

BUSINESS AS MISSION

*“Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile.
Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” (Jer 29:7)*

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A **few brief** observations on Business-as-Mission as it relates to theology, missiology, global reality, history, strategy and ecclesiology.

1. Theology

- 1.1 God is the Creator God. What he created was good and for the benefit and blessing of man. The end product as well as the process was good. We are made in His image – and part of that means to create good things for others. So even the creation of wealth is in principle a good thing. (This is NOT health and wealth theology!) Our welfare systems presupposes that wealth is created. Even our church and mission programs are based on the fundamental principle that to give money away to support missions, someone has to create more than they need for themselves. This has been the traditional way of “doing mission”. But we have too often neglected or even looked down on the ‘wealth creators’, business people and entrepreneurs who create the frameworks and the infra-structures for wealth creation. This in turn can and should be harnessed to be a blessing to many peoples. Abraham was a quite successful businessman. Part of God’s promise to make Abraham a blessing to all peoples was based on blessing him so that he could in turn bless others. (Gen 12:3)

- 1.2 The Kingdom of God is much bigger than any one church denomination or it’s mission activity. The Lord’s prayer teaches us that we are to have a Kingdom perspective and intentionality that effects every sector of life and society. We believe that the Lordship of Christ applies to all peoples, all cultures and all spheres of society. Thus we are not just looking for more churches or more church members. No, we pray that His will will be done, that His Kingdom will come, not just for me and my church, but also to be manifested in business, judicial systems, education, politics, etc.,. (Matt 6:10) In effect, this is what it means to “make disciples of all peoples”, seeing Kingdom principles being applied in every area of human life. (Matt 28:19-20)

- 1.3 The Gospel is the good news to man. God is concerned about us as human beings within our social and environmental contexts. In the Old Testament we have numerous examples of God speaking out through prophets to unjust systems and practices; where poor, hungry, needy, powerless and vulnerable people are abused. Jesus ministry is clearly one of both preaching and demonstrating God’s Kingdom come. (Isa 58:6-7; Luke 7:22)

2. Missiology

- 2.1 The holistic mission of the Kingdom is to take the whole Gospel, to the whole man, by the whole church, to the whole world. This is our mandate and our task.

- 2.2 We “mirror” Jesus’ life and mission, “as the Father has sent me, so I send you”. (John 20:21) It is a holistic mission where evangelism and social responsibility go hand in hand, are tied together.

- 2.3 To meet the many needs of the world (including unemployment, poverty, etc.,) we need the complimentary view of co-working together, partnerships between Christians engaged in various sectors of societal transformation. (Paul and Apollos, evangelists and businessmen)

2.4 In a world where we are moving from mass production to mass customisation we need to engage and enable even Christian business people to “connect direct”, bringing their particular gifts to bear on the in the holistic mission of God’s Kingdom.

3. Global Reality

3.1 Whether we look at Algeria, Tajikistan, West Africa or Mongolia, and other places where the name of Jesus is rarely heard, we will find unemployment rates ranging from 30 to 70 percent.

3.2 Two billion people live on less than £ 1.3 per day. 50 percent of the worlds population is under the age of 25. In the next 20 years , 3 billion young people will enter the marketplace looking for employment.

3.3 Thus we can never meet some of the most dire needs of the world, unless we address the area of economic development.

3.4 If we want to preach the whole gospel in a way that is “good news” to the world, we must be seen as meeting real needs and influencing the whole of society. Therefore we will increasingly need to emphasize economic and business development intentionally with a Kingdom point of view.

3.5 When we look at the reality of mission outreach throughout the world, the more 'spiritual' ministries and organisations are often already in place: Bible translators, literature, radio ministries, church planters, etc. Furthermore there are often humanitarian aid workers involved in various development projects. This is good, but one important component is often missing: The businessman, the entrepreneur.

3.6 There is a growing awareness among both mission leaders and Christian businessmen that God can and does use business skills and experience on the mission field. Kingdom businessmen need to be involved, but not by merely putting up the money for Christian organizations. They should do business in mission contexts, be consultants, and start companies as part of a global Kingdom strategy. Governments of many countries are throwing open doors, often previously closed traditional missionaries, and are asking for economic and business development in their nations.

3.7 God is setting the stage, creating an unprecedented level of preparedness, both in the Christian Business Community and on "field". Let me mention a few such infra structures, where God is setting the stage on the field:

C Asia: All countries in the region have international multi-agency partnerships. Many of them have a business development working group and/or people specifically assigned to business development. There have been three Central Asia Business Consultations.

India: Has the largest middle class stratum in the world, English speaking, MTV-watching, well educated, many involved in IT sector. This is a segment of society with hardly any Christian presence, wide open for business people. India also has many poor. Here we look at business development in a different perspective.

Africa: In March of 2001 at the African Millennial Consultation, over 400 African church leaders met to discuss the remaining challenges of the Church in Africa. They underlined the need to empower the poor as the primary need of the church in Africa.

3.8 There are links between social, economic and humanitarian justice and development.

4. History

4.1 Business as Mission may sound as a novelty, but there are historical examples that we can learn from. It may not be new, but we need to re-discover, re-new and re-found Business as Mission. (see also appendix for a few examples of what Business as Mission can mean and do)

4.2 During its first 400 years of existence, the Church grew to become a major religious influence in the world, principally by people who lived their faith in the market place. Lydia was a business woman who had the freedom to gather others to hear the good news. (Acts 16:15) It is very likely that Christian businessmen and women in the early church travelled to new lands and introduced the Gospel to other peoples as well as doing their trade.

4.3 William Carey wrote in his “Enquiry” (1792) about “business as mission”. The Moravians practiced it. David Livingstone saw the connection, the integral link: “Christianity and commerce should ever be inseparable”.

5. Strategy

5.1 Job takers, makers & fakers: Most of us will be employees. Others will create jobs by starting companies. As we’re looking at Business as Mission we are certainly not favouring or pursuing business development as a front, a mere platform, for doing ‘spiritual and real missionary work’. No that is fake. That is not understanding the importance of Business as Mission, of our God given calling to serve him and people in all areas of life. And we must start real businesses, viable and profitable. It will give us true ‘platforms’, and not fake excuses which will not survive in the long run nor give us credibility.

5.2 Relief, development and business development:

- Relief is when you give a hungry/starving man/woman/family fish to eat.
- Development is when you teach them to fish.
- Business development is to assist by giving a loan, help develop a business plan, etc., so they can buy a fishing boat or start a fish farm, feed their family, create an economy, get sub-contractors, employ others, etc...

Most churches and Christian organizations are used to doing relief and/or development work. But very, very few have seriously considered business development as part of their mission strategy nor its implications. It is highly strategic and creates long-term benefits.

5.3 Business as Mission is more than just business development. If business development per se was the ultimate and only goal we could let the Russian mafia handle that – they are doing it. No, we need to see this as a valid Christian ministry. It flows out of our love for God and mankind, driven by His calling to disciple peoples and nations,

working with others (vertically linked) in an holistic ministry, to see societies transformed by the power of the gospel displayed in the market place, harnessing its power for God's Kingdom.

- 5.4 "The emphasis is on mission as transforming community through business with an intentionality that Jesus is made known, encountered or followed. In other words the daily work of doing and being in business is one way of engaging with society, bringing the kind of transformation which builds up the common good from the perspective of faith. This approach implies a holistic mission in which there is a conscious evangelistic engagement with the business world as a place where the Lordship of Christ and the Kingdom of God is hoped for and worked out in the decisions, culture, structures and systems of commercial life - the business of eternal living." (Tim Dakin in The Church of England Newspaper)
- 5.5 Thus businesses can (should?) have both a business plan and a Great Commission plan.
- 5.6 There is basically no country or area of the world which will not welcome a businessman or "bizzionaries" (not true of missionaries in many cases).

6. Ecclesiology

- 6.1 The church and its mission work is still suffering from the self-imposed dichotomy between spiritual and secular, between clergy and lay people. Business as Mission is "a new way of doing and being mission that is beyond churchianity" (Tim Dakin, Church of England Newspaper, 20 April 2001).
- 6.2 God has called some people to do business, to start and run companies. All too often, other Christians have looked down on them or only approved of them if they made a lot of money and gave it to the church. But in the same way that God calls and equips people to be Bible translators or evangelists, He also calls and equips people to be businessmen and businesswomen, in order to serve Him and other people. And the world needs these people – in areas where the name of Jesus is rarely heard there is a desperate need of entrepreneurs and business people.
- 6.3 But to maximize the impact, we need to cooperate, we need to link the various gifts and ministries to one another. Many international partnerships already exist for unreached peoples and they provide a forum where different Christian ministries can meet, share, pray, plan and cooperate. These partnerships integrate church planting, evangelism, theological teaching, Bible translation, radio ministries, relief work, business development, water projects, etc.
- 6.4 Thus also Christian businessmen need to be:
- Affirmed: God has given them unique callings, gifts and experiences.
 - Challenged: The needs and opportunities are great.
 - Connected: With other Christian ministries.

Appendix 1: How Two Grocers Changed the Course of a Nation

A couple of hundred years ago there were two Christian grocers in London who ran market stalls. One of them said to the other (this is what I imagined to have happened) "You know as Christians, we're supposed to have honest scales. It says so in the Bible. So how should we do that?" "Well, I'll tell you what, I'll come and check your scales on Wednesdays to make sure their accurate and you come on Sundays and check mine, we'll make sure their accurate. There is a Biblical principle here that we'll make part of the way we do business." As these two grocers met together, they came out with a list of twelve principles that they felt were the guiding Biblical principles of the way that they should do business in London. Then something interesting happened. People preferred to buy from them because they knew they would get a good product, at a fair price, with honest scales etc, etc., etc. They preferred to buy from these grocers. And other grocers who were Christians said this isn't fair, we need to be honest. "So the two grocers said, "OK, if you sign up to these twelve principles and we hold you accountable for these twelve principles, then you can join our association of Christian grocer's." In those days it wasn't called exactly that, but it is still in existence today, and is called the Most Worshipful Company of Livery Merchants. And the Master of it is the Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Company. It's very odd and peculiarly British.

And then the bakers came along and said, "Yeah, these grocers are doing so well by applying Biblical principles, we're Christians, let's apply these same principles to our baking business." And then the saddle makers, and the fan makers. There were twelve original companies. There were thirteen separate trades in the city of London and twelve of those trades agreed to live by a set of twelve biblical principles to govern their businesses and they were the most successful businessmen. The thirteenth trade was the masons, and the masons became known as the Free Masons because they were free from the principles of the other twelve companies.

The twelve great companies of the City of London are still known this way today. Now there are 300 companies in the City of London registered as Livery Companies. The latest one was the Most Worshipful Company of Information Technologists. So everybody that joins one of the companies in the City of London, even today gets a list of the principles they have to sign up to. There are 36 Biblical principles to guide your life. And they call the book *Some Rules for the Conduct of Life to Which Are Added A Few Cautions*. The livery companies re-formed as companies that would live according to these biblical principles. And they effected change and what happened was that the rulers of the nation in Britain began to see the effect of these companies and said "What we need to do is make these law in the whole nation. So instead of just these grocers having their honest scales, every scale in Britain needs to weigh accurately." The government Weights and Measures Department which we have today can trace its history back to the day when these two grocers decided to keep themselves accountable for Biblical principles. The government, the King, then adopted that principle and said this should be an issue of law- every scale in Britain should be honest. Every product should be a good product at a fair price and all of the government institutions that we have today in Britain can trace their history back to the Christian Grocers Association of 1600 and something or other.

Each trade in the City of London appointed what they called a foreign officer. His job was to manage the import of products from overseas to make sure they adhered to the same principles and standards that are set out in the 36 principles. So the whole thing of fair trade came out of that. If they were using slave labour to produce something, and we were not, then they were not allowed to compete against us because that was unfair trade. And the governments of the twelve companies each had their foreign officer and they used to meet in a place called the 'foreign office.' And the government of England's foreign office today, which deals with all our international politics out of London, is the historic home of these foreign officers who managed trade. Weights and Measures, the Health and Safety at work, all of these things come from these companies.

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APPENDIX 2

A NEW ROLE FOR GLOBAL BUSINESSES: MULTINATIONAL FIRMS MUST MAKE PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS A PRIORITY

Much of the current debate on globalization focuses on the potential downside of unfettered competition. Will unemployment trigger social unrest in Europe? Will regions dependent on natural resources or commodities face more exploitation? Will the troubling social divides in emerging economies widen even further? As a businessman with almost 30 years of international experience I see, globalization as basically a good thing. But I also know that transparency and a free flow of trade, capital, skills, technology and information, even mixed with the human aspiration for a share of the better life, will not automatically lead to a better life for all.

The pursuit of profit alone can not hold societies together. This is no new insight. What is new is the way globalization is changing the landscape. Before 1989, two geopolitical power blocs, each with its own ideological and economic system, faced off across the iron curtain. In today's post cold war world, trade, commerce and technology have reconfigured the global balance of power equation. Market forces and large corporations in many ways have a bigger impact on people's lives than governments or regional and international institutions.

Against that backdrop we need to widen the focus of business and embrace a new civic role for large corporations, globally and locally. Big companies like ABB train local people and transfer technology and business know how into emerging economies. We treat employees and local communities everywhere with respect. We try to set examples of decency, fairness and solidarity, as well as of performance and effectiveness. Why? Partly because such behaviour reflects the ethical core of a company. Partly because we clearly see it helps not only to be responsible but to be seen as being responsible. Enlightened self-interest alone is reason enough for business to behave responsibly because good social practices help our bottom line. Just as companies discovered that reducing their impact on environment can also improve their competitive position - by lowering costs and meeting the expectation of consumers - we recognize that tackling broader social responsibilities also furthers commercial goals. Companies that are good local citizens will find it easier to hire and keep talent, obtain good financing and gain social approval, political support and regulatory consent.

To be sure, the social responsibilities of business are largely regulated by laws and public opinion. But it is good business to go beyond mere compliance. A firm like ABB can use our strengths - a global presence, a multicultural perspective, the proven ability to get things done quickly - to complement the actions of other and to fulfil our larger civic role. Shareholders demand - and rightly so - the creation of value as reflected by increasing profits and stock prices. That is the reason business exists. The economic dimension came first. But to it have been added the environmental, and now a societal element.

Actions speak louder than rhetoric. In South Africa, we train local people in electrical engineering skills and help them establish themselves in business, which in turn supports the rural electrification program in that region. In India, China, throughout Asia, in the middle East, Africa and Latin America, we transfer technology, engineering and business know-how.

But globalization has thrust upon the international business community another even more challenging dimension to our new civic role. An already worrying gap is widening between the international norms and declarations on human rights, such as the UN Charter, and current societal and business realities. Big companies need to step into the breach to ensure that globalization delivers more than a litany of dashed hopes. We must now act as co-guarantors of human rights.

To promote a new civic role for large corporations, I believe the business community must become active on a global level. UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan has begun to involve businesses in the UN's work. To give that alliance substance, I propose an agreement giving business an integral role in ensuring the observance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Such a pact would aim at widening corporations transfer of know-how into emerging markets to include the sharing of democratic habits. In ABB, we did this in the Balkans by making sure we got Serbs, Kosovars, and Bosnians to work together to rebuild war-damaged electricity infrastructure. In an emerging market country, we once talked the government into offering squatters along a future power transmission line financial incentives to move, instead of using the army to evict them.

The result is a win-win equation. Getting corporations as co-guarantors of human rights, the U.N. gains an ally. Business gets smarter by becoming more a part of the societies they work in. And most importantly, for the people in troubled countries, global business becomes a partner. I think that this is in our interest, and in the interest of societies everywhere. It is good business practice.

Göran Lindahl

President and CEO of ABB.

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APPENDIX 3

THE BUSINESS AS MISSION MANIFESTO

The Lausanne (LCWE¹) 2004 Forum Business as Mission Issue Group worked for a year, addressing issues relating to God's purposes for work and business, the role of business people in church and missions, the needs of the world and the potential response of business. The group consisted of more than 70 people from all continents. Most came from a business background but there were also church and mission leaders, educators, theologians, lawyers and researchers. The collaboration process included 60 papers, 25 cases studies, several national and regional Business as Mission consultations and email-based discussions, culminating in a week of face to face dialogue and work. These are **some** of our observations.

Affirmations

- We believe that **God** has created all men & women in His image with the ability to be creative, creating good things for themselves and for others - this includes business.
- We believe in following in the footsteps of **Jesus**, who constantly and consistently met the needs of the people he encountered, thus demonstrating the love of God and the rule of His kingdom.
- We believe that the **Holy Spirit** empowers all members of the **Body of Christ** to serve, to meet the real spiritual and physical needs of others, demonstrating the kingdom of God.
- We believe that God has called and equipped business people to make a **Kingdom** difference in and through their businesses.
- We believe that the **Gospel** has the power to transform individuals, communities and societies. Christians in business should therefore be a part of this holistic transformation through business.
- We recognise the fact that poverty and unemployment are often rampant in areas where the name of Jesus is rarely heard and understood.
- We recognise both the dire need for and the importance of business development. However it is more than just business per se. **Business as Mission** is about business with a Kingdom of God perspective, purpose and impact.
- We recognise that there is a need for job creation and for multiplication of businesses all over the world, aiming at the quadruple bottom line: spiritual, economical, social and environmental transformation.
- We recognise the fact that the church has a huge and largely untapped resource in the Christian business community to meet needs of the world – in and through business - and bring glory to God in the market place and beyond.

Recommendations

We call upon the Church world wide to identify, affirm, pray for, commission and release business people and entrepreneurs to exercise their gifts and calling as business people in the world – among all peoples and to the ends of the earth.

We call upon business people globally to receive this affirmation and to consider how their gifts and experience might be used to help meet the world's most pressing spiritual and physical needs through Business as Mission.

Conclusion

The real bottom line of Business as Mission is **AMDG - ad maiorem Dei gloriam** – for the greater glory of God

¹ Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation