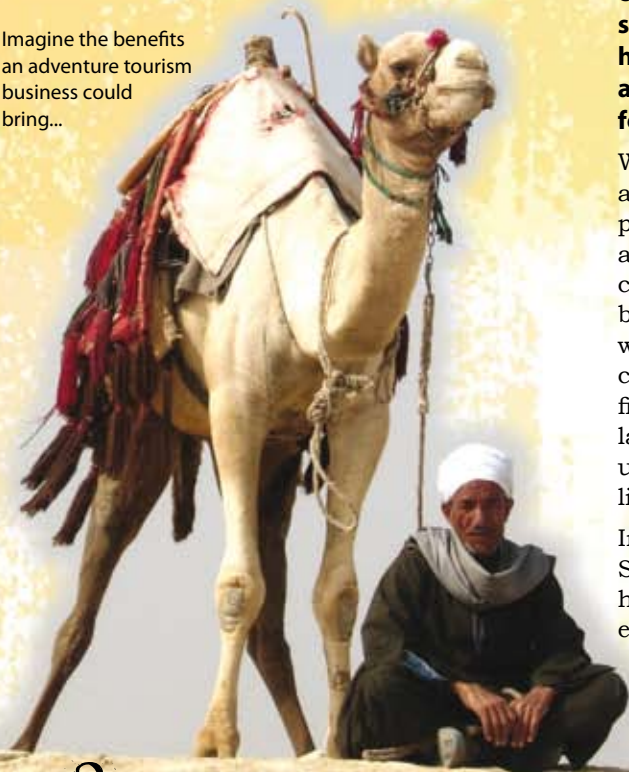


Imagine...

the Amazing Possibilities

Imagine the benefits an adventure tourism business could bring...



Imagine an impoverished Central Asian country. Extended-family households scattered across the mountainous terrain have virtually no men present because they are all across the border in Russia, looking for work to provide for those left behind.

While away, however, these men become addicted to alcohol, frequent houses of prostitution (where they catch HIV/AIDS as a bonus), and burn up their hard-earned cash instead of sending it home. How to begin tackling such a huge problem? Well, what about starting an adventure tourism company that will provide employment to fifty or more households and give dignified labour to repatriated husbands, fathers, uncles and sons, while modelling a godly lifestyle and a message of hope?

Imagine one of the neediest countries in Southeast Asia. Food crops yield poor harvests, and many eke out a meagre existence living hand to mouth as they have done for generations. Think about the possibilities for good from establishing an agribusiness to provide training and

enhanced income to a thousand farmers – and add to that the food security for five to ten times that number, all without handouts, charity or other dependency-creating approaches. And, the exciting potential for a steady and far-reaching response to the message of the gospel, shared by local Christians involved in the business.

Imagine a neglected and run down nation in the Middle East. Commonly held perceptions of foreigners are tinged by a deep (and sometimes justifiably earned) strain of xenophobia, yet the ability to speak English is ‘the ticket’ out of poverty, and into future job opportunities. There is no officially recognised church, but there is a for-profit language institute owned and run by expatriate followers of Jesus. Day in and day out, locals begin to discover in their workplace (in a non-threatening manner) what the good news of Jesus looks and feels like, as these strangers prove to be trustworthy, friendly and loving, while paying their bills, keeping their appointments, honouring their word, and modelling a different standard of work.

These are just some of the amazing possibilities illustrating a major, global movement of God’s Spirit referred to as “Business as Mission”, or BAM.

The church has often been suspicious of profit-making business. Christians have reacted against the colonialism of the past which often used mission activity

to assist commercial expansion. More recently, concerned at the apparent failure of globalization to equitably deliver on its promises, they have watched in dismay at the exploitation of the poor by unethical multinational corporations.

Unfortunately this overlooks the fact that there are large numbers of ethically-run businesses led by godly women and men, to the great benefit of many individuals and whole communities. Business can, and should be ethical, and demonstrate the truth of the Christian faith in genuine love for God and neighbour.

Businesses are an essential and indispensable part of society. And they will continue to be, whether Christians participate in them or not – so why should they not be part of Christian missional activity? The redemptive power of the gospel influencing every part of society like salt and light - including the business sector - is intrinsic to the very nature of our ministry as followers of Christ. Business does not just serve the goals of ministry – it *is* ministry!

We in Interserve believe that facilitating Christians in business is part of God's plan for world mission today, and are engaged in strategic initiatives to enable us to respond to this challenge. Among the many reasons for this conviction are the following:

- Providing capital to neglected markets, and creating meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities,

is a demonstration of human kindness grounded in the just and creative character of God. The prophetic admonition to love justice, do kindness, and walk humbly with our God is a foundational plank for our practice of Business as Mission.

- Modelling successful business grounded in God's truth is a tangible witness to the transforming character of the gospel: we live in a cynical age in which the "power of God unto salvation", the good news of Jesus Christ, must be demonstrated for its proclamation to be believed.
- Increasingly the 'ecclesia', the people of God, are to be found on the shop floor, in factories, and in other work settings, especially so in countries where suspicion and hostility to the gospel is strong, and where the building of official places for Christian worship has no government sanction or protection.
- Some of the most natural and credible opportunities to evangelise – to "gossip the gospel" – and to disciple men and women are amongst the employees, suppliers and customers of businesses led and participated in by committed Christians.

In summary, we are committed to Business as Mission in a dignified, credible, and sensitive manner so that the church of Christ might be established and strengthened for His glory. ☺



Imagine the benefits an agribusiness could bring...

The author has been involved in global mission for 35 years. He leads a global investment fund providing financial capital, mentoring services, and human resources to small to medium size companies in the Arab world and Asia. Please contact the Interserve office for more information.