Building Another’s Dream: The Essential Human Side of Social Enterprise Success

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Social Enterprise

• Definition— an organization that is directly involved in the sale of goods and services to a market, but that also has specific social objectives that serve as its primary purpose.
Interviews with ~90 people

- African, Latin American, and South Asian social entrepreneurs, community and business leaders
- American social entrepreneurs
- Nationals who have lived in the West
- American expatriates who have lived for years in emerging markets
Questions I’m Asking

• How do our definitions of the “problem” to be solved differ?
• How do our definitions of “flourishing” differ?
• What do Americans need to understand to be effective as social entrepreneurs?
• What would Americans ideally contribute in emerging markets?
Building Another’s Dream

“That could be me.”
- Melinda Gates, Gates Foundation
The Official American Dream

• Everyone can be (economically) successful and happy if they work hard
• Freedom to pursue and achieve your dreams
• Equality
The American Dream

• Have enough money in retirement
• Have a satisfying career
• Be financially successful
• What is the Ethiopian or Malawian or Zimbabwean Dream?

• How do ours differ?
• Is the American Dream a dream worth pursuing?
The American Relational Dream?

Between 1990 and 2010 the use of antidepressant prescription medication increased 400%

Between 1985 and 2010, Americans have experienced:
• a 35% drop in having friends over
• a 43% drop in family dinners
The American Career Dream?

• Our average work week is now 47 hours
• 40% of us get less than the recommended 7 hours of sleep per night
• 55% of full-time workers left vacation days unused in 2015
The American Economic Dream?

If U.S. land mass were divided like U.S. wealth:

1% would own this

9% would own this

30% would own this

20% would own this

40% would own this red dot

Occupied - occupywallstreet.com
“We can assume that as long as the wealth of nations grows, the individualism of those nations’ citizens will increase.

“Poverty makes people depend on the support of their in-groups, but when a country’s wealth increases, its citizens get access to resources that allow them to ‘do their own thing.’ The storyteller in the village market is replaced by television sets, first one per village, but soon more. In wealthy Western family homes every family member may have his or her own TV set.”
Culture and Social Enterprise

How does culture influence social entrepreneurs’
• Assumptions?
• Approach?
• Goals?
Individualism    Collectivism

• I work best alone
• “If you want it done right, do it yourself”
• We is more important than I
• In groups and out groups

• View of partnerships
• Marketing – how information is shared and obtained
• My need for others
Linear and Circular Time

- Time is finite
- Time must be carefully spent and saved
- We are controlled by time

- Time is infinite
- Time does not define our day or our relationships. It is for us to use as we wish.
- We control time

- One - three year timeframe
- Urgency of projects
- Efficiency more important than taking the time to build shared understanding and common goals
Masculine & Feminine Cultures

- Success is demonstrated by quantifiable achievement
- Worthwhile outcomes are measureable
- Achievement plays a crucial role in finding happiness, meaning

- Success is measured by the quality of our relationships
- Most worthwhile outcomes are not easily measured
- Relationships play a crucial role in finding happiness, meaning

- Short time frames for projects
- Lots of pictures and social media postings
- Focus on outcomes that can be easily measured
- Focus on material wealth (Progress Out of Poverty)
Future, Dreamers and Past, Tradition

- The future is what’s important
- I can do anything I put my mind to, history of conquest
- Creativity is emphasized in school

- The past plays a very important role
- Less confidence, history of being dominated
- Passing on knowledge is priority in school, keeping tradition

- Comfort with risk, especially among entrepreneurs
- Confidence
- Little regard for tradition
- Value change, the new
We Share Common Goals

• Improved Health
• Food Security
• Increased Opportunities, Choices
• People Realizing Their Potential
Common American Assumptions

• You need us; we may not need you
• SEs arrive in a country unattached to centuries of distrust and unequally distributed power
• Our definitions of the “problem” are the same
• The “problem” is often solved through the introduction of new technologies
• What don’t Americans understand about the needs in your country and about your culture?
• What are the biggest barriers you are facing in your work?

• Is there a role for Americans in helping you to solve these challenges?
• Is there a valuable role Americans generally can play on the ground in your country?
Key Findings

• Build partnerships based on others’ strengths – males and females, nationals and Westerners, individuals across professions

• Humanize and equalize the relationships by building trust, respect, hope

• Explore personal motivations for involvement in the social enterprise space
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Broken – having been fractured or damaged; despairing; defeated
Flourishing – to grow well; to be healthy; to thrive; peace