

# Consider Tentmaking in Spite of its Challenges

*Ministry Intent, Integration Issues, and Importance*

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## Workshop Abstract and Purpose

We live in an important time with new challenges for the advance of the Gospel. Tentmaking is a time-proven and biblical tool, adopted by the Apostle Paul, the first missionary to integrate secular work and ministry. At this workshop, we will explore both the practical reasons and emerging “strategic reasons” to become a tentmaker:

- Practical, or tactical as providing needed financial support and cultural immersion
- “Strategic” as a robust platform for on-going “cross-cultural evangelism” through redemptive relationships leading to entrenched church plants

This workshop is a practical-interactive workshop to answer your questions about Tentmaking. Many today are considering Tentmaking, especially as God is calling us to evangelize and plant churches in restricted countries. We share the results of our recent Internet survey, as we want to first understand your questions and perspectives towards Tentmaking. We interviewed established and new tentmakers, researched key topics relative to the issues that tentmakers face and provide pointers to on-going sources of help. Our goal is that you will come away with a deeper understanding of Tentmaking, that is, of the ministry intent, the secular work environment and ministry integration challenges. We provide an answer to the question why Tentmaking, that you as senders and future missionaries can prayerfully consider.

## Workshop Outline

- 1) Sources of information
  - a) Internet survey of SGI participants
  - b) Interviews of workers in NA field
  - c) Various books
  - d) Follow-up discussions with workers
  - e) My work and business experiences
- 2) Defining Tentmaking
  - a) Scriptural examples and guidance

b) Traditional form and today's unique challenges

c) "Great Commission" Companies

3) Importance of Tentmaking

a) Mission intent and vision

b) Benefits and challenges

4) The How of Tentmaking

a) Paul's' example

b) Today's examples

5) Tentmaking Challenges and Issues

a) Integration of work and ministry

b) Marketable skills

c) Church support and accountability

d) Problems of culture/language, identity and security

6) Planning and preparing for Tentmaking

a) The Ministry plan

b) Training, employment and your work identity

c) Business creation

d) An integrated plan with reasonable expectations

## Recommended Resources

### Books on Tentmaking and Cross-Cultural Issues

- Gannon, Martin J. *Understanding Global Cultures: Metaphorical Journeys Through 23 Nations*. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 2000.  
Why read: probably not the most scientific method to use metaphors to understand culture, but I have found very helpful
- Hall, Edward T. *Beyond Culture*. New York: Anchor Books, 1976.  
Why read: not an easy read, but a worthwhile read in helping you understand culture and abstract concepts like hidden culture
- Lai, Patrick. *Tentmaking: The Life and Work Of Business As Missions*. Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Media, 2005.  
Why read: an excellent book based on interviews and personal experiences of the author.
- McCall, Morgan W. Jr. and George P. Hollenbeck. *Developing Global Executives*. Watertown, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2002.  
Why read: What it means to work and lead cross-cultures
- Meredth, Robyn. *The Elephant And The Dragon: The Rise of India and China and What it Means for All of Us*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007.  
Why read: an early book on the rise of India and China
- Rundle, Steve and Tom Steffen. *Great Commission Companies*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.  
Why read: a book that provides some insight into business as a platform for ministry
- Yamamori, Tesunao and Kenneth Eldred. *Kingdom Business, Transforming Missions Through Entrepreneurial Strategies*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003.  
Note: a good book, but I prefer Patrick Lai's book Tentmaking as the book to read 1<sup>st</sup>

### Books on business, a reading list to learn more about working in, starting and running a business

- Collins, Jim. *Good to Great*. New York: Harper Business, 2001.  
Why read: the best book to help you appreciate what is a great company
- Creating a Business Plan (Pocket Mentor)*. Watertown, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2007.  
Why read: detailed guidance for writing a business plan. Note there are many business plan templates on the web, this book is instructional.
- Drucker, Peter F. *Management*. Revised Edition. New York: Harper Business, 2008.  
Why read: a global viewpoint, ethical and enlightened – specifically read the chapters 6 and 7 what is a business. Can't go wrong by reading Drucker.
- Friedman, Thomas. *The World is Flat*. Trade Paperback Edition. New York: Picador, 2007.  
Why read: Probably the best book written about what are globalization and the impact on work.

Hayzlett, Jeffrey. *The Mirror Test, Is Your Business Really Breathing*. New York: Business Plus, 2010.

Why read: A must read on how to start and promote a business

Kernen, Joe. *Your Teacher Said What?: Defending Our Kids from the Liberal Assault on Capitalism*.

Why read: recommending this book betrays a bias that capitalism is good, must read Ducker's book too.

Author is a CNBC host and unashamed Capitalist.

Silbiger, Steven A. *The Ten Day MBA*. Third Edition. New York: Harper Business, 2005.

Why read: the title is misleading you will not be "mastering the skills taught in America's top business schools in 10 days", but rather appreciating and knowing what those skills are

## A Personal Viewpoint

*Being successful in your work life or in starting a thriving new business requires more than reading books on the subject. We need time, mentoring, and a diverse and complimentary set of skills. A complete set of experiences - learning from failures (count on it) and encouraging successes - are needed, rather than book learning or coursework. It sure doesn't hurt to be well "read" to learn what you should know.*

What are the *work experiences (and skills) that we need*, and often talked about in the books recommended above?

**First, we need to become best possible employee – motivated, team players, trained and highly skilled.** Scripture teaches us the spiritual, ethical and correct attitudes of work, but is largely silent on many aspects of work. Therefore, we should be diligent to seek out the right work experiences and training. Work is not just described as an activity to get money (albeit important) but viewed as a rewarding and fruitful calling.

**Second, valuable work experiences (and marketable skills) can be obtained as part of a small start-up or a large established business.** Both train you and develop you, but in different ways! A small company environment provides opportunities to act as managers and by necessity cause us to take on broad responsibilities as employees, becoming actually managers. But, a large business has the resources to provide you on the job training and specialized training. The point is you must learn, not just be a "laborer", or have on your resume, "I worked construction or retail". This doesn't cut it, unless you can say honestly on your resume, you led a small construction crew or received extensive sales training.

Many of us who have been part of an athletic team understand how individual skills and teamwork compliment and led to success. Many books have leveraged the business as a sport team analogy – build your strength/skills, but be a team player! Our work (and ministry!) experiences should develop marketable skills and demonstrate that we can work effectively with people to a common goal.

**Third and last point, many may eventually start their own business and become job creators.** As the book Good to Great tells us the result of business success can be something lasting and important. The tentmaker books, such as "Great Commission Companies", cite examples where business can lead to a robust and lasting platform for missions. Business creation and the resultant job making in "majority countries" is viewed by the world as a high calling, but can be the means to the highest calling as a lasting and sustainable mission's platform!

***Dave**, a retired engineer with Ford Motor Company, serves as a consultant and analyst in the field of automotive technologies. He launched his consulting business, McNamara Technology Solutions, in 2006. Dave has also offered consultation to Christian universities and tentmaking workers regarding their organizational structure and business strategy. Dave and his wife, Nancy, reside near Ann Arbor, MI, and have two sons, a daughter-in-law, and a grandson.*