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A Growing Global Movement: Business as Mission

Jo Plummer and Mats Tunehag

Business as Mission (BAM) is a growing global movement of people embracing and practicing business for God's glory and the common good. The phrase "business as mission" encompasses three things: a concept, a practice, and a global movement.

BAM Global (bamglobal.org) is a network of networks operating among the business as mission community that exists to invigorate, strengthen, and equip the global BAM movement. It has done so since 2002 by focusing on developing *intellectual capital* (understanding, knowledge, and shared learning) and *social capital* (relationships and collaboration) in the movement. This in turn has been instrumental in establishing the BAM concept, multiplying BAM practice, and fostering a cohesive global community.

This article will unpack the concept, the practice, and the movement. It will also show how the proactive development of intellectual and social capital has contributed to developing various BAM networks and nurturing a worldwide movement.

The Concept

In short, *business as mission* is shaping and reshaping your business for God and for people. Business can be God-glorifying and has enormous potential to do good. As a movement, business as mission gathers together business professionals who use the gifts of entrepreneurship and good management to bring creative, for-profit, sustainable solutions to global challenges, including bringing the gospel to the ends of the earth.

BAM is pursuing a positive impact for multiple stakeholders, "aiming at the quadruple bottom line: spiritual, economic, social, and environmental transformation."¹ In other words, businessmen and women are using their skills in alignment with God's purposes to serve people, make a profit, and be good stewards of the planet – among all peoples.

It is founded on three biblical mandates. The *cultural mandate* to "tend the garden" (Genesis 1, 2), stewarding creation and engaging in resource-multiplying activities that aid human flourishing. The *great commandment* to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 25:35-40), caring for the poor and vulnerable

and fighting injustice. The *great commission* mandate to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:16-20), sharing Jesus' good news of the Kingdom and his commandments as we are going out into the world.

Thus, to enable a meaningful conversation and constructive collaboration, BAM Global has developed the following four-part working definition.

BAM is:

- Profitable and sustainable businesses
- Intentional about Kingdom of God purpose and impact on people and nations
- Focused on holistic transformation and the multiple bottom lines of economic, social, environmental and spiritual outcomes
- Concerned about the world's poorest and least evangelized peoples

This definition has been, and continues to be, absolutely essential to developing and growing a cohesive and global movement. Without a common language, you cannot communicate. If you don't communicate, you cannot collaborate. Without collaboration, you cannot create synergistic impact.

The first global white paper towards that end was the Lausanne Occasional Paper, "Business as Mission,"² which included The Business as Mission Manifesto.³ Since then, BAM Global worked towards developing a consensus-based and globally accepted understanding of the BAM concept creating several global conversations to develop it from biblical, historical, global, regional, economic, strategic, missiological, and ecclesiological perspectives.⁴

During 2016 and 2017, in partnership with the *Lausanne Movement*, BAM Global co-convened another such global conversation around the role of wealth creation for holistic transformation of people and

societies. The findings are in seven papers, one manifesto (in fourteen languages so far) and an educational video.⁵ This further strengthened the common language, which is necessary to grow the movement.

The Practice

Business is a good, God-given institution that can benefit human society. It creates jobs, multiplies wealth and resources, and drives creativity and innovation. And it sustainably provides for families, communities, and nations. Businessmen and women can intentionally harness this power to address some of the world's most pressing problems: environmental crises, joblessness, poverty, slavery, sanitation problems, food security, and so on. Businesses that provide excellent products and services as well as jobs with real dignity bring economic stability to families and communities.

Business people have an influential role in a community meeting real needs and building a strong network of relationships. They can share the gospel in word and deed in the context of everyday life. Business people and business skills are some of the most needed resources in global mission today.

However, the rapid expansion of the business as mission concept and strategy in the past twenty years also presents challenges. Some misunderstand the BAM concept. Mission agencies and churches grapple with how to effectively integrate the BAM strategy. The pervasive sacred-secular divide creates a severe barrier to mobilization and engagement. Essential services like investment and mentoring were lacking as were established best practices.

Thus, there has been an ongoing need to patiently unpack the concept of BAM, identify fruitful practices, and mobilize and engage new partners and players in order to nurture a strong, healthy "BAM ecosystem."

BAM Global identified five functions (our



Photo by Kaur Kristian

“5Cs”) that could enhance this work:

- **Connecting:** Fostering relationships with related networks and organizations as ambassadors for business as mission.
- **Convening:** Gathering together in virtual and face-to-face forums, including various consultations and think tank groups, and a BAM Global Congress in April 2013 and one planned for April 2020.
- **Content:** Building a comprehensive library of BAM-related materials and resources on businessasmission.com (general resources and a blog) and at bamglobal.org (white papers and reports).
- **Community:** Enhancing networking and partnerships in the BAM global movement by connecting people-to-people and people-to-resources.
- **Communication:** Informing, using tools including a twice-monthly BAM-focused newsletter,⁶ *The BAM Review*, sent out to 6,500 plus recipients.

An obvious focus and target audience for BAM Global is business and business people - our core constituency. However, we recognize that business is not a “silver bullet” and to achieve holistic transformation on a

macro scale with intergenerational perspectives, we need to build an ecosystem. Thus, BAM Global is working with four constituencies: leaders from business, missions, church, and academia.

Since 2002 BAM Global has facilitated global “think tank” and consultation processes. We have engaged more than five hundred people from around fifty countries in various global conversations on BAM primarily business people but also key leaders from the other three groups. Together we have produced close to thirty reports⁷ with more in the pipeline. Each report has been both peer-produced and peer-reviewed.

These complex consultation processes involve listening, learning and sharing fruitful practices among BAM practitioners and leaders from around the globe. This collaborative approach creates ownership of content and also generated action.

Endorsing the concept of BAM is relatively easy but applying it in various aspects of business and in a complex marketplace is a learning process. BAM practice looks different in different industries, times, locations, cultures, and nations. Our reports show examples of this which not only deal with conceptual and theological issues but also with BAM related to particular issues like

human trafficking and unreached people, as well as BAM practices in particular countries and regions.

BAM Global is thus both a *think tank* and a *do-tank* aiming to catalyze both reflection and action. This contributes significantly to the exponential growth of BAM practice, and we believe helps the movement mature as we pass on a knowledge base to the next generation.

The Movement

BAM Global is a very small organization which serves the much larger global movement. A movement, by definition, is to some extent beyond control. What holds it together is a common vision and mission, shared values, relationships, and a small but dedicated team of facilitators. A movement has leaders but not a brick and mortar headquarters as demonstrated by such movements such as the abolitionist movement,⁸ the civil rights movement, or the charismatic movement.

Today, the global BAM movement is diverse and speaks many languages. It has many moving and growing parts. A plethora of initiatives in all four major constituencies reflect it. There are a growing number of larger and more long-lasting BAM businesses, including small and medium-sized enterprises

(SMEs) and large-scale companies. BAM incubators and accelerators, investment, consulting, and training organizations also continue to grow numerically.

There are industry-related BAM groups such as the Coffee as Mission network which has more than four hundred members representing over one hundred BAM business dealing with coffee, from plant to cup. Similarly, the Freedom Business Alliance (freedombusinessalliance.com) has over one hundred freedom businesses in its global trade association networking companies of all types that fight human trafficking.

Within the movement there are also well established national or regional networks that operate in languages like Korean, Portuguese, and Chinese.⁹ These convene conferences and publish language-specific materials on BAM.

Almost all of the oldest and largest evangelical mission agencies in the world embrace BAM and are pursuing ways to put it into practice. More and more local churches and major denominations around the globe are involved in BAM. The same applies to various academic institutions, and the number of academic theses on BAM continues to grow. Every year major BAM conferences occur on every continent.

These are just a few examples of BAM-related initiatives in the global BAM movement that help build the ecosystem around BAM companies. BAM Global serves these by providing connecting points for various organizations and networks at an international level.

Looking Forward

As we look forward BAM Global has identified some keystone initiatives, including:

Putting the Global into BAM Global

We coach national and regional groups as they develop geographically based networks and conferences. We facilitate the translation of key documents into large widely used languages.

BAM Global Congress

While other entities in the movement focus on hosting in regional conferences (in which we often have a collaborative role), BAM Global is in a unique position to convene global gatherings. In 2020 key BAM leaders from all continents will gather at the second BAM Global Congress.¹⁰ We will celebrate what God is doing through BAM around the world, connect leaders and initiatives, and create momentum to scale the movement for greater impact.


Building Organizational and Leadership Capacity

BAM Global is currently developing a growth plan that will enhance the operational capacity of our core team. We are also identifying “BAM Global Ambassadors” from a diverse range of regions and networks to strengthen global connections, and “Associate Ambassadors” to raise up a new generation of leaders.

Framing Big Hairy Audacious Goals (BHAGs)

We have identified some key needs and objectives for the movement. These are expressed as our Three BAM BHAGs.¹¹ First, solve global issues with innovative BAM solutions. Second, reach a tipping point for macro impact through BAM businesses. Third, transform views of business in the church worldwide.

We continue to communicate this vision and do our *loaves and fishes* work of building intellectual and social capital in the BAM

movement. Our prayer is that God will continue to do his work of multiplication so that his Kingdom will continue to come on earth as it is in heaven. 

Jo Plummer is a Lausanne catalyst for Business as Mission, co-chair of BAM Global, and an editor of the Lausanne Occasional Paper on Business as Mission. She has been developing resources for BAM since 2001 and currently serves as editor of the Business as Mission website and The BAM Review blog.

Mats Tunehag is the co-chair of BAM Global and the chairman of the Freedom Business Alliance, a global trade association developing business solutions to human trafficking. He also serves with a BAM investment fund which helps SMEs to grow in size and holistic impact in the Arab world and Asia.

Notes

1. “Lausanne Business as Mission Manifesto,” Special Reports, BAM Global, October 2004, <https://bamglobal.org/lop-manifesto/>.
2. Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, “Business as Mission,” *Lausanne Occasional Paper 59* (2004), <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lop/business-mission-lop-59>.
3. “Business as Mission Manifesto,” BAM Global.
4. See related BAM reports at <https://bamglobal.org/reports/>.
5. Mats Tunehag, “Wealth Creation,” July 22, 2017, <http://matstunehag.com/wealth-creation/>.
6. Subscribe to the BAM Review at <https://businessasmission.com/newsletter/>.
7. Find the BAM Global reports at <https://bamglobal.org/reports/>.
8. Recommended reading: Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire’s Slaves* (Mariner Books: 2005).
9. One example, see Chinese BAM at <http://www.chinesebam.com/>.
10. Learn more about the upcoming BAM Global Congress at <http://bamglobal.org/congress-2020/>.
11. The term BHAGs or Big Hairy Audacious Goals was coined by Jim Collins in his book *Built to Last*, <https://www.bamglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/BAM-Global-BHAGs.pdf>.



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