

Business as Mission

Kingdom-Focused Companies

by Justin Forman

Editor's note: Presented here are three companies that are a source of inspiration for all the entrepreneurs who are doing or wish to do Business as Mission.

Cards from Africa—Rwanda



Years after genocide ravaged its country, the nation of Rwanda is rising from its past to reclaim its future in Africa's growing landscape. That movement is being led by young entrepreneurs who see endless potential.

Cards from Africa is led by Chris Page. (See article on page 23). The 27-year-old British born missionary

teamed up with Rwandan artists several years ago to start Cards from Africa. Page's company has finished second in the World Challenge, a competition sponsored by *Newsweek*, BBC and Shell. They also won first place in the Open for Business competition at Urbana 06.

Here's a quote from their new website:

The cards, feature unique designs and are made of authentic recycled paper. They are made by the hands of an aspiring yet disadvantaged group of young men and women. Orphaned as a result of the genocide, AIDS or other sickness, our staff serve as the heads of their households. Our main goal is to consistently provide them with employment, inspire them with creativity, and teach them valuable skills to one day start their own business.

Meixia International

Bill Job, talented artist and entrepreneur from the mountains of Tennessee in the southeastern United States, came with his family to Xiamen, China in September 1987 and attended Xiamen University to study Mandarin Chinese.

Three months after arriving in China, the family focus shifted. Bill learned about a new policy allowing foreigners to set up wholly owned Foreign Investment Enterprises. In March of 1988 he brought together several American investors and obtained a license to produce handicrafts in the Special Economic Zone of Xiamen in Fujian Province. Meixia International was born. Over the years Bill has gathered together a management staff of key people from the US, Australia and the Philippines.

After 3 years of manufacturing high quality Tiffany lampshades, Bill developed a technology of building miniature houses out of stained glass and accessorizing them with pewter attachments, signage, trees and figurines. This new collectible line was called Forma Vitrum. The buildings included replica lighthouses, churches, businesses and Bed and Breakfast Inns. Among these collectible series were The Disney® Lighted Village and Coca Cola™ Through the Decades.



Taken from The 25 Most Admired Kingdom Companies by Justin Forman, founder of the Business as Mission Network (www.businessasmissionnetwork.com). Used with permission.

Recently, after years of research and development using varying stained glass techniques, Bill has created a superior quality laminated stained glass product. This 'inlaid stained glass' can be designed for any architectural or art glass application, and is subjected to rigorous ANSI safety glass standards.

Meixia International continues to produce Tiffany lampshades and other fine quality products for distribution in the United States and is currently expanding markets in both the United States and the Asia Pacific region.

Meixia also specializes in serving the needs of companies who design, manufacture and market their own product lines, but are finding their profits squeezed due to rising domestic production costs.



In over 50 years of serving both publishers and authors, they have produced over 100 million life-changing Christian paperbacks in partnership with the majority of Christian publishers and ministries in America.

way we do business every day, we have not arrived yet. We are committed, however, to measuring our progress and striving for continuous improvement.

Under John's leadership, the team has adopted a quadruple bottom line criteria for evaluating their success as a BAM practitioner: social, economic, spiritual, and environmental transformation.

Bethany Press—USA

Bethany Press (www.bethanypress.com) is a Christian owned and managed book manufacturer providing publishing solutions for manifesting, production, printing, binding, fulfillment, and warehousing of Christian literature.

In over 50 years of serving both publishers and authors, they have produced over 100 million life-changing Christian paperbacks in partnership with the majority of Christian publishers and ministries in America. They provide complete custom publishing services and project management for independent authors, ministries, and small publishers.

According to President and CEO John DePree,

Bethany Press began as a business for missions company, but is striving to become a Business as Mission company. We have only recently begun this transformation, and although it has been changing the

One distinguishing emphasis of Bethany is its commitment to be a catalyst of environmental transformation. Bethany Press has been an industry leader in environmental impact. They have signed the Green Press initiative (<http://greenpressinitiative.org/>), and are working towards improving their shop waste and office recycling programs.

Another important characteristic of Bethany's culture is the fact that they are a tax-paying, for-profit business that was founded by a non-profit world missions organization. As a result, Bethany Press provides financial contribution back to the parent non-profit (Bethany International) which funds world evangelism, missionary training, and church growth.

Bethany International (www.bethanyinternational.org) maintains over 125 missionaries in 30 countries and Bethany College of Missions trains more each year. In 2005, Bethany witnessed the graduation of over 500 nationally trained missionaries through 100 training schools located in Kenya, Indonesia, India, Brazil, and the Philippines....

This said, Bethany Press is overtly profit focused. They see a compelling need to steward and therefore multiply the resources that God has entrusted to their care so that God's Kingdom may be further advanced by the proper use of those resources.

According to John,

The team used to view Bethany Press as the business that made profit to fund missions (Business for Missions). Profit was the main motive, and the work itself, although producing life-changing Christian literature, was not viewed as ministry by the employees, leadership, or ownership. About two years ago, God began leading me on a journey that has brought me to understand work as a divine calling, Bethany Press' identity as a BAM company, and the sacred/secular divide that has caused so much damage to the body of Christ.

As I have been transformed by this journey, I have invited the leadership team and our ownership to journey with me, seeking to discover God's calling for Bethany Press and for each of us individually. This has led to many revelations about how our business had become misaligned with our vision, and ultimately God's desire for our company.

Our business is currently in an extremely exciting phase. We are in the beginning phases of developing BAM ventures around the world. These new ventures will give us a chance to found BAM companies and have their values, priorities and vision rooted in BAM principles from the beginning. It's a bit like building a ship in a dry dock versus trying to rebuild it while at sea. As I mentioned above, Bethany Press exists to help distribute the Christian message to a world in desperate need. The sky's the limit as we dream about the future.

I'm excited and hopeful as we have already seen great strides taken, and transformation occurring within the business as we seek to follow after God and align ourselves with the mission He has given us. 🌐