

How might better awareness of personal experience of social entrepreneurship generate better support ?

1. Observations

- Need to be realistic about the support scheme and structure - the circumstances under which it was created are likely outdated
- Funding and support structures are in place, but they are repetitive, redundant, or not aligned with the needs of aspiring and start-up social entrepreneurs
- Support systems and structures within the social enterprise ecosystems are not as flexible as they could be
- Social entrepreneurs' time is eaten up by funding applications - feel it is more time and cost effective to get a second job
- There is often little if any outcome from the hours spent on funding applications
- Time could be better and more effectively spent of promotion and public relations rather than funding applications
- There is a sense that there is an unequal 'permission' of failure for traditional start-up businesses than for social enterprises - social enterprises/entrepreneurs are not given the same leeway for failure
- Social entrepreneurs feel they can be caught between being 'too social' or 'too commercial'

2. References / Best Practices

- Tourism sector - campaigns and awareness without (always) the expectation of being measureable or showing quantifiable benefit, yet nonetheless broadly understand as worthwhile
- Cambridge researcher book: 'Doing Good Better'
- The 'traditional' business sector on how failure is conceptualized and accepted within it

3. Key Insights

- Entrepreneurs feel they need more trust from support systems and funders
- Among social entrepreneurs, support systems and funders, there is a need to talk about the future plainly and practically, and for honesty in relationships
- There is a key challenge for entrepreneurs in making the transition from operating as an individual to measurably impactful organization
- There is a mismatch in support available and the needs of social entrepreneurs
- Organizations and individuals with a larger network and better funding can attract more attention, creating a self-fulfilling loop and making it more difficult for new actors to break-in
- There is a need to share risk - social entrepreneurs more often than not bear the full responsibility, financially and reputationally, if a project goes south of fails to take off

4. Ideas to explore

- Mentorship schemes both within the social enterprise sector and in partnership with the business sector; one-to-one expertise from industry leaders
- Events for peer-to-peer support, both personal and professional, for social entrepreneurs
- What support is being seen, and by who? How do different actors and observers understand the social enterprise experience and the support that is available?
- Where can and should support come from, and in what form?
- Revisit/diversify/ overhaul the social enterprise support pipeline

6. Warnings / Red Flags

- Gatekeeping of resources at various levels
- Mythical media portrayal of a 'thriving' social enterprise sector - must be more critical
- 'Poster girls' and 'poster-boys' make it look effortless; they don't represent the experience of the majority. Myth of the 'heropreneur'.
- On-going need and challenge of impact reporting

7. Questions to dive into for research

- How can personal and practical support structures be adapted to better suit the current challenges of social entrepreneurs and the ecosystem as a whole?
- What insights on 'success' and 'failure' can be gained from greater/better collaboration with the 'traditional' business sector?
- How can a transformation of social enterprise funding allow for greater diversity in the social enterprise sector?

5. Key performance indicators

- A diversified support and funding structure for start-up entrepreneurs
- Higher level of peer-to-peer engagement among entrepreneurs
- Formal structures of collaboration with the formal business sector