BUSINESS *for* TRANSFORMATION

GETTING STARTED

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Business for Transformation: Getting Started
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Chapter 1

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF B4T!

Welcome to the *B4T world.* The business for transformation world cannot be seen, but it can be felt; it cannot be touched, but it can make you sweat or give you chills. It originates from God's Spirit, so it is overpoweringly strong, yet it leaves your knees feeling weak. It draws scores of people to yourself, yet you feel alone. It is a place full of exploding energy, overflowing with wonderful (some say crazy) ideas. When starting out, you feel an overwhelming frustration intermixed with wild excitement. The B4T world is not a place to fear or flee from. Your feelings are normal. That's right, *normal.* No need to call a shrink. The Master Builder has called you into this world, and He will sustain and guide you.

There are schools where you can study the B4T world, but you cannot master it. Once you enter the B4T world, instead of encouragement, friends are likely to tell you, "That will never work," and ask, "How are you going to make money from that?" Your spouse will probably become a critic too, fearing he or she is going to lose all you own, or that you have gone totally insane. It is the "No one believes in what I am doing except for me" zone. Nonetheless, listen to God's voice. Do not succumb to the naysayers. Stand firm; stay the course. Leave the old wineskins for the old wine. Step forward and keep moving. Today is the day you identify who you are. The answer to many of your questions, and the steps you need to take, may be found in this book. As you chart a course that will lead you into your B4T life and work, utilize this book as a tool to enhance your ability to glorify Jesus in a place where few have done so before. You will find the answers if you take the time and keep your courage centered on Him.

Jesus said, "*Truly, I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*"[1] I don't know who said, "*Dream like a child, decide as an adult,*" but it fits the B4T

[1] Matthew 18:3

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world. The B4Ter needs to be free to dream like a child. As you set out into the world of B4T, look at the world through a child's eyes and see the possibilities. Just as a child does shamelessly and frequently, do not hesitate to ask for help. Never delay, never fear for even one second to humbly admit, "*I don't know how to do this.*" Like a child, *do* ask for help. Then decide as an adult. Take the data, ideas, and information you are given in this book, and with Jesus' Spirit, prayerfully use your intuition, experience, and knowledge to decide on the next action steps. Tapping into the possibilities and taking action energizes you to move forward and accomplish your goals.

What is the first thing you can do today to make your B4T business become a reality? What is the next step after that? This is important for maintaining the balance between your dream and your reality, especially when the rest of the world isn't wholly supportive. Pray. Keep close to the Master Builder. Never let the dreamer inside you become too quiet, and always remember when to let the adult take over. The adult seeks advice and wisdom on how to get from here to there.

You will find like-minded peers and elders in the OPEN Network. Connect with them via their website: *www.OPENNetworkers.net.* If you are overseas already, you can find coaches and mentors there. They can provide you with interns and apprentices, too. If you are preparing to go overseas or are a church leader involved in sending new workers, then contact *www.NEXUSB4T.com.* NexusB4T will connect you with people who can assist you with the ideas you read about in this book. And if you are looking to do an internship or apprentice somewhere, they can also help with that.

Utilize the tools in this book. B4T softens the soil for His seed. It will also soften your own heart. But it will require work. Be diligent to continually strive to expand your knowledge by cross-referencing answers with the resources around you. Pray. Interact with other B4Ters in your field; learn from them and then avoid their mistakes. Keep the possibilities alive and your B4T life and work moving forward. Pray.

The Master has enabled my wife and me to live and work in the B4T world for over twenty years. During this time, we have started fourteen businesses—six of which have failed, and four just limped along for years till being closed. By grace, we have learned much through our failures, and hopefully you can learn from them too. This book is an accumulation of experiences and stories, successes and failures, of the nearly seven hundred members of the OPEN Network, plus our own. This book is written especially to the young men and women who are striving to start

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businesses where there are few to no churches, so that the glory of Jesus may be proclaimed among all people.

Living in the B4T world is not your choice—the Master sent you here. (If He has not sent you here, then put this book down immediately and run!) You already realize doing B4T is not about what you can get, but rather what you can give. You are beginning to live your life from true intent—that burning feeling He has placed in your heart. B4T is very hard work, but there is nothing more powerful and nothing more exciting than doing business and reaching people with the Master. There will be challenges. There will be moments of exhaustion. There will be times of feeling completely overwhelmed with everything presently going on and everything that has yet to be achieved. Whenever that moment arrives, you will know because your stomach does a sideways flip and your brain tank goes to empty. But never fear, we have been there too. *It is okay.* At such times, give a like-minded brother or sister a call. Pray. And remember, "*Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*"[2]

Not only that, but "*we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*"[3]

Remember God has not called you into B4T for the sake of the lost, but for His sake. He is much more concerned about the worker than He is with the work. The assignment of doing B4T is a heart-changing assignment—it changes our own hearts, as well as others.

Becoming a B4Ter is a journey of a thousand little steps. You will need desire, dreams, recognition of opportunities, seriousness about the opportunity, responsibility, an expectation of loneliness and fear and second guessing, serious study of the situation, a business plan, adequate capital, advice from experienced people, the drive to follow through, a positive attitude, and a will to empower others. Laying out these steps is easy and is what you will learn as you continue to read this book; following through—that is the hard part.

Persevere. Stay present and focused on the one step you can take right here, right now. A business is a natural crossroads where God's and Satan's worlds collide. The temptations, turmoil, troubles, and time invested

[2] James 1:12

[3] Romans 5:3–5

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will test even the strongest person. God will use your B4T experience to teach you more about yourself than you ever imagined was inside you. The question is: are you ready to see yourself for who you are? Caleb, in India, told me, "*I thought I was a mature Christian. I had been a pastor and discipled men, but running a business here has forced me to face issues about myself I am not sure I want to face, yet I know God brought me here to face them.*" B4T is not just God's tool for reaching the unreached; it is also His tool for reaching, renewing, and revealing a reality about yourself. Transformation does not begin with transforming the lives of the unreached—it begins with transforming ourselves.

Jesus and Jobs—Priority #1

Sali is a Muslim man who lives in Dakar, Senegal. I was in Dakar for a week doing some consulting work with a nongovernmental organization (NGO). The NGO director put me up in a guest house in the European/Western part of the city. While looking for a taxi, Sali was the only driver in a long queue of taxis parked near the guest house who spoke English. Everyone else spoke French or Wolof, the native language. Consequently, I rode with Sali every day, and as we drove we became better acquainted with one another.

I learned that Sali grew up in a poor village in the eastern part of the country and came to Dakar to find a better life. After putting himself through the university, he met his wife and they had two daughters. While his wife worked, he earned a master's degree in business arts (MBA). Surprised, I asked Sali why he was driving a taxi if he had an MBA. He replied, "*Sir, there are no jobs and I have two little girls. They both like to eat, so to keep them fed, I drive a taxi.*"

The very next day, I was with the director of the NGO and we summoned Sali to take us to a restaurant. During a lull in the conversation, I said to Sali, "*My friend here has a charity organization, an NGO that works in your country with your people. They provide clean water and medicine. They set up clinics and schools. They provide food for refugees out east, where you come from. As a businessperson, I want to invest in one of these projects. Sali, you know what your people need. Which project would you say is the greatest need of your people? You choose and I'll give to that project.*"

Sali paused, made eye contact with me in the rearview mirror, and then said, "*Don't waste your money on any of them.*"

Surprised I queried, "*Well Sali, then what do you think I should invest in? Building homes?*"

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"*No.*"

"*Well, what do you think the NGO should be doing? Should they go home?*"

"*No,*" Sali answered, "*They should be creating jobs.*"

"*Why jobs?*"

Sali replied, "*You asked me what we need. What we need are jobs. If the NGO creates jobs for us, then we can decide if we need water or medicine or education. If they create jobs, then we can be in control of what we need, rather than having you imperialist Americans telling us what we need.*"

Stop and contemplate Sali's words. Who is going to be more receptive to the gospel? I have had similar conversations with perhaps a dozen nationals in a dozen different countries. What is the greatest physical need of people? Spiritually they need Jesus, but physically what is their deepest need? Food, water, education—or respect? I would argue that respect is a greater need. When you give a person respect, she in turn respects you. A job is the most fundamental nonspiritual need of a human being. With a job comes food, water, medicine, and education. With a job comes an identity, value, and an acceptance in the community.

If we come to a city and tell the people what their needs are, then provide the goods to meet the needs of those people, does that give respect? Nobody likes to be a charity case. What if we instead went in to serve the people by creating opportunities for them, so they can provide for their families and determine for themselves what their needs are?

We have seen time after time in many different countries that Muslims are persecuted when they come to faith, but if the new believer is the primary breadwinner for that family or a community of families, they are not persecuted. Like a steady income, adding a tangible value to a family trumps religious zeal four out of five times. In addition, there is a very different attitude towards someone who is feeding their own family versus an outsider who is doing the same.

I have come to the conclusion that after receiving Christ, the greatest need of a human being is a job. Yes, there are starving people who do not have food and water and therefore lack the strength to work, but that number is steadily shrinking. If you have ever been unemployed, you understand the value of having a job. A job provides more than money: it provides dignity and gives a person a role and value in their family and the community. A job provides an identity, giving people a way to explain to friends and others what they contribute to the world. A job provides self-esteem and honor, especially from others who work jobs that are deemed to be of lower status.

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