In the modern era, there are two interrelated realities related to *scalability* that are critical for businesses and nonprofits, small and large. Now I'm not talking about a flourishing one-person engineering consultancy here, or a solo antique-clock repairman who took over the shop for his father before him. What I *am* talking about is an enterprise with multiple employees and a healthy gaggle of customers.

And here are those two realities of scalability. First, your enterprise is either growing or it's dying. Second, your enterprise needs sustaining scalability—*the capability to foster and sustain consistent, fruitful growth*. Hey, if you are the leader of your enterprise and don't believe that, then the only question really left is the pace at which your enterprise is dying. Yes, even if it takes some time, that enterprise is dying. So maybe now's the time to find a buyer for your company, or, at the least, not sign up for a new lease!

Does that seem a bit too brutal to say? It may seem so, but it's real. And it's ostensibly true even for all the churches in America. Countless churches—and I do mean *countless* churches—have closed their doors the past several decades. And many seminaries and smaller Christian universities are in decline. Those schools may merge with other institutions or just plain go out of business. Yes, Christian organizations do *go out of business*—often because they ignore solid organizational principles that apply to *every* enterprise in order to thrive and then grow. And one of those crucial principles is that of scalability.

So, just what is *scalability*, this idea that's so crucial? Well, let's start by going beyond a discussion of churches—we'll return to that later. So, here's a business definition: "From a marketing perspective, *scalability* means the enterprise can increase revenue with a necessary increase in resources to support that growth." Obviously that scalability is constantly of vital importance to every business leader.

But, like people, not every business is equal—either in current positioning or future prospects. And, more than ever, your status is binary—you're trending either as a winner or a loser, with much of that dependent upon your handling of scalability. And what's changed scalability so much is the digital era.

Did you know that each year, [Interbrand, a leading marketing firm, creates a list of what they consider to be the world's most valuable brands](#)? And who do you think the top four brands were for the year 2022? Surprise…they're Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, and Google—companies whose value is essentially grounded in very low cost and scalable delivery using digital capability to customers around the world. Even Amazon reportedly operates currently in about 50 countries, yes, digital, but also delivering vast amounts of physical goods as part of its value to its customers. Right, Amazon is not limiting itself to America alone!

So, how about, say, your small crafts company in Kansas? Scalability is key because your many competitors throughout America may already be using Amazon or its similar digital-competitor Shopify as a third-party seller. If so, your loyal customers are now gravitating to your competitors' easy digital checkout and payments and even the storage and shipping capabilities of Amazon or Shopify. Yes, your crafts-world competitors are *scaling* with the key help of Amazon or Shopify! So, suddenly, the charm of driving to your little shop in Kansas as part of a fun pilgrimage is blown away by a "here-tomorrow" reality made possible through scalability. And, yes, that's manifested by strategic partnerships using vast warehouses, digitally-immediate inventory-availability, and real-time point-and-click order-pay processes! *21ˢᵗ century.*

Years ago, that growing behemoth called Walmart came into many a rural town—then several local businesses later closed down. Frankly, no tears here…the highly motivated and industrious Sam Walton and his Walmart stores were and remain far better stewards of countless poor Americans' budgets than those local store owners. Yeah, those local owners were *unwilling to use scalability* in order to lower prices to customers on their high-priced necessities like blue jeans, scotch tape, shampoo, and russet potatoes!

Yes, Walton *did* create amazing scale for life's necessities, deploying huge fleets of Walmart trucks from large distribution centers to local supercenters. This is key—Sam clearly fostered much lower prices for shoppers! Turns out, years later, Amazon executed a digital version of much the same thing—but Amazon avoided the end-node costs of buildings and huge labor expense of local retail supercenters. Now, even

many a Walmart loyalist is clicking away on Amazon! And Walmart is constantly working to create deeper digital activity through Walmart.com for both direct-delivery and outside-the-store pickup of purchases.

So, nowadays, many small firms enjoy the supply-chain scalability provided by the Amazons and Shopifys of the world. That's the embodiment of possible scalability for your enterprise—yeah, a truly strategic partnership beyond just delivering your goods via UPS...you might now go all the way to a more full-service model via an Amazon or a Shopify. Or you might be a music artist and start using Apple Music as a great channel to market, effective marketing well beyond simply playing live venues in Indiana. Or you might economically use Microsoft's great tools and cloud services—leveraging your small enterprise!

But, sadly, even while your competitors are creating these strategic partnerships with Big Tech, you might actually be *complaining* about your plight...you might be looking for scapegoats while your firm is dying. Hey, you might as well saddle up your horse and complain about those new-fangled cars from Henry Ford!

Perhaps you have a sickening feeling in the pit of your stomach now. Sorry about that. But thinking about scalability here is not the problem—*it's the start of your solution!* So get busy. Don't be the victim that the politicians want you to be so that they can rush government subsidies to you and create dependency.

Back to the church. Foundationally, the American church is in decline because it lacks robust proclaiming of the authentic, powerful Gospel of the Kingdom...*you know, like Jesus did* (Mark 1:15)! Beware the big-tent, politically-geared, watered-down ecumenicalism that's emerged out of cratering denominations to supposedly defeat radical secularism—such politics is clearly failing and will continue to do so. Beware bad theology and cults, too. Instead, first seek the Kingdom...then gather with others, proclaim, disciple!

'Course, beyond Amazon and Google, the digital world has drastically impacted the American church, too. The decades-long adult Sunday school movement where solid theology was taught has largely fallen away. Nowadays, many serious believers are fed *digitally* with worship and sermons, often from several sources. Believers who do attend church are often in and out in an hour each week. *But is that Biblical community?*

A segment of aware churches has very much *scaled*, some for better...and some for worse. There are some anonymizing mega-churches with gifted pastor-speakers considered shepherds by some (Ephesians 4:11)—but such speakers know only a small percentage of a huge flock...hardly a structure for connected ministry. Other churches have expanded with multiple, low-cost "satellite" locations—largely-digital gatherings often in the same city as the mother church. Is *that* effective at making disciples?

Along the way, some churches have thoughtfully segmented pastors and services into youth ministry...and men's and women's and seniors' areas...and kids' ministries, all that to the extent that most every sheep who wants to be known by a shepherd can be—even while the church still wisely offers digital services. That *feels* savvy, but the proof is in serving the grind of life's troubles...the funerals...the ground-level stuff.

A hopeful trend in America in recent years has been the creation of small groups of a dozen or so, often meeting in homes, where real ministry of prayer and teaching is fulfilled, essentially self-funded by each group's members. And when that local church grows, more groups are created. Some seminarians despair of deviations in doctrine, but, as one who observes both failing ecumenicalism and the competing beliefs *due to all the seminarians themselves touting conflicting theologies*, it's well worth the pursuit of well-screened leaders overseen by on-target pastors. Wise leaders can work to beget solid *small-community-building scalability*...yes, lots of small groups scaling together, each economically delivering real ministry! God bless pastors...who need all the help they can get from God and us in their shepherding restless flocks!

We've eclipsed the church-growth movement of recent decades in America...now often highly politicized churches—both conservative and liberal—hold sway at the expense of God's winsome Gospel. But recall the two principles we started with: first, your church is either growing or it's dying. Second, your church needs sustaining scalability. So then, what about your church's *Biblical* scalability? Just work at going forth and making disciples of every person—yes, *small-community-building scalability*. God's blessings to you!

A&A: Application & Action

1. Does your workplace leadership consider scalability a huge problem…or a great opportunity…or a non-issue? Are they even sufficiently aware of the possible issue? Discuss. Be specific.

2. 1 Timothy 2:4 says, "God our Savior desires all people to be saved." Does your personal theology prompt you to want to see many church laborers help capture a believer-beachhead and then joyously help expand the number of believers in every nation in the world—you know…scaling? Or do you believe God takes care of all of that by Himself, being "independently deterministic" regarding human destinies…yes, acting fully apart from any human effort? Discuss these two different worldviews that are present today in America and elsewhere.

3. Does your church leadership consider scalability a huge problem…or a great opportunity…or a non-issue? Are they even sufficiently aware of the possible issue? Discuss. Be specific.