

ASIX

Australian Social Innovation eXchange

Building Enterprises that Empower Communities

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ASIX - Australian Social Innovation
eXchange



What does Social Enterprise Offer?

- Renewed vision for economic empowerment & wealth creation in communities
- Funds we can choose how to use
- Reduced dependence on government
- Enterprise skills needed by all citizens
- Identifying and building community assets is a priority – social capital alone is not enough

All communities need 'enterprising skills'

- Recognising opportunities
- Solving problems, designing solutions
- Making underused resources productive
- Inspiring people, building teams
- Engaging all sectors, collaboration
- Leading from behind
- Utilising people's hidden potential

The 'social enterprise' approach?

- A sustainable business driven by a social vision – not an entirely new idea
- Innovation – thinking freshly about challenges we face, with all stakeholders
- Problem solving – not symptom alleviation
- Making measurable social impact and reporting it
- Scalability and replication
- Building ownership by the service users
- Inter and intra-sector collaboration
- Valuing capable leadership
- Building high performance teams

Some observations

- Leadership and advocacy needed to move inertia and silo mentalities - in and out of our sector and government
- Social entrepreneurs need strong business and government allies
- Effective entrepreneurs build community support for innovation - entrenched interests will fight real change
- Any new field attracts 'shonky' operators dressing old ideas in new jargon
- Look for open, ethical collaboration

WorkVentures Story

- Founded in 1979 by Malabar Anglican Parish - generalist community development - minimum government dependency
- Moved to employment/economic development focus in 1986
- History of social and economic innovation - change brings opportunity as well as risk
- Focus on performance - 'no mission without a margin' – social justice is who controls assets
- Combining vision & values + attention to execution detail

WorkVentures Group Profile

- \$20mil pa – 25% compounded growth pa over 25 years
- Employment Services, Vocational Training, Small Business formation, Electronics enterprise, Digital Divide
- Place 2500 jobseekers, assist new business starts, 200 employees
- Locations in Sydney – inner/east, west, south west + Melbourne

WorkVentures' History

- **1979-80 Peninsula Community Services** founded by Malabar Anglican Parish - \$3,000 loan
 - generalist community development agency
- **1984-86 Employment & Economic Development focus** - Sydney ITeC, Compuskill, SIRC
- **1991 becomes WorkVentures Ltd**
- **1996 WorkVentures Group Training, JOB futures network formed**
- **2001 Social Enterprise Development Unit, WV Connect, Social Ventures Australia development**
- **2002 Western Sydney ITeC becomes part of WV Group**

Businesses

- **1979-88**

- *Clothing Recycling*
- *Ark II & III Op Shops*
- *Community Market*
- *Horse & Cart Hire*
- *Carpet Recycling*
- *Compuskill*

- **1988-92**

- *MusITeC*
- *ITeC Training Services*
- *Sydney ITeC Repair Centre*
- *Newtons - The Restaurant*
- *Nonprofit Management Services*

- **1993-2011**

- *Sydney/Melbourne ITeC Repair Centres*
- *Clothing Recycling*
- *WITT Computer Training*
- *Small Business Advice, Incubator & Training*
- *JOB futures Employment Services sites*
- *WorkVentures Group Training*



Case Study – Sydney ITeC Repair Centre

- Began in 1988 as the result of opportunity identified from electronics training
- Grew with IT company outsourcing
- Took over NCR, IBM & Fujitsu repair centres
- Now employs 110 – majority LTU clients
- Major national business



Case Study – Computer Reuse

- Major bank needs to dispose of 25,000 PCs nationally over 3 years – other corporates have similar needs
- 75% of households under \$25,000pa lack IT skills & access
- WV wants to develop entry level training, jobs, career pathways for at risk youth
- National social franchise network?



Some reflections

- We had lots of good ‘learning experiences’
- Many ideas copied and bettered by others
- Balancing social and financial is tough
- Taking risks with people’s jobs
- Do we build an institution or a movement?
- Who gets the credit?
- Measuring impact

More reflections

- Shared ownership and individualism
- Leadership, power and egos

Are We In Business Anyway?

- A practical as well as philosophical question
- Making a profit
- Differences between business and community agencies - two 'bottom lines'
- Being professional about what we do
- Learning from business

Forms of Enterprise

- A strategically planned and well run organisation
- Earned income becomes more of the budget
 - Government or other
- New enterprises developed - related or unrelated
- An 'affirmative business' emerges
 - Real jobs, competitive wages, internal career paths, ownership

Conclusion

- Not new but growing interest and improved practice
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