

# The Future We Make vs. the Future We Take

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## Introduction

This fifth edition of the **JBIB** is the last edition of the present millennium. In addition to the usual array of timely and thoughtful individual articles, we have continued to invite and include responses to those articles. We began this practice in the Fall 1997 issue of the **JBIB**, and this met with significant approval from CBFA members. The response pieces are all part of an intentional effort to fashion the **JBIB** as a “town hall” of ideas where we can express our different perspectives in an atmosphere of Christian respect and love.

In addition, this issue of the **JBIB** includes a special section on issues related to the future of Christian business education in the new millennium. The articles are diverse, but all point toward the challenges of continuing to develop a paradigm of Christian education in business that will remain true to its Christ-centered, biblically-rooted distinctives while engaging in changing forms of developing, delivering, and assessing the education of

students to which we are committed.

For most of my academic career, I have taught strategic management as a primary responsibility. After arriving at Cedarville College as chairman of the business department, I found that the business strategy course (the required capstone course offered in most business programs, sometimes known as “business policy”) was already in the capable hands of a professor, and so I assumed responsibility for teaching a course in Christian business ethics. Recently, the professor teaching the strategic management course announced his retirement. So, after a six year hiatus, I have been given the opportunity to resume teaching in this area.

So, planning and strategy has been on my mind lately. In addition to this course, I have been given the opportunity to design a distance education course in management. And, I also serve as director of graduate programs at Cedarville College with responsibility for launching our first-ever graduate program

(a master of science in administration degree) this fall. For me, planning and strategy are arenas for growth and experimentation both inside and outside the classroom.

**A Model**

A number of years ago, I developed a model of the planning process that has served me well as I wrestle with both “proclaiming” and practicing the art and science of strategic planning. A graphic of that model appears in Figure 1.

The model suggests that future results are very much the product of present actions using resources applied over time. In addition, the model focuses attention on

- the importance of goals, assumptions, and strategies as the fulcrum over which our plans are leveraged.
- the resistance all individuals and institutions encounter when they seek to engage in this active planning process stemming from momentum (“We’ve always done

it this way”), inertia (“We’ve never done it this way”), gravity (succumbing to the pressure of settling for second best and just getting by), and erosion (losing our competitive edge and our competitive energy).

- the fact that future results are only partially determinable by our intentions and actions. There is the part of the future we *make* as a result of our plans, and the part of the future that we *take* that comes as a surprise or reflects events beyond our influence.

we shall live and also do this or that.’ But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.”), we are nonetheless responsible for thinking through what we want to happen and for acting in ways that make such outcomes more probable. (Proverbs 16:3, “Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.”)

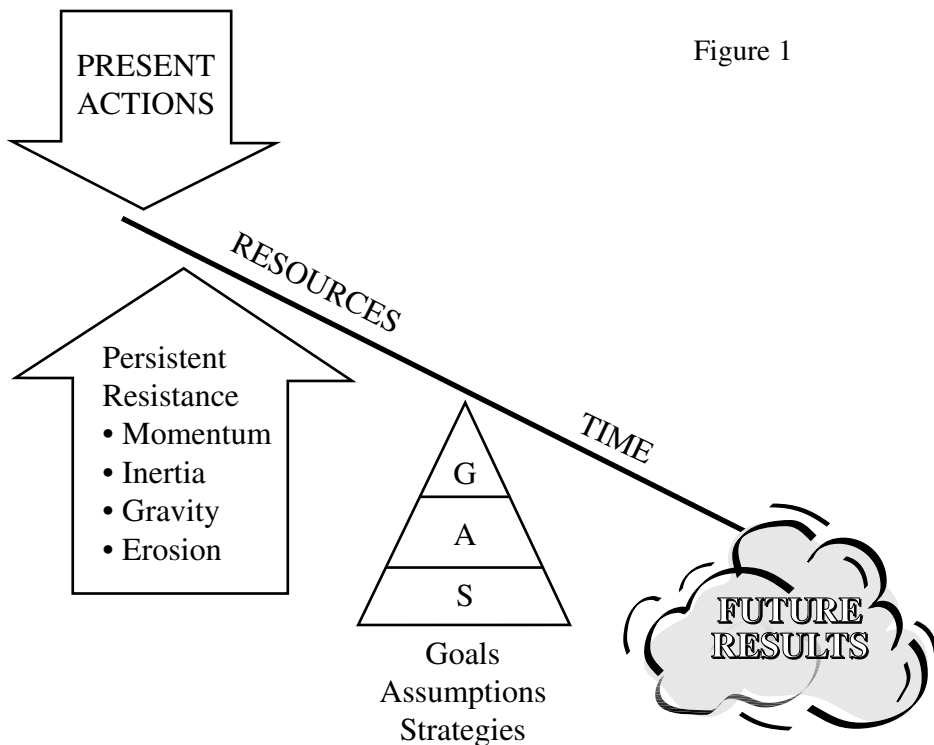
Christian business education stands at the threshold of a new century. By any measure the past has been a rousing success. Thousands of students have been prepared intellectually and spiritually to assume their place as Christ-honoring employees. They have made a significant impact in the workplace for the cause of Christ. They have been salt and light in a workplace increasingly oppressed by the effects of individual sin and collective greed. They have brought the witness of both the quality of their work and the grace of their words.

The present is equally compelling. Christian faculty are bringing a renewed commitment to faith and life integration. The Christian Business Faculty Association and its *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business* have fostered an increased interest in developing a

**Implications for the CBFA and the JBIB**

I have become convinced that those who focus effort on proactively creating the future rather than reactively coping with the future are the individuals and institutions that will succeed. While we should avoid the hubris of ever thinking that we control the future (Consider well the warning in James 4:13-16, “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.’ Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, *you ought* to say, ‘If the Lord will,

Figure 1



community of faith-centered scholars who bring to their teaching and publishing a distinctive Christian workplace perspective.

And, the future holds great promise for technologies and approaches that will extend both the impact and outreach of Christian business educators. This is especially so for those who have developed clear and compelling goals, have realistic assumptions about what can and cannot be done, and whose strategies produce distinctive Christ-centered competencies.

#### **About This Issue**

This fifth issue of the **JBIB** celebrates the creativity of the authors of its articles and responders, the professionalism of the review board, and the quality support of Kara Steinman and the other members of the public relations team at Cedarville College. Each of these groups and individuals have greatly helped this **JBIB** issue to come together.

It is my prayer that what is written in this issue will be used by the Holy Spirit to enrich and encourage the efforts of teachers of business on both Christian and secular campuses.

We welcome your comments about the material in the **JBIB**. If this is your first issue and you would be interested in looking at any of the four previous issues, please contact me by e-mail at [johns@cedarville.edu](mailto:johns@cedarville.edu).

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