

Published by Biola University School of Business for MBA students and friends

WORD STUDY: AVODAH

A *vodah* (ah'-voh-dah) is a Hebrew word used in the Bible that has two distinct yet intertwined meanings: worship and work. The dual meaning of this ancient word offers powerful wisdom for modern times. Look in the Old Testament, and listen for the word *avodah*, and how it unites the ideas of work, labor, craftsmanship, and production with the ideas of worship, service, and ministry.

- Genesis 2:15
- Genesis 29
- Exodus 34:21
- 1 Chronicles 28:21
- Psalm 104:23
- Exodus 3:12
- Exodus 8:1
- Numbers 8:11
- Deuteronomy 10:12
- Joshua 24:15

What a powerful image to think that the word for working in the fields is the same that was used for worshipping the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Israelites understood that work could be a way to honor God and neighbor, to serve God and neighbor, yes to worship God and serve neighbor. *Avodah*. ◇

Source: The Avodah Institute

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IS BOOTSTRAP BRANDING FOR YOU?

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Companies we associate with brand success—Coca-Cola, McDonalds, Nike—have spent millions of dollars to purchase a place in the hearts and minds of consumers. This leads to the oft-asked questions: How does my company build a viable brand with only a budget of only four, five or six figures? Do I have to go without?

Richard Layton, founder of Transform Communications, says “Not at all!” He provides a three-step process that can be used to develop your own bootstrap-branding journey. Regardless of the amount of dollars available, what is required in any successful branding effort is a thoughtful, sequenced approach. Layton proposes a roadmap that encompasses three phases: *discover* the essence of your brand, take definitive action to *express* it uniquely, and *execute* it strategically in every aspect of your business. A “reality check” between each phase helps ensure the right fit for your organization.

BRAND DISCOVERY PHASE

Start with asking “Who are we and what do we stand for?” Think back to the original inspiration or vision that started it all for you/your company. Consider what your customers most enjoy and value about doing business with you. Distill the essence of what it is they get from your organization that they can’t get from anyone else. You’ll discover your brand precisely where your passion, performance and point-of-difference converge.

Next, generate a “brand essence” document to formally capture key elements such as target markets and respective value propositions, an official company description and any phrases that convey your brand promise in a few memorable words. Finally, use any visual “raw material” (napkin sketches and white-board brainstorm) as a starting point for developing graphic elements of the brand identity.

As a reality check, he suggests you determine whether the brand vision has meaning for line employees, customers, prospects, partners and competitors. Do customers agree with your assessment of the value you provide to them? Do you have a truly distinctive and memorable brand concept? Run the brand essence past a few insightful members of your “kitchen cabinet” to help ensure quality.

BRAND EXPRESSION PHASE

This phase asks “What’s the look and feel we want to convey?” To distill the “look” of your brand—its visual identity—you’ll want to work with

GREAT COMMISSION COMPANIES: A NEW PAR

Editor's Note: In their new book, *Great Commission Companies: The Emerging Role of Business in Missions* (InterVarsity Press, 2003), Biola's own Steve Rundle and Tom Steffen show how globalization is creating new opportunities for Christian entrepreneurs and businesspeople who desire to use their God-given skills to impact the world for Jesus Christ. They offer keen analysis of the principles and practices of these unique and purposeful companies that pursue profits while remaining unabashedly Christian in their purpose. Dr. James F. Engel, coauthor of *Changing the Mind of Missions* says this about the book: "This a remarkable book. [These authors] have demonstrated that income-producing businesses managed by 'kingdom professionals' can play a central, essential role in extending Christ's kingdom worldwide. Rundle and Steffen have plowed much-needed, new ground for all who take the kingdom seriously."

The book is based on five years of studying and visiting for-profit companies that have a missional purpose. Collectively the authors interviewed literally hundreds of men and women working in this context. In addition to interviewing Americans and Western Europeans, they met with lay professionals – or, "kingdom professionals" – from India, China, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia and Eastern Europe who are using their businesses to bring the healing message of the gospel to places that are difficult to reach with traditional missionary strategies.

The following discussion is based on excerpts condensed from their book, which is available anywhere Christian books are sold.

WHAT IS A GREAT COMMISSION COMPANY?

Great Commission Companies (GCCs) are socially responsible, for-profit businesses that are created and managed by kingdom professionals expressly for the purpose of promoting the spread of the gospel in the least developed and least evangelized parts of the world. This is not a book about microenterprise development. As valid as helping poor people start their own small businesses may be, what we are describing is a markedly different approach to economic and spiritual development. This approach borrows a page from something that most governments and economists have recognized for a long time: multinational corporations – properly motivated – can greatly assist the development process by upgrading a country's economic capabilities, contributing to its integration into the global economy and its fight against poverty and other socioeconomic problems.

It also borrows a page from the apostle Paul's mission strategy. While we don't often hear much teaching about this, Paul was a full-time leather worker during much of his missionary career. A study of his letters reveals that working was more than a way of supporting himself; it was a central part of his missionary strategy. Preaching the gospel for free added credibility to his message and served as a model for his converts to follow

(see 1 Cor 9:12-18). "By working for a living, Paul set a pattern of lay witness and ministry by regular, working Christians," notes Dave English of Global Opportunities. He "made it normative for every Christian to make disciples."

Great Commission Companies can have a similar impact. We have found that large, job-creating, tax-paying, export-oriented companies are often more effective than small "mom-and-pop" efforts because they are generally more respected in the community and able to minister in ways that are impossible for individuals or small businesses. Larger companies are also more secure in countries that are hostile to Christian ministries because the cost of expelling such companies increases with its size. Put another way, the local government has more to lose by expelling a large and profitable business than it does a small, struggling, even phony enterprise.

THE BOOK'S THESIS

Some readers who expect this book to be narrowly focused on missions will be struck by the lengthy discussion about globalization. Some have asked, "What does globalization have to do with it?" Simply put, our book takes an expectant and relatively optimistic look at globalization because it is based on one indisputable fact: Globalization did not catch God by surprise, nor is it out of His control. On the contrary, we believe that globalization is a continuation of God's plan, first revealed to Abram, to bless all nations and peoples of the earth (Gen 12:3). Moreover we believe that this redemptive plan, which is the central message of the Bible, is the intended purpose of the whole church, not merely those in professional ministry. Globalization is helping undo the modern dichotomy between spiritual and worldly professions, in part by bringing businesses of all sizes into countries that are in desperate spiritual and economic need. This is creating unprecedented new opportunities for Christian business professionals who desire to use their God-given skills to impact the world for Jesus Christ. In short, we believe there is a different "invisible hand" at work, the hand of Almighty God.

THE BOOK'S AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

This book is for the countless Christian men and women in business who want to do more than watch the game of missions. They want to do more than dole out money to make the game financially viable; they want to be on the playing field. They have served on church committees, they have reflected Christ in their workplaces, they have participated in short-term missions trips, but the unmistakable message they continue to receive is that anything more requires a career change. This is a tough pill to swallow for people who are creative and resourceful by nature, and who quite frankly enjoy the business career. The purpose of this book is to show how it is not only possible today, but also necessary for business professionals – and companies owned by Christians – to become more actively involved in missions.

PARADIGM IN GLOBAL MISSIONS

DIFFERENT APPROACHES, SAME GOALS

There are limitless ways a business can participate in missions, which makes it difficult to find a simple way to categorize Great Commission Companies. We have identified some as “facilitative” because they were created for the express purpose of assisting the work of other, more traditional missions organizations. Others are “pioneers” in the sense that the owners and managers are directly involved in the outreach for which it was created. Some companies are based in highly developed economies like the United States, and others are located in the toughest and most unreached parts of the world. Some form alliances with mission agencies, and others work more-or-less independently. What all the companies have in common is a highly specific purpose and a highly intentional way they go about achieving that purpose. The key is the company’s focus and purpose, not its location. The best strategy (business as well as missions) and location depends on many factors, such as the type of business, the economic and religious climate in the country of interest, the status of the indigenous church in that country and so on.

EXAMPLES

Combining business and missions is not easy, and it creates a tension that does not exist when the activities are pursued separately. But the fact that it is difficult is not a valid reason for not trying. People need to start sharing their stories – their successes as well as failures – so that Christians can become more consistently effective and successful in this area. Here are three examples.

Silk Road Handicraft Company

An example of a pioneering GCC, one that is essentially an independent, self-supporting Christian witness, is the Silk Road Handicraft Company, a multimillion dollar company in Central Asia that employs some three hundred people between its two factories (Chapter 7). The company’s mission is to make money, to build people, and to create eternal value. A maker of handcrafted home furnishings, its product lines are sold in high-end retail stores such as the Expo Design Center, as well as through retail outlets such as Hallmark Stores and the television station QVC. Founded in 1988 the owners’ business backgrounds were not particularly strong, but what they lacked in experience they made up for in prayer, faith and hard work. Today, roughly 90 percent of the company’s employees are Christian, and many friends and family members are also hearing about and accepting Christ. Further, a core group of about two dozen people are now committed to spreading that transforming message throughout their community – a densely populated village plagued by problems stemming from gambling, witchcraft, prostitution, etc. To date, eight churches have been planted, varying in size from twelve to four hundred people.

Pura Vida Coffee

Seattle-based Pura Vida Coffee (Chapter 9) is an example of a facilitative alliance. The company sells branded, fresh-roasted coffee through direct channels such as the Internet and toll-free order lines,

as well as indirectly through church fundraisers and strategic partnerships with established charitable organizations such as World Relief and Habitat for Humanity. With 2003 projected revenues of nearly \$2 million and almost 30 employees, this young fast growing company was founded in 1998 by two former business school classmates expressly for the purpose of being the “funding engine” for Christian ministries that are helping meet the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of at-risk children in Costa Rica and other coffee growing countries. The company is a subsidiary of Pura Vida Partners, a tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation that oversees those outreach programs. In accordance with its bylaws and charter, the company donates 100 percent of its net profit to Pura Vida Partners and other ministries that are not only providing these kids with hot meals, clothing and medical care but also sharing the gospel and helping build self-esteem.

Global Engineering and Management Solutions

Global Engineering and Management Solutions (GEMS; Chapter 10) is an example of a pioneering alliance. Established in 1989, this company provides a broad range of services for companies seeking to invest primarily in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. These services include feasibility studies, site selection, market research, licensing and registration, human resource management, equipment acquisition and importation, and other essential steps toward successfully doing business in a foreign country. GEMS is made up of a multicultural team of kingdom professionals from New Zealand, South America, England and the United States. With projected 2003 revenues of \$10 million, it has thus far helped establish almost twenty factories that collectively employ more than two thousand nationals and generate \$200 million in revenue per year. Many of the factories are located in unreached cities and are themselves managed by teams of kingdom professionals.

CONCLUSION

In today’s globalized economy, Great Commission Companies are uniquely positioned to reach a hurting world. This is because:

- Never has it been so easy to travel and communicate internationally but so difficult to go as a professional missionary.
- Global economic pressures are compelling businesses to develop a more global perspective about their markets and supply chain.
- Jobs provide a dignified means to support one’s family and for Christians to support the work of their local church.
- The workplace provides a real-life setting where values, ideas and biblical principles are exchanged, observed and tested.

How does one prepare for this kind of ministry? First we should note that one reason the book focused more on the people behind the business than the business itself is because we found that, without question, the most important determinant of a GCC’s success and

A NEW PARADIGM IN MISSIONS: **GOING DEEPER**

BOOKS

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USEFUL WEB RESOURCES

Business Professional Network:

www.bpn.org

Centre for Entrepreneurship & Economic Development:

www.ceed-uofn.org

CIA World Factbook:

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>

Connecting Business Men to Christ (CBMC):

www.cbmc.com

Fellowship of Companies for Christ:

www.fcci.org

Global Opportunities:

www.globalopps.org

Intent:

www.intent.org

International Christian Chamber of Commerce:

www.iccc.net

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship's MBA Ministry:

www.intervarsity.org/gfm/mba

Kingdom Business Forum:

www.kingdombusinessforum.org

Scruples:

www.scruples.org ◇

effectiveness is the people. Indeed, some of the most successful GCCs have been started by people with no prior business experience or training. Yet, every one of those exceptional cases agree that if they had it to do over again, they would seek the appropriate business training and experience before embarking on this journey. Indeed, the experience gained in a secular context is often a central part of the equipping process. It should never be viewed as a “necessary evil” but rather as “today’s assignment” by a God who is both using us now and preparing us for future service.

It is encouraging to see that some business programs, like Biola’s, are starting to create degree programs for those specifically interested in reflecting Christ cross culturally. Likewise, some seminaries and schools of world mission – like those at Fuller, Gordon-Conwell and Regent College – are beginning to offer seminars, conferences and certificate programs that focus on the role of business in the mission of the church. We expect these trends to continue because globalization is causing business to become an increasingly important part of the mission of the church. GCCs represent a return to a much older paradigm, one that places laypeople who are living out their faith in a secular workplace environment squarely in the middle of the missionary enterprise. ◇

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ORDER YOUR COPY OF:
***Great Commission Companies:
The Emerging Role of
Business in Missions***
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www.amazon.com

ON THE MOVE

Larry D. Strand

Dean of the School of Business

Greetings for the New Year! My view of the past year is influenced by how rapidly January – December transpired. Or perhaps that is a reflection of my lack of taking enough time to meditate and purposely slow down. We do express our thanks to God for His work accomplished in the School of Business in 2003.

One of the welcome challenges we have faced is the rapid growth (65% in the last 5 years) in our undergraduate program. This is the case for most programs at Biola and we do not foresee any change in the growth cycle for several years. Our new MBA program faces a different set of challenges. We are competing with 38 institutions in the Southern California area that offer MBAs. We have built the program to fit the Biola professional school model of professional accreditation, strong biblical integration, a spiritual formation component, and our unique mentor program. We know of no such commitment in any other MBA program with one-on-one mentoring by Christian business professionals in key decision-making roles in the marketplace.

We ask for your support in communicating our MBA program to your network, as word of mouth is clearly an important influence to prospective students. The spring months of February through May are critical for prospective students to begin and complete their search and application process. For information please contact our MBA Administrator Kathlene Pedrick at mba@biola.edu or 562-777-4015.

One of the Business School's current marketing efforts is to bring a new awareness to the concept "business is ministry." This has been a focus for the past 30 years in our undergraduate program and now we have an opportunity to add the same focus in the MBA program. This issue of *The Mentor* highlights the research and scholarship of our economics professor Dr. Steve Rundle in his newly published book *Great Commission Companies*, with his joint author Dr. Tom Steffen of Biola's School of Intercultural Studies. Published by InterVarsity Press, it was introduced at the Urbana Conference in December. Steve and I were privileged to attend the conference along with 16,000 college students and another 2,000 faculty and missions personnel. What an honor for Dr. Rundle and for the Biola School of Business! This is another reinforcement of the paradigm of "business as mission." Both Dr. Rundle and Dr. Steffen are at the forefront of this new model for missions.

We pray that 2004 will be a blessing to you and your family as you bring salt and light to your area of ministry in business. Be encouraged with affirmation of your calling with the biblical word *avodah*. ◇

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BOOTSTRAP BRANDING continued

qualified creative professionals in corporate image/graphic design. You can save time and money, however, by gathering visual samples from competitors and other companies whose branding appeals to you. Having a few parameters in mind is preferable to starting with a blank piece of paper, and is considerably more cost effective.

This phase requires trademark search/filing (if needed), a company logo, official tag line and business identity system, a firm sense of company reputation, and any indicated revisions for strengthening the brand concept.

To provide a reality check, ask questions such as "Will the visual elements of our brand stand out in a crowd?" "Does the look-and-feel comfortably reflect our company's personality?" and "Are we stepping on any other brand toes?" Here again, feedback from insightful members of the "kitchen cabinet" or an informal focus group can help. Use caution, however, in managing the size of the approval loop.

BRAND EXECUTION PHASE

The final phase asks the big question: "How do we get our brand off the drawing board?" You've got the look, but the "feel" is something you must create on your own. It's the **total experience** of your company: the way phones are answered, how products and services are delivered, your approach to the sales process, the style of communication, the value placed on people. All these "expressions of your brand" build on the work in phases 1 & 2, and they are just as vital, if not more so, than your brand's graphic packaging. Also important is ensuring "brand discipline" for advertising, marketing, website and other media/channels.

Layton notes that if you and your team devote quality time and rigorous attention to solidifying this "roadmap framework" you'll have bootstrapped your brand to a level that some firms spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to reach. The caveats here are clarity, conviction and compelling execution. Try to avoid "branding-by-committee" which may be potentially more problematic than no branding at all.

He concludes that to be effective, products, services and technologies that provide outstanding value to customers over the long term must back your brand. Regardless how much money is spent, branding at its best is a discipline practiced consistently in every aspect of your business. The journey begins here:

*To change the way other people think
about your company, change first the way
your company thinks about itself. ◇*

Richard Layton is the founder of Transform Communications, a consulting practice dedicated to *Cutting the Cost of Confusion™*.
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"GO TO" RESOURCES

This space will provide website, article, and book reviews to help build the character necessary for the ministry for which you are called. If you come across a resource you think is worth sharing, please let us know (mentor@biola.edu).

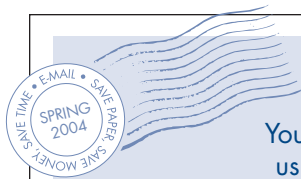
The Avodah Institute www.avodahinstitute.com

Begun in 1999 the Avodah Institute is interested in helping people integrate their faith in all aspects of business and professional life. Its purpose is to help meet the spiritual needs of people in the marketplace, with a mission to help leaders integrate the claims of their faith with the demands of their work. This mission is underpinned by the belief that God can and should be a central part of every sphere of life, including business. The Institute helps people discover meaning, significance, and spirituality in their work lives, and aims to equip and encourage people to reframe, integrate, and apply their faith in practical and effective ways to meet the challenges and opportunities of the business world.

The Avodah Institute recognizes a disconnection between faith and work, the so-called "worship-work" gap. What one hears in weekend worship bears little resemblance to weekday work realities. Business and religion often seem to speak different languages. The primary focus is to equip and encourage leaders to:

- *translate faith* from intellectual understanding into action, in work and all spheres of life,
- *integrate faith* into the challenges and opportunities of the workplace in practical and effective ways, where faith becomes a source of ethical guidance to steer individual and group behavior,
- *employ faith* as a source of spiritual nurture to discover meaning, purpose, and significance in successes and failures at work, where faith teaches the responsibility to treat people as the subject of work, not the object of work,
- *live out faith* in word and deed, as a follower of the One who is worthy of worship.

The site provides a number of resources (e.g., book suggestions, links) and a short video, as well as a discussion on integrating faith & work. ◇



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