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ECONOMICS

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+ LEADERS WHO LEAVE THE  
PULPIT TO MAXIMIZE IMPACT

WIL LAKE  
+ HOW OUR CHURCH IS  
HELPING BUSINESS

SEPTEMBER // OCTOBER 2015

# MinistryToday

EQUIPPING CHRISTIAN LEADERS TO GROW

## Marketplace AND THE Church

Fulfilling the Church's Role  
in Supporting Business Leaders



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# Marketplace & the Church 18

*The church has a key role to play in supporting business leaders—but many pastors don't realize it. Helen Mitchell, director of the Talbot Center for Faith, Work and Economics and co-founder of Saddleback@Work, employs her executive and pastoral experience to guide church leaders in their faith-at-work ministry.*

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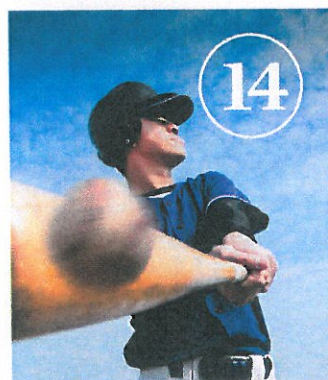
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# Serving Marketplace Leaders

Your church can fulfill an important role  
by supporting businesses

BY HELEN M. MITCHELL

**D**riving across town on that sunny Southern California day, my mind wandered to our monthly Business Connection event scheduled at church that night. Generally, I look forward to our monthly gathering of small business leaders, owners and entrepreneurs, but not this night. I wasn't thinking about praying for these small business leaders and their companies or the high-energy networking and sharing they would engage in or what our main speaker would share. I was thinking about how to get it all done in the few hours left in the day and whom I needed to call.

I had just found out that many of my core volunteers were not available, and I was left to figure out how to make an event happen for 100 people. To make things even more complicated, we had technology challenges in our marketing and communication. Our typical three-week schedule for communication had been reduced to a week, relying heavily on emails, social media, word-of-mouth—and prayer. Since we hadn't met the previous two months and lacked strong speakers the two months before that, we'd lost momentum.

And I was beginning to lose my momentum too. Were we really making a difference? Is this still what small business leaders were looking for from their local church?

Turning off the main road, my thoughts drifted to personal matters. I was leaving for the airport at 5:00 the next morning, and I still had not packed or prepared for my business trip. It was going to be a long night. The bright California sun and the beginning of summer did nothing to alleviate the weight and pressures of life that accompanied me in the car that afternoon.

In the four years I have been leading the Business Connection at Saddleback Church, thousands of people have come for the purpose of connecting to people, connecting to business and connecting to their work purpose. In spite of the fruitfulness, the value, new business development and the ministry, in that moment I wanted to quit. I have been told that rarely is there a pastor who doesn't want to quit at least once a month—and often every Monday morning!

Unable to clearly discern God's will and direction, two questions came to mind: 1) Should the church continue

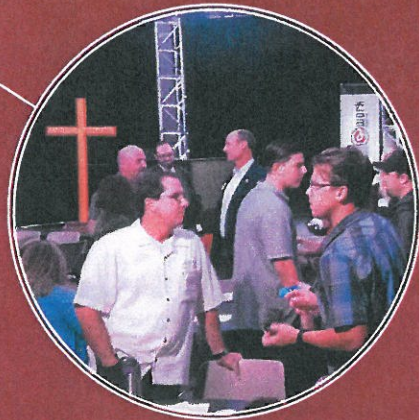
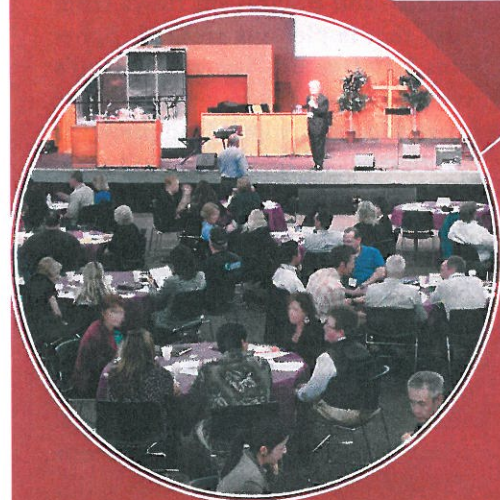
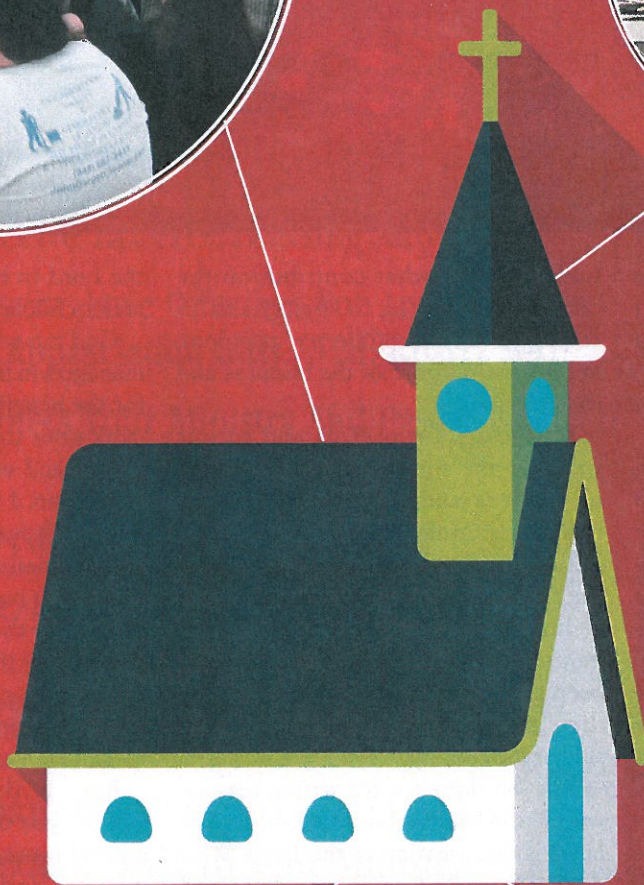
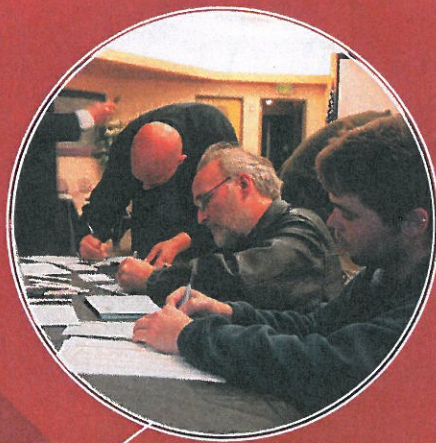
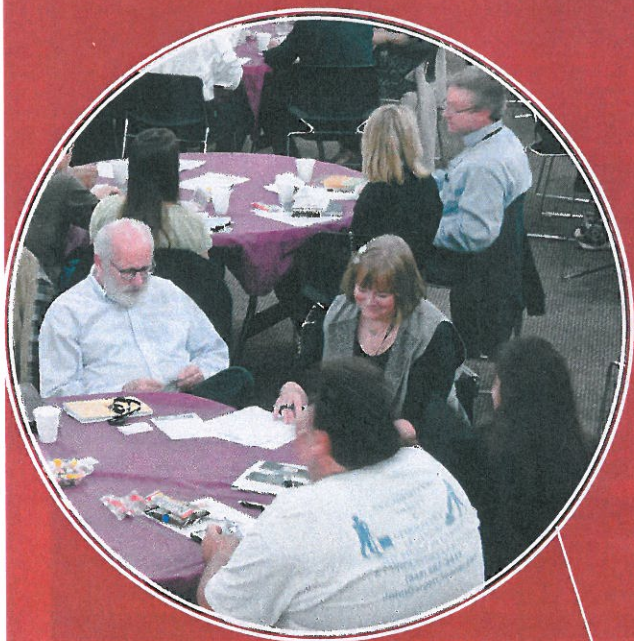
with the monthly Business Connection event? and 2) Was I to continue to lead it if we did? Was it time for a big change?

At the end of the event that evening, John, a regular participant, approached me. He'd casually told me in the past that the hour's drive was not too much for the value he gained in listening to inspiring and knowledgeable speakers and to clarify where God was in the midst of his business. This night, however, he was a man on a mission and not at all casual in expressing the value that he and other small business leaders gained. He was direct and strong with his words. It was as if he knew what I needed to hear. "Don't stop meeting," he said. "We need this."

Either God was really making a point about the need to meet and minister to small business owners or He didn't want me to miss the answer to my first question—or perhaps both.

It also turned out we had an abundance of help that night, so I was able to leave earlier than usual, as I was eager to get home and on with my packing. Before I left that evening, I walked up to thank our speaker one last time and realized a quick exit was not to be. Another attendee who had been talking with our









The monthly Business Connection event aims to build competency, character and community among its members.

speaker commented on how passionate he thought I was for these folks and that I obviously was the right person to lead this group. I had just met this guy!

### An Unknown Need

In my journey with workplace ministries, I have learned that there is both a need and a huge opportunity for the church to make a difference in the business community—but most pastors are not aware of it.

Most of the pastors and seminary students I've spoken with through the years have not considered how or why they should support the business leaders in their church. Central to the church's role in supporting businesses are questions like these: Is work good and a gift of God? Are only certain types of work pleasing and acceptable to the Lord? Which jobs are considered doing God's work? Words like profit, competition, money and business can elicit negative connotations for some. Today's anti-capitalist news headlines seem to reinforce stereotypes.

Others may view businesses simply as sources of funding for the local church or their employees as a mission field ripe for evangelism. While in some cases those descriptions may be accurate, it's important to remember that a business is a combination of the organization and the people who work in it. If we

want to know what contribution the company is making to society and to employees' quality of life, we must look at both the purpose of the business and its leadership.

Businesses themselves add to our world by the contribution of products or services and the employment of individuals. In the case of medical technology, for instance, improvements in the field have brought life-saving procedures and much-needed relief from pain. A smartphone and a computer keep grandma connected with her children and grandchildren on the other side of the country.

Any job done for the wrong reasons with sinful motivations and an impure heart is not pleasing to the Lord. Who does the work, how it gets done and for what reasons reflect the state of the leader's heart.

The pastor plays an important role in serving business leaders. Ephesians 4:11-13 expands the pastor's role by instructing God's representatives to equip the saints for the work of ministry. The word "works" in this passage is the Greek word *ergon*, which can mean business, employment, task, product developed or anything accomplished by hand, art or industry. Part of the pastoral job description then is to help God's people find the right job and to do their work with excellence as unto

the Lord to benefit the common good and for human flourishing.

God intends for His people to be His managers in the world for His glory and for the benefit of others. God ordained work prior to the entrance of sin in the world, and work in itself has intrinsic value (Gen. 1:23-28; 2:15).

Almost every pastor I know can tell you that defining moment when he felt called into pastoral ministry. These pastors knew their work reflected God's purpose for their life. They were to lead His people, grow them to be more like Christ and prepare them for a ministry and mission in the world.

Rare is the business leader who will tell you that he was created to run a good business and that his worship, ministry and evangelism flows from work that is pleasing to God. Ephesians 2:10 tells us, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, so that we should walk in them." Again we find that the word "works" is *ergon*, the same used in Ephesians 4. God planned long ago for some people to run a good and profitable business and to develop a good product or service. These leaders are to have a ministry inside and outside the local church and a mission in the world.

The pastor plays an important and influential role for business leaders. Faith,



work and economics are fundamental to our gospel mission and creation mandate.

As the pastor points the business leader to a fuller understanding of his purpose and influence in the world, his focus will expand beyond the local church to becoming more globally minded.

As the pastor guides the leader in practically connecting faith to daily work, the leader will become more missionally driven in his business and more Spirit-driven in his leadership.

As the pastor guides the business leader in discerning where God is in his business, the leader will collaborate as God's business partner to meet unmet needs, bring new solutions and influence people.

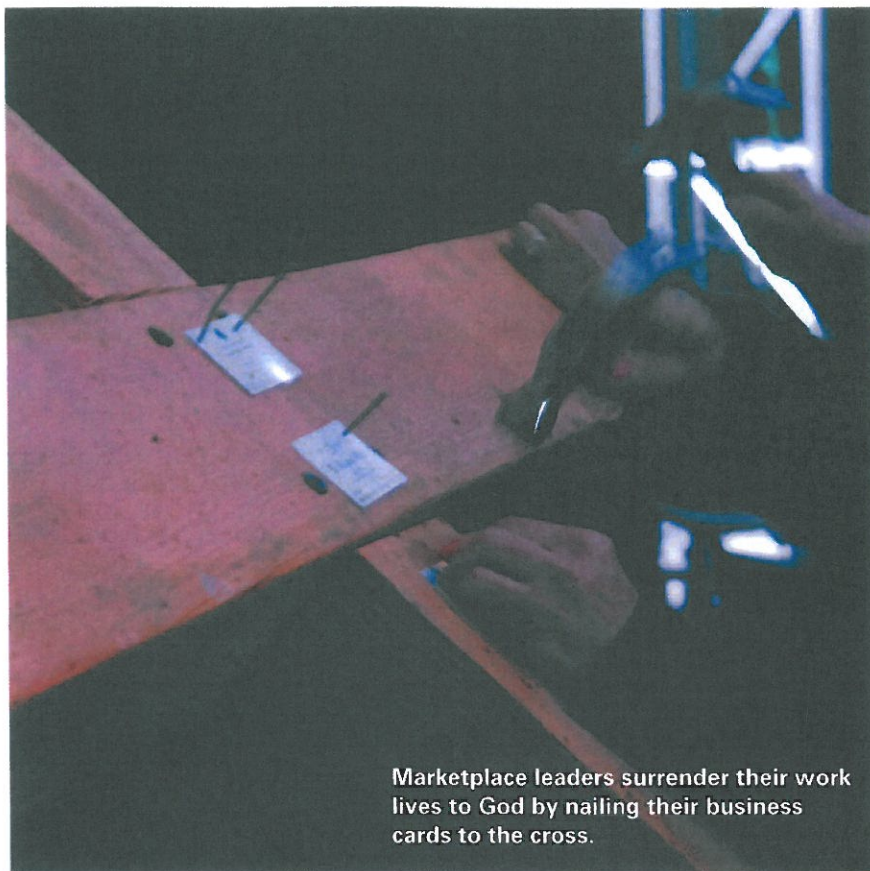
As the pastor leads the business leader to connect with other like-minded leaders, they will find community and a sharing of ideas and spiritual growth in their work life. For example, at our monthly Business Connection event, we are building competency, character and community among the members. We are investing in their vocational, spiritual and personal development.

The business leader is not looking for his pastor to help him run his business more profitably, implement manufacturing improvements or make that personnel decision. The business leader is looking for his pastor to be his pastor in all areas of their life, including his work life.

Leaders want their pastors to pray for them and their business. They want to be seen, known and understood for what they do. Pastors need to acknowledge the contribution that the leader's business makes to society, and affirm the leader's calling, value, worth and dignity as a business leader. Business leaders want to be valued for what they can provide in the local church with their unique skills and training.

Invite them to speak into technology, communication, finance and other aspects of running the church. Unless the CEO has a real desire to work in the nursery, his service likely will be better invested in matters that match his skill set, giftings, experience and passion.

Business leaders want their pastor to unpack biblical truths with excellence



Marketplace leaders surrender their work lives to God by nailing their business cards to the cross.

and help them understand. They want to be refreshed, uplifted and encouraged. After a week of being beat up by customers, suppliers and investors, they need to be refueled and sent back out into the world.

### No 'Right Way'

There is no single model or one right way for the local church to support businesses. At our church, we have a directory of the businesses represented in our church that is available to the congregation; business networking and business mentoring within the church to create community; small groups or life groups at various leaders' businesses with their employees in order to help them maintain focus on the purpose of the business and grow the individuals in their work life.

Chaplaincy services are also effective in the right environment. Bring in speakers to help business leaders navigate workplace challenges, such as legal rights. Support entrepreneurial ventures or fund small-business startups. Each church needs to discover whom God has entrusted to the congregation, their members' level of spiritual maturity, the

businesses represented and their locations, sizes and industries. Each pastor needs to build on the unique DNA of his own church with the people God has placed in his congregation.

Fortunately, we are seeing an increase in the number of churches that are attempting to connect with the work life of their members. Unfortunately, most of those efforts, while well-intended, go from sizzle to fizzle in a hurry. Pastors and church leaders are left frustrated and their congregation disappointed.

"RIDE" is a simple acrostic you can use for a guiding strategy. It helps pastors frame support not only for business leaders but also for all of the working congregation. The acrostic's meaning is not necessarily sequential, but it offers areas of focus. Think of these areas as levers that when pulled, will yield fruitfulness as church members are empowered to multiply in the marketplace.

- Reinforce the role that believers have in the marketplace
- Identify the influence they have
- Disciple them in their work life
- Empower to multiply



## R: Reinforce the Role

What is their job description for Jesus? A mature theology of work facilitates an integrated understanding of work, stewardship and calling from a biblical perspective. Pastors need to include work illustrations in their teaching. Although not everyone in the congregation will work in the field of business or have a career, everyone can identify with words like job, work and workplace.

## I: Identify the Influence

Now that your congregation has the big picture, help them to see what this looks like in their work life. Use testimonials, stories and practical examples to provide a mental model and fuel creativity. Business leaders influence their employees with their character, their company with their ideas and leadership, their industry by their decisions and those around them by how they live.

## D: Disciple

With a high-level understanding of God's purposes in the marketplace and what leaders can do in connecting their daily schedules to God's work, the pastor can effectively disciple the business leader. This discipleship can occur in the church's weekend service, through classes or on an individual basis. Small and consistent activities shape beliefs and facilitate cultural change. If people are effectively disciplined in their work life, lives will be changed, and companies and communities will be transformed.

At Saddleback, we focused on growing and discipling marketplace believers, primarily through one of our 500 workplace small groups. Twenty-five percent of our workplace small groups had one or more people come to Christ by first developing disciples, so at our December 2014 Business Connection event, I invited the small business leaders to offer their business to Jesus as their Christmas gift. Using large wooden crosses placed throughout the room, the leaders nailed their business cards to them in surrender.

## E: Empower to Multiply

With the right soil, the planting of seeds and consistent watering, you will

**"There is both a need and a huge opportunity for the church to make a difference in the business community—but most pastors are not aware of it."**

begin to see lives change, people coming to Christ, businesses transformed and communities impacted. God is eager to make Himself known through the business leaders in your church and through their businesses.

## How to Guide Business Leaders

**1) Increase understanding on the integration of faith, work and economics.**

Books such as *Business for the Glory of God* by Wayne Grudem, *Work Matters* by Tom Nelson and *Business for the Common Good* by Kenman L. Wong and Scott B. Rae are a few of my picks. [Theologyofwork.org](http://Theologyofwork.org) is a robust website with articles, resources and an in-depth review for each book of the Bible. [Convenenow.com](http://Convenenow.com) is a nationwide group of Christian CEOs growing exceptional businesses built on kingdom principles.

**2) Join a community of like-minded pastors in this work-life conversation.**

Made to Flourish, a pastors' network for the common good, is an effective forum for pastors to support and learn from one another, as well as access tools, resources and assistance. Learn more at [madetoflourish.org](http://madetoflourish.org).

**3) Visit your business leaders at their place of business.**

Walk with them and experience their life on a regular basis. Understand how their company operates, their challenges and opportunities.

**4) Read what your business leaders are reading.**

Pick up the latest management, leadership or business book, and

discuss it with your business leaders. Subscribe to a business journal or magazine to keep current with business and economic trends.

**5) Consider the needs of the unemployed in your church.**

Consider what your church can do to provide assistance in finding a job for the unemployed, from resume writing to interviewing skills. The unemployed may, in fact, be a talent pool for your business leaders, so this could be a win-win.

**6) Find someone in your church who is passionate about Christian leadership in the marketplace.**

Pray for and find individuals with whom you can collaborate, and empower to lead and develop marketplace initiatives in your church for your working congregation.

**7) Cast a vision of being a whole-life discipleship church.**

Helping your congregation identify the godly value in their daily work is not another idea to add, but rather one to integrate into the ministries and culture of our churches.

As mentioned earlier, as we were preparing for yet another monthly Business Connection meeting, God took me on a drive to get my attention. He reminded me of the role of the church in supporting and meeting the needs of business leaders and those who have been called to do His work in the marketplace. He showed me, again, that it's not about me, but about serving our business leaders. This ministry is not easy, but it can bear much fruit for the kingdom of God. What local business leaders can your church help develop? ■

HELEN M. MITCHELL is the architect and visionary of the Saddleback@Work ministry, where she served on the pastoral staff at Saddleback Church. As CEO and founder of Strategic Management Resources, she is a speaker, author, licensed minister and consultant to business leaders and pastors. She is director of the Talbot Center for Faith, Work and Economics at Biola University, as well as an adjunct faculty member at Biola's Crowell School of Business. Her business career started with AT&T, where she became a vice president at the age of 30.