

poses.

3. Cover name for security purposes.
4. Don Hamilton, *Tentmakers Speak* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1987).
5. Tetsunao Yamamori, *God's New Envoys* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1987, p 56).
6. Albert Helman, *Merchant, Mission and Meditation* (Paramaribo: C. Kersten & Co. N.V. 1968).
7. Samuel Vinay and Albrecht Hauser, eds., *Proclaiming Christ in Christ's Way* (Oxford, Regnum Books, 1989).

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and professionals. These workers are then encouraged to commit themselves both to Christ and to the company and to gain a clear understanding of how Christian principles apply to the whole of life. As such, they become “businaries” and maximize the potential results for the glory of God both in their working environments and in their everyday lives.

Principles and Characteristics

From the studies conducted by the authors, we have found ten characteristics and principles that can be derived from the historical examples and case studies. These principles seem to run as a common thread throughout the centuries and are recommended to Christian business people of today.

1. A Spiritual Conception of Business

For a study of Moravian missionaries, the Basel Mission, and missionary tentmakers⁴, it was found that no distinction could be drawn between ministering the Word and serving through trade and commerce. Col. 3:23-24 says, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord... It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

2. Discipline and Diligence

Being disciplined and diligent in their work, Christian business people today can have a profound impact on contemporary society, or in cultures where these virtues are not promoted by the underlying religious motivation and values.

3. Honesty

To live and to do business in a dark environment is never easy, but God promises His blessing and help to those who act righteously. “You must

have accurate and honest weights and measures, so that you may live long...” (Deut 25:15). “The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out” (Prov 10:9, cf. Prov. 28:18). Christian business people who demonstrate honesty in their dealings will set a prominent and clearly visible testimony, thanks to the power of their good example.

4. Fixed and Fair Prices

At present, 50% of the employees are Christians. Since the company’s policy includes a Bible devotional at the beginning of each day...the impact of the Gospel is powerful.

Dealing with clearly fixed and fair prices and maintaining Christian economic principles would be most welcomed as a trademark of Christian business, especially in this day and age. Such attitudes would impact society and demonstrate higher values and divine goodness to the producers and consumers worldwide, bringing a powerful impact for the kingdom of God.

5. Quality as a Trademark

It is glorifying to God to maintain this distinctive tradition of providing quality products, thus revealing to the whole world something of the character of God who made everything “very good” (Gen. 1:31) and for His Glory (1Cor. 10:31).

6. Highly-Skilled Professionalism

Business leaders emphasize the need for highly-qualified professionals on their staff. Yamamori calls the

Christian missionary professional “a specialist in every sense of the word!”⁵

7. Fervent Evangelism and Discipleship

We see historically that it is possible to be a skilled professional and yet maintain a burning desire to bring the Good News to the lost, evangelizing by preaching, teaching and living within the context of one’s job. If only Christian artisans and traders would obey the great commission to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Mt. 28:19) when they are in the marketplace and seize every available opportunity to share the Gospel!

8. Social Solidarity

Active Christian businesspeople will have an impact on society, whether at home or overseas. Their “light shall shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Mt. 5:14-16).

9. Community-Wide Impact

Moravian business enterprises and its people gradually became an integral part of the community to which they had brought economic growth, social help, and ethical change. As a result, they were able to introduce Christian principles and serve as “agents of change” for a whole society.⁶

10. Political Influence

In whatever century, whatever country, and whatever political context, Christian business people have repeatedly won the right to be heard on a political level and thus to impact society as a whole.⁷

End Notes

1. Heinz Suter and Marco Gmur, *Business Power for God’s Purpose*, (VKG Publishing, CH-3280 Greng-Murten Switzerland, 1997).
2. Cover name for security pur-

with certain contacts and a degree of experience in products such as leather articles, wood, ceramics and carpets. One of PMI's professionals became a HIE's in-country representative. He was contacted by the head office in Spain to arrange the logistics of when the van would come to load products. Then he would visit the sites, place orders and set an approximate time at which he would return to collect them. Occasionally he would also spot-check the process and quality. This provided wonderful opportunities to establish friendships and share the Gospel, especially in those remote areas of this restricted-access country where no foreigners were living.

Another PMI affiliate, with experience in the carpet business and in export, set up his own in-country export company to channel products for HIE. Already two tentmakers were involved. While both received some financial benefit from these business operations, the work grew to become a financial burden for the small Spanish company. Therefore, the owner set about building up his own network of contacts in 1993. Fortunately he was able to employ an indigenous Christian (former Muslim) who was able to lower the production price. To date, four to five small Islamic producers who work in cooperation with the company, have been exposed to the message of the living God, and at least 20 or more other artisans have received some kind of Christian witness.

Obviously, it is no easy task for a missionary to be a tentmaker. First, a tentmaker needs to be a well-qualified professional in his field. Second, he/she needs to be able to give himself wholeheartedly to his business activities. If his time is divided for instance, between ten (or more) hours of language study per week, activities in

connection with his mission agency, visits with contacts, as well as Bible studies during working hours—he cannot be very effective in the marketplace. The business world is tough. In this particular case, the small company was unable to cope with high fixed costs and needed to lower the purchase costs in order to be competitive.

Third, the partner company in the business venture needs to have sufficient financial resources to effect the necessary adjustments until the difficulties of the first two to three years are overcome and net profit achieve satisfactory levels.

HIE has meanwhile purchased land and is building its own manufacturing center in its target country. This allows it to further influence workers with kingdom principles and to share the Gospel, quite apart from lowering production costs and, possibly, even raising the quality of the products.

A Non-Western Textile Company

In March, 1994 I had the privilege of attending the first Tentmakers International Exchange Congress in Asia. There, two non-western brothers shared about their company, Angel Textiles³ (AT). The company started in the garage of the current CEO, a committed Christian. Early on, it was a small trade shop, comparable to Paul's environment in Acts 18:1-3. As God blessed the business, it developed until it was registered for international expansion in 1980. Any personnel employed had to give evidence of a deep loyalty to Christ, and the company conducted its business with great integrity. This worked like light in the darkness of the corruption that surrounded them. Other Biblical principles, such as taking a sabbatical in

1986 and 1993, were introduced into business practice; yet still the company expanded. In 1992 AT won an award for integrity from the government. The company now employs a workforce of over 2,000 people with an annual turnover totaling over US\$1,000,000,000. AT is linked to over 2,000 franchise stores worldwide, some in countries that are completely closed to the Gospel. Thus, AT has become a worldwide multinational company that is renowned for its quality and honesty in business.

At present, 50% of the employees are Christians. Since the company's policy includes a Bible devotional at the beginning of each day and mandatory weekly Bible study groups, the impact of the Gospel is powerful. Yearly company vacations with Biblical teaching bring forth astonishing results, and many of the non-Christian employees are converted. An internal business ministry institute—staffed partially by chaplains—trains workers in Christian ethics, business principles and social behavior. This leads to a holistic impact on the workers' lifestyles, business practices, work and interpersonal relationships, encouraging Christ-like speech and action. In 1991 the company also opened a foundation to aid the handicapped and deprived, and in 1994 opened a factory for deaf workers. No wonder that wherever AT businessmen work, produce, deal, sell, buy or travel world-wide, they are known as "businaries"—or businessmen with missionary vision.

Obviously, AT has anything but a low-key style of operations. Yet it seems to have a very clear idea that the Christian professional must not live in a dichotomy between the secular and the sacred. Since AT operates from a business platform, it does not recruit missionaries but, rather, either Christian or secular workers

Business Power for God's Purpose

What are the elements needed to do effective tentmaking?

The authors presents two case studies that give suggestions of elements which have proved helpful and successful as well as outline clear principles for effective tentmaking today.

by Heinz Suter and Marco Gmur

Excerpts from their recent book used by the GCOWE business consultation in South Africa state: "Since the days of the early church, to our contemporary world, God-fearing men and women in trade and business have (like Paul—the apostle and tentmaker) been playing a key role in the advancement of the Kingdom of God. We address two case studies and derive a number of clear principles that flow together into the integral lifestyle of a Christian in business."¹

Christians who have succeeded in business have a spiritual understanding of their work. They were disciplined and diligent workers. Honesty was their trademark, fixed and fair prices were their calling card. Another characteristic was the good quality of their work and products—these people were highly skilled professionals. They were also characterized by social solidarity and a fervent evangelistic zeal. Thus, their community-wide impact was natural, and their political influence a bonus. On the negative side, the issue of motivation emerges as well as the danger of getting "side-tracked". Despite all the controversies of history and the precautions that must be taken, business and trade can today still be a powerful vehicle by which missions can reach "the unreached" in the restricted-access

world. This is the challenge to the church, to Christian business people and to mission organizations around the globe as we stand on the threshold of a new millennium.

PMI Case Study

A small Spanish import-export company, PM International (PMI), has been involved in tentmaking since its official inception in 1984. From the outset, we were charged with investigating, implementing and expanding this facet of the ministry. This came about—typically, as the Lord so often leads—on a sunny day at the entrance hall of a Christian Easter conference in 1989. I, already an associate of PMI, met the owner of Heaven's Import-Export² (HIE). The owner was a Christian businessman with a heart for missions, evangelism, and the advancement of God's kingdom, and with no fear of transcultural work in the Arab world. In fact, since he had lived and traveled extensively in this part of the world prior to his conversion, he was strongly attracted to the whole concept of a company whose missionary-business personnel would penetrate Muslim lands and, at the same time, buy produce and import products in a lucrative fashion. This attraction was deepened by his desire to impact Islamic nations

with the transforming power of the Gospel.

The small family company was founded between 1986 and 1987 with a start-up capital of roughly US \$20,000. It operated in the handicraft wholesale business. The owner would either import articles from various locations or produce them himself. Then he would sell them to shops and to the market vendors in his city of some two million inhabitants. At the time of the joint-venture with PMI, the company was worth around US \$150,000, including a warehouse and a van for distribution. The company employed two or three people.

Today HIE has become, within its particular niche, one of the most competitive importer specialists and distributors of ceramics in Spain. Annual turnover has doubled to US \$300,000. Every two months, a 6-meter container crosses the border containing five thousand items of handmade ceramics which reach the market throughout Spain. The company now has four to five employees, and five representatives. The next step could well be to sell to other European countries.

Ever since 1984, I had traveled extensively in the target country investigating various business opportunities. This enabled HIE to start out