

# Grace, Space and Pace

*Phil Hanson and Terry Young suggest business meetings might benefit from Grace, space, pace.*

Dreamed up in the 1950s, Jaguar Cars' famous 'Grace, space, pace' slogan defined the way the company's founder Sir William Lyons wanted the brand to be known. It painted a picture of a large saloon which could keep up with the E-Type, but that was also on par with a Rolls-Royce in terms of comfort.

This slogan was intended as an inspirational advertising strapline that encapsulated the vision for the company's products. What we want to suggest here is that these three words, pace, space and grace, can be appropriated for running a 'kingdom' purposed business.

It's not unusual in businesses to separate out two sorts of executive meetings. First, regular operational meetings are used to agree short-term plans, monitor actions and intervene quickly if necessary. Second, less frequent meetings may be devoted to a 'helicopter view' of the operation and strategic issues. Plagiarising the

Jaguar strapline, these two types of decision-making meetings might be labelled as 'pace' and 'space' respectively.

**Pace** meetings are, in content, transactional, the sort of meeting that can be recorded as actions, dates and responsibilities. Their ethos is urgent and responsive; their decisions are immediate and tactical.

**Space** meetings involve standing back from the day-to-day issues, pressing pause, taking time-out. Their opportunity is calmly reflective; their outcomes are big picture and strategic.

Senior executives are often encouraged to examine their diaries to see how much of their time and energy is consumed by what we are calling 'pace' and how much by 'space'. The challenge is always to avoid being consumed by the day-to-day and find time for the big picture. The danger is that firefighting displaces strategy: all pace and no space.

However, Jaguar's slogan also invites us to wonder if there might be a third type of executive meeting that would fit the description 'grace'. In a Christian business with a conscious 'kingdom' aspiration to be a platform for making the world a better place, is there an opportunity for a type of meeting that is different from pace or space?

The purpose of a **Grace** meeting might be to seek God's will for the business. An annual retreat where the opportunity for silence, listening and prayer could shape just such an occasion. It is not about day-to-day actions or even looking at the business from above through our own eyes. It is about seeing the business through God's eyes and recognising how kingdom purpose may be achieved in God's way.

Just as a space meeting sets aside the immediate pressures of life in order to consider longer-term issues, so a grace meeting may set aside the hopes and fears that we have for our company in



Photo: Mike Bird (Pexel)




the marketplace in order to seek a higher perspective in the will of God.

An excellent business may operate very satisfactorily on 'pace' and 'space'. We have argued elsewhere<sup>1</sup> that any business that is seeking to deliver kingdom impact needs to start from a foundation of business excellence. A base of world-class best-practice alone, however, is not enough. What we are here describing as 'grace' is part of the missing ingredient that makes a great business into a kingdom business.

This 'grace' focus has several benefits. It will keep the business true to its kingdom destination whatever the direction of the prevailing winds. It is much less likely to be blown off course by changing circumstances. It will also ensure that the outcomes and impact are not simply the achievement of human aspirations but are genuinely God-given kingdom changes.

Grace is at the heart of sustainability in its widest sense. Only through working in God's strength will any venture

be sustained beyond human effort. If our businesses are to deliver kingdom outcomes continuously, it will only be possible in God's way and in God's strength. Eventually even the best intended human initiatives will burn out at some point.

Whilst we have made grace the final step in this cascade of meetings, surely Sir William Lyons knew best when he created the slogan as 'Grace, space and pace'. After all, we are called to seek first the kingdom of God?<sup>2</sup> 

1. 'Great to Goodness', Philip Hanson and Terry Young, FiBQ 22.1, pp.17-20.

2. Matthew 6:33



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