

Ministry 2 Business

*After reciting Manchester's achievement as a top European business city and his own baptism of fire into the business community, **Pete Horlock** shows how M2B networks in unusual places, encourages social action and evangelises in business.*

Manchester Means Business

Manchester is one of the UK's most exciting, vibrant, forward-thinking cities and is widely recognised as the most significant commercial centre outside of London, with an extremely talented and highly respected business community. 70% of graduates from Manchester's Universities stay in the city; Generation Y clearly appreciates the benefits of choosing Manchester over London to launch their professional careers¹. "[Manchester's] increasing success over the last decade has seen the city take its place as a Top 10 European business location. KPMG's study of the most cost effective locations to operate a business (in cities with a population of over 2 million) ranks Manchester first among European cities."² In this context Ministry 2 Business (M2B)

seeks to be a positive, innovative and supportive Christian influence enabling business professionals to explore God's call on their lives and the relevance of faith to their work. Derrick Watson (co-founder of Axon Moore recruitment firm and founder of M2B), articulates our compelling vision: "to see increasing numbers of Manchester's professionals developing a faith that is utterly relevant to their daily lives; inspiring and equipping them to make a truly transformative and vibrant contribution to their workplaces and the wider business community". Over the eleven years since M2B was launched, this vision continues to be shared by like-minded friends, representing different churches, working in different sectors, and united by a desire to live out Jesus' gospel where God has called them to work.

Out Of The Comfort Zone

In July 2012 I was commissioned by the Bishop of Manchester as the first business community missionary (or 'business vicar') working in partnership with M2B. Being thrown in at the deep end engaging with professionals and business leaders on their turf was way out of my comfort zone and something I hadn't prepared for at theological college or during my curacy. Five and a half years into this role and it remains a steep learning curve! But the unique combination of a supportive diocese, the dynamic and strategic leadership of active trustees and a growing core of Christians in the business community have proved a fruitful collaboration. Without the initial encouragement from Rev. Rob Hinton (former Business Vicar in Leeds), and ongoing mentoring from Derrick Watson, I know I would have retreated



Manchester business centre

Photo: Herald Land

into the familiar world of parish ministry. The M2B trustees and I were convinced that simply copying business ministry from churches in London, Sydney or New York wasn't going to work in Manchester. It was our responsibility to thoughtfully and prayerfully learn from their fantastic resources and experiences, but we had to figure out what was needed in our unique situation.

What Does Ministry 2 Business Do?

Three priorities shape M2B's work:

Engage: 'Building supportive relationships with city centre professionals and business leaders, providing assistance where appropriate with the key issues they face in their work.'

The first aspect of my work is making new connections with people in business whether through direct 'cold contact' approaches or warm referrals. These have paved the way for trusting and supportive relationships. This means attending various networking events, black tie dinners, business seminars, launch events, retirement drinks, and nights out with colleagues; basically being where people don't expect to meet a vicar and developing those new connections. Over the years we've hosted a number of events in businesses and banks (KPMG, HSBC, Barclays, Brabners) with guest speakers looking at issues from personal leadership and growing good business relationships through to supporting mental health and wellbeing. Our monthly 'Made Up North Breakfast' is an informal and convenient way to gather professionals together to learn from a business leader, sharing insights

and practical lessons distilled from their reflections on work. Breakfast is courtesy of M2B, there's a mix of speakers from different sectors, and I intentionally invite guests and speakers who wouldn't necessarily identify as Christian. It's a practical way to serve people without asking for anything in return.

Over the next 18 months we'll develop a new venture as anchor tenants (the first and leading tenants) at a city centre co-working space in Canada House. Working in partnership with the landlords (a law firm) and drawing on the human resources within the M2B network, we'll provide practical guidance and input for young entrepreneurs, freelancers and small start-ups that want a flexible, supportive base to work from. At the heart of this growing community will be generosity of spirit: there will be an intentional focus in each business to create a positive social impact which is more than profit.

Encourage: 'Helping people thrive in their work and empowering Christians to see their faith as integral to their professional lives.' One-to-one meetings, small group bible discussions and regular lunchtime prayer meetings have been strategic ways of helping Christians integrate their faith and work. In particular LICC's *Transforming Work*, Tim Keller's *Gospel In Life* and *Every Good Endeavour*, and Ken Costa's *God At Work*, have been helpful resources for frontline workplace discipleship which complement local church teaching. Encouraging people at work also involves being a blessing to others. In May 2016 the first CEO

Sleepout took place at Lancashire's County Cricket Ground. I was part of the small team that helped organise it; seeing over 80 people from the business community taking part and raising £64k to support homeless charities in the city was a terrific demonstration of the generous relationships and networks that are intrinsic to Manchester.

Explore: 'Creating accessible opportunities for people to investigate the bigger questions of life, to consider Jesus' good news and the dynamic connection between God, faith and their work.' Whether it's our *Faith@Work* interviews, *Endeavour Central* gatherings, *Reason For God* dinner and discussions, or the Lunchtime Town Hall Carol Services - giving people the opportunity to experience and hear Jesus's good news is a distinctive privilege we have and will not neglect. A friend working in recruitment who has been attending our *Encounter* dinner and bible studies shared with me that the more he reads the gospels, and the more time he spends with Christians, the more the Christian faith makes sense to him. Work is the platform where people see what really matters to us. Evangelism in the context of work is not a project; it is highly relational and it is a privilege to share our lives and the gospel. We might not always see the fruit of this work, but that's fine because we'll take God-given opportunities to share his word, depending on the Holy Spirit to do his work of bringing people to new life in Jesus Christ. That is the ultimate joy - bringing meaning to all our work (John 15:5). 

1 <https://www.selectproperty.com/2016/09/northern-powerhouse-boosts-manchester-graduate-retention-rate-70/> Accessed 16/01/18

2 <https://www.thecityuk.com/about-us/uk-work-programme/new-u-k-interactive-map-page/north-west/> Accessed 16/01/18



Pete Horlock is originally from Hampshire, studied in Bristol, worked in London and has had the immense pleasure of calling Manchester home since July 2004. Prior to this role with Ministry 2 Business he was on the staff team at Holy Trinity Platt in Rusholme, helping to develop and plant a new church community in the local area. He is married to Emily with two sons, Sam and Noah. Pete is also Chaplain at Manchester City FC.