
Halftime Newsletter November 2010

Redesigning Your Business Platform for Your Second Half Calling

By Lloyd Reeb

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Some of the most powerful ministries around the world happens on a for-profit platform. Fifteen years into my own second half journey I still own my business and I believe it is an important part of my platform for serving God and others in my second half. Austin Boyd is a successful businessman from Huntsville, Alabama, with a passion for business, bioethics and pro-life ministry. He's less than a year into his Halftime transition, having thoughtfully and intentionally redesigned his business platform for his unique calling. I want you to hear some of his story, and then let's unpack the common elements that may benefit you.

Lloyd: Austin, I want to address the challenge of how to create a business platform that not only allows you to live out your calling, but also enhances your ability to do so. The recession has left many Halftimers facing unexpected career changes. It's an opportunity to explore more creative ways to use their career as a platform. But first take us back to your first half success and how that set the stage for what you are doing now.

Austin: Any discussion of my Halftime journey has to begin with what drove me so hard for 32 years before I entered the business world. Starting at age 12, I had a real sense of a calling—a calling to make a difference. I was just never able to shake this vision of doing something that mattered. I had this sense that the calling pointed me toward selection as an astronaut, and I spent 32 years trying the astronaut route, doing everything I could to get there. I reached a point at age 44 in 1998 when I had to make a decision to retire from the Navy to care for my wife and her medical condition. When I "retired," I put everything that I had into becoming successful within a large business working for SAIC.

Moving up to run Business Development, being part of turning a 43 million dollar business unit into one worth more than a billion dollars.



I never lost the vision, though, for doing something to make a difference. I found myself constantly bristling at my work situation. I wasn't able to make all the decisions that I wanted to make, and I was even limited by what I was allowed to do regarding the expression of faith. In fact, at one point I was under a letter of censure to stop talking about faith at work. So, I had this pent up frustration to do something to make a difference yet I was in a "box" of my own making.

Lloyd: When we first began regular [Halftime coaching](#) conversations you were considering typical non-profit / ministry roles alongside your career. What changed?

Austin: There were a few flashpoints in my self-evaluation. Flashpoint number one was advice from a close friend of mine. Joe made a comment to me that "if you want to experience this new kind of career you're going to have to let go of the vine." I asked him what he meant, and he replied, "Well, you have to let go of the vine you're on to grab a new one. Tarzan didn't swing through the trees just hanging onto one vine." The fact was I didn't want to jump out of one large business "frying pan" into another one. I was looking actively for "where God is calling me in this journey?"

Then a second flashpoint occurred when I attended the Halftime luncheon event. Surrounded by peers and seeing the lights go on in their head as they listened to the idea of moving from success to significance, I realized that this frustration to make a difference is something other men have been sensing too. I wasn't the only crazy guy out there.

But the big flash, Lloyd, was when you made a comment to me one day, "Austin, I sense that you are the kind of guy who is drawn to impact and adventure, and your wife is one who is called to nurture and security." Then you went on to say "Take a look at your personal mission statement; maybe instead of looking for ways to get away from the office in order to go make an impact in local community activities, you could instead try to find a way to make an impact at work."

Because I had been officially reprimanded for taking a strong position on abortion, and officially reprimanded for expressing my faith in events outside the office, I was being very careful not to do anything that would cause me to cross over that line in my work at SAIC. Those words – and I still remember where I was when you spoke those words – made me realize I did need to let go of the vine like Joe said, but when I grabbed the new vine I needed to grab one at a business where people needed to be ministered to. I decided at that point, "I'm letting go of the vine. I don't know what I'm going to grab, I don't know what it will look like, but I know that before August of next year I'm going to change jobs to someplace that allows me to make a difference." I decided to make myself available, wherever that took me.

Lloyd: How did you go about finding the right business opportunity?

Austin: My friend Joe's great advice was to be flexible and available. During the next three weeks I said nothing to anyone except for Joe, and I know Joe doesn't talk. This was just me being open to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and making myself available for whatever might come my way. Three different companies approached me about taking a CEO position; I was floored in the next three weeks to have this happen, because no one had ever approached me before. But once I made a decision to let go of the vine and go in the direction of some ministry, that's precisely when things started showing up. If you make yourself available, the Holy Spirit can do something with you. It's when I resist being available that I can't be used very effectively.

The opportunity that grabbed my heart was this turn-around situation with Inergi (www.inergi.com). I knew their financial position. I knew how much they needed some new leadership. When they made me an offer to become CEO I felt the first thing they needed was an effort to "pastor" the employees. They needed somebody to minister to them, somebody to gather them up and say "I'll take care of you." Once you have the people taken care of, then take care of the cash. If you take care of cash before you take care of people, you end up losing the most important resource you have working for you. So that's what led me there. That's kind of the whole package.

Lloyd: So, now you find yourself in a place where you've got a lot more freedom.

Austin: My new role as CEO of Inergi is incredibly fulfilling, although it's also the toughest thing I've ever done in my life. It's exciting on three counts. First of all, there is not the drain of simply generating profit; I care for people AND make money. Second, it's freeing because I don't have the long drawn out decision processes I had in a large public company; the decisions made today make an impact tomorrow. Third, it's fulfilling because now I have a chance to mentor and pastor people, to change lives – we have about 70 employees.

Lloyd: You had to “negotiate” a platform that would enable you to not just run a business but to care for the employees in a pastoral way. And then you also need to set aside the time and effort to be able to pursue your passions outside of work around crisis pregnancy and write provocative novels. Talk about how you created that platform.

Austin: I think it's critical for leaders to be transparent, to be totally honest with the partners or investors who are going to bring guys like me on as major players in a company. We need to be open about our passions, and about what some of our commitments are going to be. I was very open with the board of directors at Inergi on two points:

- One was that I intended to continue writing a novel per year. I can work 60 hours a week and still find time to write a novel, but they needed to understand that I had visibility as a writer. I was clear that the time I'd spend as a writer would have to be part of the commitment that I was going to make as part of being CEO.
- The second thing was that I am passionately pro-life and very concerned about taking care of our local Crisis Pregnancy Center, Choose Life. I intended to continue serving on the board of directors, and I'd be running a new capital campaign there.

They replied in the best of ways, saying “we really want you to continue doing those things that give you fulfillment - we're behind you.” I was blessed that a group of believers were on the board. But that's not all there is to it. If you have things you are doing that are part of your Halftime activity to make a difference you have to put that on the table so that people don't feel like you hoodwinked them—at least that's the way I look at it. So I put my Halftime intentions, my novel writing, and my Choose Life participation, into the negotiations.

Lloyd: Tell us about your next book.

Austin: The next book is the first in a series of novels from Zondervan publishers, a series entitled [The Pandora Files](#), that addresses some of the thorny issues in bioethics. Most people won't read a bioethics book or study the ethical dilemmas that we're facing in biotechnology . . . but they will read a story. My belief is that you can share truth through story, what I call “a novel approach to truth.” The first book titled, [Nobody's Child](#), releases next August. It's about a young woman faced with a serious financial dilemma. Her father is dying of cancer, they have no insurance, and they mortgage the farm to try and buy medical coverage, yet there's no way to pay. He's sick and she's all that's left to work the farm. So she makes the decision to sell her body to raise money to pay off these bills, but she sells her body in the unusual way where she sell her eggs as part of what's known as “egg donation.” In the process she discovers that actions have unintended consequences.

For my second half portfolio, the two – writing and business – fit hand in hand. I don't use my workplace as a platform to push my writing. But I get asked, as a CEO, “what are you doing to make a difference?” My response? “Well, I'm working with Inergi but I'm also writing books because it helps me to extend my reach.” Each of us can do more than one thing in halftime. The key is to be available.

Guided Reflection

As you probably know, there are three big issues that you and I need to solve on our journey from success to significance: Core, Capacity and Context. These three provide the frame work for you to redesign your business platform to optimize your potential impact. Here are three questions to reflect on:

1. Clarify your Core - *What is my personal mission or my Ephesians 2:10 calling?*

2. Create Capacity - *Does my current business platform enhance my capacity to live out my calling or reduce it?*

3. Design your Context - *What changes to my current business role or setting would allow me to make the greatest impact in alignment with my calling? (Redefine my role, redesign my team, change companies, grow or shrink the organization?)*