

VALIANT for Profit

by Jim Davidson
jim@resilientways.net

"There is one and only one social responsibility of business: to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits as long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception and fraud."

~ Milton Friedman,
New York Times Magazine
13 September 1970

Yesterday, 12 March 2021, it was brought to my attention that the voluntaryists & agorists living in absolute non-aggression today (VALIANT) project is regarded by some as my personal business and that it is a for-profit venture. There seemed, to me, an implied criticism of the profit motive as well as a misunderstanding of the intention for Freedom Land Decentralised Autonomous Organisation to be decentralised and not just my own personal project. These are both very good matters to examine, and the purpose of this essay is to do so.

Profit

Profit is how we measure effective use of resources. It is not possible to be certain that a non-profit organisation is really being effective with its resources because there is no market-driven measurement. We may take the word of those involved that they are diligent and hard working, but without free market competition, how do we know? Whereas when a business is profitable, and makes a return for its investors, that business can be shown to be efficient with the resources available to it.

When a government agency or non-profit loses money, what happens? Why, it is given more money, either by the political processes of government or by the donors who seek to have its charitable purposes (in the case of a non-profit) continue to be met. Whereas if a company loses money, its investors go elsewhere. Companies that lose money consistently go out of business. Companies that make profits consistently attract new investors and are able to expand to serve more of the same market they are in, or expand into other markets.

It is certainly true that the business plans I've been writing have been designed around the concept of making a profit for those who invest in them. That has been true going back to 1986 when I began working in earnest learning the craft of business plan writing in various entrepreneurship courses at Rice University and got on-the-job experience with the business plan of Space Services Incorporated of America where I worked as a Summer Intern, then as an Analyst, and later as Logistics Manager.

So, then, do we want to be able to measure effectiveness? Yes. And if we are effective, would we be likely given more resources to do more things? Yes.

No doubt I have written plans for groups that are non-profit, and I have also planned businesses that were not able to make a profit. Part of entrepreneurship is understanding that not every idea is going to be successful. Which is why people charge fees for planning services. Those without any resources to start planning might not be especially well adapted to making profits for their investors, either. That said, I have on occasion wagered my talents on the speculation of future profits from a share of the business, and sometimes that has worked out well.

VALIANT Investors and Lot Users

The VALIANT business plans have two basic ways for people to get involved. One way is to put capital into the project. Those who do so are allocated up to 60% of the project in each case. So far, I have written business plans for two VALIANT projects. The one in Oklahoma was not able to secure its land and that property was taken off the market by its owners at the end of January. The other project is in Arkansas and its land is secured through agreement with a foundation that has a contract for deed to acquire the land we're working on.

The other way to get involved is as a lot user. The lot user agreement we've developed is intended to be a sort of community association, and, like the terms of service for an app or a web site, is meant to provide certain benefits to the lot user (a specific piece of ground, a specific set of rights to its use and to the usufruct of what comes from it). Lot users are also provided an ownership in the VALIANT project which is explained in detail in the business plan. The lot users as a group get about 20% of the ownership.

I myself get nothing. I have no ownership interest in any of the VALIANT projects. My work and "sweat equity" provides an ownership interest to the Houston Space Society, Inc., which is a non-profit organisation. I do not wish to be an owner nor a lot user nor an investor nor a shareholder in my name, ever, for the following reason: governments have taken away from me everything I've ever made or built or owned, so I don't agree to seek to make or build or own in my name.

The Team

There are other directors of each of the VALIANT projects. Again these are found by looking in the business plan. Mike Swatek, chief engineer, is responsible for the design of facilities and systems needed to make everything work. Chris Boehr, vision director, is responsible for developing and implementing the liberty vision and policies of the company. Chris wrote a great book on effective ways to implement freedom communities. David Mayoh is a director and is primarily concerned with forming new structures and institutions that are reflective of humanity's deeper need for freedom and free association. Lisa Bowman, agreed to work as property manager for the project in Oklahoma and it is our hope she, or someone with similar qualifications, will do the same work on our Arkansas project. Mary Blazes, a successful business woman, is a principal of Hearts Ablaze Foundation. She is also a director of our Arkansas project.

There are other VALIANT projects being developed, in Tennessee, Maine, New Hampshire, Belize, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and we're in contact with groups in Mexico, eastern Europe, and Chile with similar intentions. None of these other projects is planned by me at this time, and I'm not a director of any of them.

So, in this essay I've tried to attend to two matters. On the matter of "is VALIANT for profit" yes, it is, and it is meant to be that way. Moreover, the lot users are participants in those profits, so that everyone in the community is interested in the success of the community.

Are these my projects? No. I'm not an owner of any of them, I'm not a shareholder of any of them, and I'm not a director or planner or anything but a casual advisor to most of them. Thus, none of these projects are for my personal financial gain.

VALIANT is an open source project. None of these facts are secrets. All of the above can be known by reading the business plans already on our web site.

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Jim Davidson is an author, entrepreneur, actor, and director. He is the vision director of HoustonSpaceSociety.net You can find him on [Twitter.com/planetaryjim](https://twitter.com/planetaryjim) as well as [Pocket.app](https://pocket.app) and [Flote.app](https://flote.app) also as planetaryjim. He appreciates any support you can provide as times are very difficult. See the Paypal link on this page. Or email your humble author to offer other choices. This week Jim learned that [SubscribeStar.com/planetaryjim](https://subscribestar.com/planetaryjim) is working, so he'll be adding new things there soon. Visit [IglooLuau.com](https://iglooluau.com) for more information. Those seeking a multi-jurisdiction multi-hop VPN for communications privacy please visit <https://secure.cryptohippie.com/houstonspacesociety.php> For those seeking colloidal silver try [ppmSilver.com/Jim](https://ppmsilver.com/Jim) Ask Jim about CryptoWealth. VALIANT projects are open source at [FreedomLandDAO.com](https://freedomlanddao.com) Just arrived: [FreedomDeFiSoftware.com](https://freedomdefi.com)