



7 Creative Ways that Practitioners Integrate Business and Mission

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We are launching a new series on the topic of ‘Integration of Mission and Business’. A defining characteristic of a BAM company is that it intentionally integrates mission with business. But what does that look like in practice? What are some creative ways that practitioners work out their goals for spiritual impact, alongside their commercial, social and environmental goals?

We asked a small group of practitioners to share what they do in the business context that moves them towards their missional goals and spiritual impact. This could be something they did when establishing the company, or practices they do on a regular basis in the day-to-day life of the business. The practitioners shared a diverse range of specific practices, but there were some common themes. These seven ways to integrate business and mission stood out:

Keep Purpose Front and Center

Keeping the purpose, vision and objectives of the company at the forefront emerged as a key principle. This is important all the way through the life of the company, from the planning stages and goal setting, to evaluating those goals and choosing measures, to on-boarding processes for new hires, to daily communication with employees.

We have spent several months working on an impact strategy; documenting this and articulating specific annual operational goals and activities which emerge from this.

– *David*

In addition to an on-going business plan, with written and established goals for the business, there is a current annual Great Commission plan, with written and established goals for fulfilling the Great Commission through the business. – *Dwight*

We share the mission, history and culture of the company, along with the role of faith at the company or personal testimony of founder during pre-orientation of potential new staff. This is all to ask if the person is “willing to come into this type of environment”. We get a verbal agreement that they are joining a faith-based or values-based company and embarking on a journey to challenge and grow themselves. We’ve found this is

essential to manage expectations and open the door for follow-on spiritual impact.

– *Mark*

Consistently helping staff appreciate the higher purpose in which they are engaged is important. A key task of a leader is to link purpose with activity. Helping staff join the dots of the “why” allows them to sign up and commit to a cause, rather than just come to work. It lifts their spirit knowing that there is a higher calling they are serving.

– *Liam*

One of the owners is taking on a role which is a guardianship of the mission, vision, values – that have also been clearly articulated. This person has a roving brief to speak to anyone within the business, review documents etc. to assess whether at every level we are aligned with our mission. – *David*

On the board of directors (ideal) or (next best) on the board of advisors, there is a strategy coordinator who helps ensure that there are annual great commission plans that are ambitious but culturally achievable. – *Dwight*

Bring Prayer into the Workplace

Prayer is an essential part of integrating mission and business for these practitioners. Prayer and devotions in the business took the form of many different specific practices, but the core message is, ‘just do it’.

Something we do on regular basis is that we pray for the trips and courses that we have running. We pray for our customers by name, asking God if He has something special that we should communicate to them or focus on that particular trip. We also pray for healing whenever someone has an illness or injury. Many times we are allowed to pray for that person there and then, it doesn’t matter if the person in question believes in Jesus or not. – *Anne*

We pray with employees when personal issues come up for them, and as I become aware of them. Be willing to interrupt your life to stop and minister to someone in the office – or a supplier or customer – who is hurting. – *André*

We have had devotions with staff and had the ones who are willing lead it take turns to do that. – *Julia*

We pray with staff and for staff, we request prayer points from non-Christian stakeholders. – *Jai*

We provide a place for employees to worship before the workday begins. The goal is to invite His presence into our lives and the factory space. I walk the production line with a couple of key leaders at the end of the day and pray that day’s problems back to the Lord so that we don’t take them home with us. I also keep a running record of the number of days we waited for orders after supplies ran out and we prayed. In over 25 years, the most we waited was 3 days – once we prayed! This has been a practical way of building faith in our team. – *Bill*

Walk the walk

The idea of showing Jesus to people and modelling Biblical values in the course of everyday business life was a common thread. Living out our faith in the workplace is a powerful witness to others. This is also a practical way to introduce and teach a Biblical way of thinking, demonstrating what the Kingdom of God looks like.

We try (and sometimes fail) to do everything in a way that honours God. Most of our community know we are Christian and we believe that work with integrity is itself quite a strong witness. Our policies are informed by and quote scripture, this serves as a reminder to us that there is a wisdom far greater than our own. I personally find it useful to finish a week or day and ask myself “In what ways was I like Jesus today?” the answer is often equal parts useful and terrifying! – *Jai*

As a rule we are very aware of not joining in on talking behind the back of other businesses and their leaders in our local area. This is a simple key to being different that is very obvious for other people to see. – *Anne*

On a very practical level, just seeking to think through how our daily actions we can reflect Jesus. A recent example was a serious situation in the workplace which could have resulted in dismissal for two quite vulnerable staff. Both confessed when confronted and sincerely asked for forgiveness. We talked about how Jesus dealt with “the woman at the well” and the “woman who was nearly stoned for adultery”. In our cultural context these are powerful stories which connect, and the impact was very, very visible. We don’t do formal Bible studies in the workplace, but are convinced that trying to be Jesus, and using stories, when the opportunities present, has a powerful effect. – *David*

We use the principles in Matthew of ‘seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness’ and ‘don’t worry’ when we create contracts. Our contract format shows each party’s rights and responsibilities, then we encourage those who feel they are ‘poor’ to remember God’s promises to the righteous and those who seek Him – and actually sign the contract. We want to show that seeking the Kingdom is a covenant issue. – *Bill*

Employee Training

Another way to pass on Biblical teaching, and bring transformation at a worldview level, is to formalise it into training for employees. Such programs can be delivered in numerous different ways, using off-the-shelf or custom-created materials. They are usually based on Biblical values are often connected to clearly articulated company values.

We often implemented training that was informed by our worldview as believers. For example, we trained on effective conflict resolution, or on equal opportunity hiring. We explained that these values, and the reason we were doing the training, was because of how we see the world as Christians. This opened up opportunities to share. – *André*

We ran a “good workers course” not only for our staff but available for others as well. This covered work ethics, communication skills and integrated having self-esteem that

comes from knowing that you were made for a purpose. We used the book ‘Purpose Driven Life’ for this when we were with our own staff. –*Julia*

We pass on Biblically-based leadership principles on a weekly basis. This happens in an hour during the working day when the company is shut down and breaks into teams to discuss and set goals around Biblical principles. – *Mark*

We implement a formal employee training program on business ethics using our own developed teaching guide. – *Dwight*

Add Salt

Many BAM practitioners are mindful of the way that their Christian and non-Christian staff interact. They structure their companies in such a way there is a natural forum for Christians to have influence in the workplace.

We “add salt” by empowering the 25% of Christians in different departments and roles to love and reach out to those around them. We have intentionally created a culture and environment where ministering to, and praying for, employees happens regularly one-on-one. – *Mark*

Something I have tried to do is balance my believer and non-believer ratio for the best atmosphere. We are a little place so I can do that. I also consider this in hiring, along with their skills. I ask myself if this person is a good mentor match with the person they will be working with. One talkative man on my staff had a 30 year walk with Christ and the other man was a seeker. They worked together every morning before anyone else was awake! –*Julia*

Ideally the management team is multinational or multi-ethnic. Not all managers have to be Christian but the majority should be ‘Great Commission Christians’ and no key managers should be antagonistic to Kingdom-focused goals, i.e. they understand that these are supportive of the world-class business goals of company. – *Dwight*

Intentionally Build Relationships

Businesses are built on a network of relationships, with employees, suppliers, clients and the community. Building on the idea that business provides an ideal context to be salt and light to others, the practitioners specifically mentioned habits and practices that serve to strengthen relationships.

Break bread together! We provide a simple, inexpensive lunch for the staff on a regular basis, with the expectation to spend time sharing life together and not just talk “shop”. – *Mark*

We have had a ‘Chaplain’ at the workplace who is intimately involved with the staff; in the recruitment phase, performance reviews, loitering with intent in the lunch room, available at critical incidents at the work site, available for critical incidents that are happening in the lives of staff outside the work context, etc. This provides a simple bridge from which profound and eternal conversations can flow. – *Liam*

We have invited employees to our home to be guests for dinner. This allowed them to see the home life of a believer, to engage in conversations that don't happen naturally in a work context, and opened the door for sharing the gospel. – *André*

Meet Practical Needs in the Community

Part of the mission Jesus gave his people is to respond to the practical needs of people around us. Of course this happens as we create good, stable jobs for people and treat employees with dignity, but there are many other creative ways we can show the Kingdom of God in action.

We've asked employees what they struggle with that we could possibly do something about. First we heard that if both parents work, then no one is home with the kids in the summer. We developed a program for 8 weeks, 5 days a week for employees' kids. Over 450 kids accepted the Lord over the next 10 years. Second, employees said in their village children were being killed in traffic and drowning in the irrigation ditches. We organized them to pray over the village and for the last 12 years there have been no known deaths of kids from these issues. – *Bill*

Another helpful practice is having a common project that is an expression of social justice in which most staff can engage, not just financially, but practically. This allows them to be serving shoulder to shoulder, outside the usual work context, allowing them to appreciate the needs of the world and be in the company of their fellow employees. – *Liam*

These are just seven practical ways to integrate mission and business. There are many more. What strategies and habits have you found effective? Share your ideas in the Comments section below.

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