



Social Impact Initiative Briefing Paper 2017

What is the aim of your initiative?

The aim of the Social Impact Initiative is to identify, catalog, communicate, and inspire evidence-based social impact approaches and programs that benefit society.

What or who are the current “news makers” or trends in the initiative’s industry/sector?

The two top trends in social impact are:

1. Collaboration, not competition – The lesson here is to connect with other individuals and organizations that have the same aims as you do. When you encounter other organizations, think of what you can accomplish together and what you can learn from each other, not who’s outdoing whom.
2. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – Organizations are connecting their social impact approaches and programs to the SDGs because the SDGs offer both a unifying concept and set of goals upon which to base measurement and reporting.

Name some (high level) challenges facing your industry/sector?

Dedication to a shared vision about return on investment (ROI) is widely regarded as the most challenging aspect of social impact. Hand-in-hand with this challenge is the need to strike a balance between fiscal return and social return. There are no perfect measures of social impact, but that’s no different from measures of the economy and financial risk. The goal should be to have accepted measures that are good enough to be useful. Addressing this challenge is important because the better we measure social impact, the more capital and time will be invested in achieving it.

Where do you see the opportunities for industry/sector?

There has been a stunning transition as corporate social responsibility (now referred to as social impact) evolved from a nice-to-have silo within some businesses to a fundamental strategic priority for all businesses. We now see companies investing in global solutions around health and wellness, housing, human rights, caring for children and the elderly, reducing prisoner reoffending, climate, financial inclusion and education. Such involvement offers a wide range of ROI, including boosting brand credibility. On the other hand,

companies are finding that their customers, employees and other stakeholders perceive a lack of social impact approaches and programs as a glaring gap. That perception can be particularly negative in this era of fast-paced social media.

Are there any “heroes” (either companies or individuals) who stand out in your industry/sector?

Social impact is a thriving sector that is growing by leaps and bounds. There are far too many heroes to name, but the list can start with the following examples, which are widely regarded as the visionaries in this field:

- Ben & Jerry’s
- BMW
- Google
- Microsoft
- Newman’s Own
- TOMS
- Unilever
- The Walt Disney Company
- The Wonderful Company

Is there noteworthy investment happening in your industry/sector?

Yes. The heroes listed above, as well as many others, have cumulatively invested billions of dollars in capital and personnel time into social impact in their communities, regions, nations and globally.

Name any key accomplishments (milestones) made by your initiative?

The GWI Social Impact Initiative started in 2017. So far, we are:

- Recruiting experts in social impact to serve as initiative team members.
- Identifying best practices gathered from teams implementing and sustaining social impact programs.
- Developing case studies about social impact programs.

Finally, we will meet with our colleagues at the 2017 Global Wellness Summit to share the living document of best practices and case studies.

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