

From Existence to Survival - Evaluating Sustainability Factors in a New Social Entrepreneurship Venture

L. Gillin

Australian Graduate School of Entrepreneurship, 1/54 Sackville Street, 3101 Kew, Australia
mgillin@swin.edu.au

Principal Topic

It is uncommon to have a 'start-up' in entrepreneurship documented and critically evaluated while still a fledgling. This is even less likely to occur when a venture into social entrepreneurship has come into existence and is growing to the survival stage (Churchill and Lewis 1983). Such an occurrence and the associated transition forms the topic of this paper.

Where people congregate together in a given community or community of interest, it is a truism that there is no shortage of good ideas. But the non-profit sector in Australia has traditionally paid scant attention to sustainability. It has also relied heavily upon a culture of fundraising to support whatever form a single good idea takes. Now that a model exists to give a more certain functional structure to a social entrepreneurship venture (Gillin, 2006), it is possible to identify a genuine social entrepreneur and goodwill support team, and cluster of support processes to grow a venture from its inception.

The social venture of this study is a membership organization, raising the consciousness of diverse sectoral interests of change for the better which can occur at the grass roots in the community. It provides interactive information across a spectrum of usefulness; and sees itself in a secondary role to the primary role of existing social enterprises and future partnerships.

Methodology/Key Propositions

By means of interview data and using a redrawn model of the McAdam and de St. Aubin (1992) diagram (for Generativity) the aspects of Need in a Community (or Societal Opportunity) are held against the subjective, intrapsychic (internal) space of two principals. They each share the roles of Social Entrepreneur and Support Team person for the studied social organization. Their data leads to propositions 1 to 5 as follows:

1. That Need in a Community and absorption by a Social Entrepreneur occupies psychosocial space.
2. That a chemistry between the two catalyses into conscious awareness as a forerunner to action occurring.
3. That each principal's worldview has implicit belief in humanity and spiritual beliefs consistent with reaching out to others in order to meet need.
4. That all three former propositions are required before legitimate concern becomes mobilized into appropriate responding.
5. That a conscious or unconscious commitment is thus made which leads to appropriate decisions and action to be taken.

This methodology will also examine the place of network theory and its goodness-of-fit for a fledgling venture. In particular, the stage theory of Larsen and Starr (1993) will be compared and contrasted.

Results and Implications

Drawn from N-Vivo content analysis results of the in-depth interviews and the empirical performance results important insights are discussed about what has stiffened the resolve of the two principals to seek sustainability. Acknowledgement will be made in passing to mistakes made previously, and what was at the root of lack of success. The promise and potential for future expansion will be discussed. It is intended to test these findings with current social entrepreneurship theory and assess their usefulness and application in the field of Social Entrepreneurship practice

Contact

Loris Gillin. Australian Graduate School of Entrepreneurship, 1/54 Sackville Street, 3101 Kew, Australia.
(T) (03) 9817 3013, (F) (03) 9817 5836, Email: mgillin@swin.edu.au