvement with Sending Agency, Home or Local Church	0	0

Language, Culture, and People

Learning language, culture, and about the people is essential to building relationships and operating the business. Regarding learning about the people and culture only one BAM practitioner admitted that they did not do any profiling of the people, culture, and politics before starting their business. One used a strategy of spending time with the people group in their home country before moving to the restricted access nation. Seven (64%) mentioned that they lived in the country for quite some time before starting their business, thus learning about the people informally and “unintentionally” as one of them said. One mentioned that they had a cultural insider to help them make sense of all that they were experiencing and to help them process various aspects of the business. Another said that meetings with local business people and politicians helped with understanding the culture and people.

Seven (64%) of the 11 BAM practitioners did not start their business until they had at least a limited working proficiency of the language which allowed them to handle routine social demands and limited work requirements. Three (27%) of the respondents had an elementary proficiency of the language when they started their business, which means they could communicate basic needs, however, with laborious speech. One (9%) started with no proficiency at all and was limited to just short statements and questions. At the time of this study all but one of the BAM practitioners have a minimum limited working proficiency. Six (55%) of them are at a professional working proficiency or above which means they rarely need to grope for a word. This means that all the practitioners have improved in their language ability from the time they started their business.

Business and Ministry Plans

Having a business plan and a ministry plan is vital to success (Johnson, 2009). Six (55%) of the BAM practitioners did not have a business plan while the rest of them did. The same number of BAM practitioners, but not the same ones, prepared an annual budget for their organization, but five did not. A market study is foundational in the preparation of a business plan. Seven (64%) of them did not do any form of market study before starting their business. Two (18%) did a formal market study and two did a very informal study. Six (55%) of the BAM practitioners did, however,

research their competition before starting their business. One reason some of these traditional business planning activities are so low may be due to the typical resource constraints of microenterprises. Another reason, which will be discussed later, may be the lack of business acumen by many of the BAM practitioners.

Seven (64%) of the practitioners had a ministry plan, however not all of them were fully integrated into the business. One said “I try to have limited time commitments to work so I leave plenty of time for evangelism and language study.” Another said, “Business can take away from the main thing.” Another said that their business and their ministry were “two very separate things”, and “not integrated” with “separate ministry aims.” While one more commented that “I do not consider the business itself to be a ministry.” Four (36%) indicated that they viewed their organization as a way to be legitimate so that they could do ministry outside of the organization. These statements may point to the possibility that these individuals think they are doing BAM when in reality they are not as holistic as Rundle (2012) argues they should be.

There were two, however, that did express that their ministry plan was integrated with their business. One said, “my business is a place where people can experience the grace of God in its various forms.” Another said, “Our ministry model is to do legitimate work in a way that would bless the oppressed in the community. The business allowed us to develop relationships with customers, suppliers, and government people all as a result of doing business and living in the community.”

Team, Mentorship, and Accountability

Team, mentorship, and accountability are important to help BAM practitioners integrate their work and life as well as maintain balance (Lai, 2015). Seven (64%) of the practitioners worked with a team on the field but only four of those seven required that their teammates worked within the business, the remaining three did other things. Only three (27%) of the BAM practitioners had an advisory board or board of directors to help with governance and decision-making. On top of this only four (36%) have any sort of mentor or coach related to their business. This may be acceptable if their sending organization, home church or local church had any involvement with the business, but none indicated that there was any ongoing continuous involvement in the

business from their sending organization, home church or local church. Two indicated that they would actually like some involvement from their sending organization or home church.

Triple Bottom Line Goals and Measurement

The reason an understanding of the triple bottom line is important is that it allows a company to move from a strict business model to a Kingdom model (Johnson, 2009). Three (27%) had heard of the triple bottom line concept before, and as such, it is not surprising that only two (18%) measured spiritual aspects of the organization, and there was only one (9%) individual that measured anything beyond economic and spiritual aspects; they measured environmental impact. Not surprisingly, all the practitioners measured both profitability and cash on hand. Six (54%) of the organizations had some level of profitability and one indicated that over the years they had some profitable quarters and some unprofitable ones. The BAM practitioners had various views about the importance of profitability when asked if they agreed with the statement from Lai (2015) that both profitability and reaching people for Jesus are paramount. One said, “Glorifying God does not equal being profitable; the ultimate goal is to win people to Jesus.” Another one said, “Reaching people for Jesus is most important. Business profitability should be pursued, but is not most important.” Another responded with a broader view by saying, “Who runs a business that is not making a profit? It needs to be a real model to the locals. Being a good business owner is not evangelism, but it is a huge part of your testimony.” Finally, one responded with a broader view and said,

“Workers can set up hybrid organizations, social ventures, much like their non-Christian counterparts and still reach people for Jesus without being profitable. It is not an either/or proposition, but a both/and hybrid that seems to make sense. Intentionality of reaching people for Jesus are [sic] paramount. If one desires to be profitable than [sic] they need to pursue it, but if they are not profitable for a period of time—how long is that time? Do you pull the plug on the business? Why not operate it as a hybrid social venture? It is just as legitimate as other organizational structures”

Related to this, five (45%) of the respondents said they were partially paid a salary by the business.

Findings beyond Best Practices

The business practitioners were given the opportunity to share what they wish they would have known before becoming BAM practitioners. Many of them were very practical in what they would have wanted. Things such as “specific training for business”, and understanding “how small businesses start, organizational structures, how to create business plans, marketing plans, and how to do adequate assessments” came up. Related to these practical items were how to do “accounting, forecasting, planning” and the “need for more help with planning” and “everything related to business, accounting, marketing, strategy, saving, accountability, ownership and board structure.” One simply wished they knew that they “should have started small first.”

Beyond the practical aspects regarding business, two specifically mentioned they wish they had a better grasp on language before they started. Another said a better understanding “of the time and energy, stress and heartache of cross-cultural entrepreneurship as it is a massive amount of work.” Others were more philosophical and said “I wish I knew my weaknesses better” and “how powerful God is” and “how God can use your vocation and work to advance the Kingdom of God.”

The BAM practitioners also had the opportunity to give advice for those who wanted to do similar work. Some of their raw advice, in their own words, is as follows:

- “Make sure you marry someone who can be married to an entrepreneur.”
- “Persevere, persevere, persevere.”
- “You have to be legitimate and professional.”
- “Maybe after ten years there will be profit and fruit—it is a long work.”
- “Have practical experience preferably in challenging situations not just theology.”
- “Before you come to the field have a real job where you have to show up for work and be responsible and take initiative.”
- “Come ready to work.”

- “Do your research—take time and do it.”
- “The essential characteristic of a calling is suffering. You will suffer in some way.”

One of the key learnings from these thoughts is that running a missional business is a hard and long work. It requires that the BAM practitioner will have worked before reaching the field, and also have an understanding of the perseverance needed to continue on the field. And finally, the aspiring BAM practitioner should have an understanding that there will be sacrifice and suffering involved.

Delimitations

Because the research was focused on BAM practitioners among one ethnic group in one country among a people that practiced one religion, there are limitations to the generalizability of the findings and conclusions of the study. Additionally, all the organizations were micro-enterprises, and therefore, some of these findings may not apply to multinational corporations (MNC's) or even larger Small and Medium Businesses (SMB's). However, because of the dearth of research, particularly published field research, among micro businesses established for missional and Kingdom purposes this research is of value.

Furthermore, due to the qualitative nature of the field study, and the limited sample size, broad generalizations may not be made. However, the sample was also broad as it involved individuals among multiple sending organizations, working in different cities and in different types of businesses. Finally, the qualitative nature of the study on the field allowed for a deeper understanding of the context and work of the BAM practitioners. This richness of context and understanding is one of the benefits of qualitative research that is often missing in quantitative studies (Patton, 2001).

Learning Outcomes and Implications for Teaching

Most of the individuals in this study had undergraduate degrees in non-theological fields such as business, the sciences, engineering, and computers with also a few in history, linguistics, and communications. Only three (27%) of them had either a Masters of Theology or Masters of Divinity. This finding is interesting because when asked if they would prefer more ministry training or more business training six

(54%) of them wished their team had more business training. One went so far as to say, “I wish I had not gone to Bible School, but I wish I had a business degree... If I were to do it again I would get a business degree rather than a bible degree as it did not help prepare me for what I am doing here.” Three (27%) did not see the need for any more training, and two (18%) would have liked additional training on church planting or specific training related to the religion of the majority people in their country. These numbers and responses communicate the need for more business training of BAM practitioners, and there is also recognition among them that they need it.

This study has also uncovered several areas where there appears to be a gap between best and fruitful practices of the BAM literature and what the BAM practitioners are doing on the field. Even though effectiveness was not the focus of the study, if highly effective results had been communicated or observed this may be an argument that the best practices are not appropriate for this context. However, that was not the case. Therefore, this information helps inform developers of Business as Mission curriculum and specific courses on the areas that need to be covered in those courses. Specifically, it is clear that due to the number of business practitioners that did not even have a mission statement that some instruction on the value of a mission statement, and how they are crafted and used to give direction needs to take place. Less than half of the BAM practitioners had developed business plans and even fewer had done a market analysis and competitive analysis. As previously mentioned, this may be the result of studying microenterprises, but it also appears to point to the fact that there is a lack of training in this area. Thus, business plan preparation is a significant need for BAM practitioners, but also a great opportunity for those developing BAM curriculum and courses. Equally important is the ministry plan. 63% percent of the BAM practitioners did have ministry plans, however, most of them did not have integrated business and ministry plans. It seems like this is where instruction on the Theology of Work would be important for future BAM practitioners.

Another area that should be included in Business as Mission curriculum is the importance of mentorship and accountability. At its most basic form this relates to governance structures and boards of directors, but it also

relates to the role that sending agencies and churches as well as the local indigenous church can and should have in a missional business. Included in the proposed instruction is the role and benefits of having a mentor.

Finally, there appears to be a significant need for instruction on what the triple bottom line or multiple bottom line concept is and how it can help a missional business. There seems to be the understanding that economic profit must be measured as all of the BAM practitioners in this study measured profit. Yet, there appeared to be very few who measured the spiritual or social impact of the enterprise. Instruction regarding setting goals and measurable metrics should be included here, as well as how often and in what detail items should be measured. Of course, all of this is tied back to the mission statement, the business and ministry plan, as well as organizational governance and accountability. The key here is not measurement for measurement sake, but in order to be more effective in the work that God has called BAM practitioners to do.

Recommendations for Future Study

Further research should be undertaken to determine if the same items are found among BAM practitioners in other contexts. Additionally, longitudinal studies should be done in order to determine if there are any changes over time both in the perspective of the BAM practitioner and as the organization grows and matures. Furthermore, it appears that there needs to be some research done on how the BAM practitioners' theology of work impacts their understanding and application of multiple bottom lines. Fourthly, it is always important to continue to study, understand, and refine what are the best practices of BAM in terms of effectiveness. Performing this research across nations, contexts, and businesses would be beneficial to determine if BAM practitioners are operating differently yet experiencing effective results. Finally, a study of younger BAM practitioners may yield different results as the effects of the relatively young Business as Mission research and literature may take time to be applied on the field. This research will hopefully spur others to adequately train and prepare a new wave of BAM practitioners so that the goal of seeing individual lives, communities, and nations transformed by the gospel can be realized.

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