# Chapter 1

# Still Searching for Social Entrepreneurship



Three decades after its first use, social entrepreneurship remains one of the most alluring terms on the problem-solving landscape and has even received a warm embrace from President Barack Obama. He stitched a variation of the concept into his 2009 Serve America Act, which simultaneously expanded Americorps and created a $50 million Social Innovation Fund. Obama has also created several national competitions to advance breakthroughs in education and health.

Obama clearly understands that the world faces a long list of urgent threats—poverty, hunger, disease, despair, pandemics, global climate change, aging economies, and so forth.

He also understands that the unthinkable is not only thinkable today but is approaching at light speed. His new Social Innovation Fund offers great promise for needed acceleration of social change, but is not enough for eventual success. Investors need to pour much more money into what works, and shut down programs that do not.

Obama is hardly the only national leader who understands the threats ahead. In 2009, for example, the Ford Foundation changed its logo and tagline to underscore a heightened focus on social breakthrough. Focusing on the "fierce urgency of now," the foundation's new tagline is simple: "Working with Visionaries on the Frontlines of Social Change Worldwide."

At first glance, the new logo and tagline embrace an exclusive definition of social entrepreneurship that favors individual action. After all, it focuses on visionaries as the source of breakthroughs in areas such as good governance, economic opportunity, better education, and freedom of expression. "We take enormous pride in our commitment to the visionary people who are seizing this moment and the promise it represents," the foundation's president, Luis A. Ubiñas, wrote. "With renewed focus and a shared optimism about what is possible, the Ford Foundation will be there to support them as they aspire to the fairness, freedom, opportunity, and dignity in which we all believe."

Yet, the logo and tagline also embrace an inclusive definition by focusing on the role of partnership and collaboration in creating social change. It does not define visionaries in the singular, for example, and includes organizations as a source of change. Even as the foundation focuses on the "people unafraid to take risks in search of lasting change," it is also clearly aware that these individuals do not work alone.

As such, the Ford Foundation's new logo and tagline blend the best of recent research on social entrepreneurship and breakthrough. The foundation's focus is on visionaries, but with a more inclusive approach to achieving solutions to the world's toughest problems. The foundation also clearly emphasizes the importance of aggregation to social impact. The search for new ideas is clear, but so is the need to move those ideas forward aggressively. As the foundation explains, civil society is essential for addressing complex and enduring problems. Without the organizations and partnerships to expand it, breakthrough seems impossible. The Ford Foundation's tagline is well worth copying.

The rest of this chapter deals with this changing definition of social entrepreneurship as a blend of both exclusive and inclusive approaches. The chapter begins with a discussion of divisions within the field, moves forward with a comparison of the exclusive and inclusive approaches, and addresses three questions that continue to bedevil the field. The basic definition and tactics underlying social entrepreneurship are changing quickly, and entrepreneurs and their funders confront new challenges in building lasting success.

It is important to note that social entrepreneurship will remain a field in flux for some time into the future. It is a new field ripe for further research, and the concept itself implies that there will be new combinations of ideas for basic definitions and learning. Social entrepreneurship is still inventing itself. Indeed, I would argue that social entrepreneurship must continue bending as it produces variation through its own exercise. This is not only healthy, but essential.

## Building a Field

The Catherine B. Reynolds Foundation is just as committed as the Ford Foundation to building the field of social entrepreneurship through direct investment in developing new talent.

Although its budget is smaller than that of the Ford Foundation, the Reynolds effort is creating an enormous multiplier effect through a tight focus on preparing a new generation of social entrepreneurs for engagement.

The Reynolds Foundation is clearly committed to social change. Its vision statement declares: "The Catherine B. Reynolds Foundation strives to make a difference in its creative approach to philanthropy. It believes in direct action and creating powerful incentives that will stir young people to strive for excellence."

Like the Ford Foundation, the Reynolds Foundation believes in the power of individual imagination, which it supports through its annual Academy of Achievement. But it also believes in harnessing that imagination for the collective betterment of the world.

The Reynolds Foundation began investing in education for social entrepreneurship in 2005 with grants to Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government and my home institution, New York University's Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service. These grants embrace an ecumenical approach too rarely applied in the field.

New York University now awards up to 10 undergraduate and 20 graduate fellowships annually to promising social entrepreneurs. The only catch is that no more than one-third of the fellows can come from any one of NYU's schools. Each class hails from every corner of the university, including our programs in business, public service, political science, social work, architecture, the arts, engineering, journalism, and the humanities.

The program covers a wide range of activities, including a speakers series and coaching sessions for each fellow. It also includes coursework in finance, business planning, social change, and project management, as well as a Leadership and

Social Transformation seminar that uses a blended definition of social entrepreneurship. The course description is clearly in sync with this book:

> The course explores the role of leadership in organizational efforts to change thinking, systems, and policies—taking into consideration the contested process by which the responsibility of addressing intractable problems is distributed among key diverse actors in a shared-power world. Traditional approaches to leadership defined by single heroic individuals who influence followers are contrasted with new perspectives—consistent with the demands of today's complex problems—particularly when we aspire to inclusive, transparent, and democratic solutions. Emergent perspectives reveal leadership as the collective achievement of members of a group who share a vision, and who must navigate the constellation of relationships, structures, processes, and institutional dynamics within the larger system in which they are embedded.

## A Field Divided

The field of social entrepreneurship is still in its infancy. Research continues to lag action, definitions continue to evolve, and the knowledge base is fragmented. More troubling, the field still operates in silos of engagement in which partnerships are sometimes undervalued and collaboration lightly embraced. Instead of coming together as a field of both practice and research, social entrepreneurship is sometimes divided against itself. Consider the following list of challenges.

The definition of social entrepreneurship is changing rapidly as entrepreneurs and researchers work to create strategies for addressing urgent threats. David Bornstein and Susan Davis wrote about this evolution, *social entrepreneurship 3.0*, in their recent book *Social Entrepreneurship: What Everyone Needs to Know*:

> Social entrepreneurship 3.0 (today) looks beyond individual founders and institutions to change-making potential of *all* people and their interactions. It recognizes that social entrepreneurship is contagious. Every person who starts a social change organization emboldens others to pursue *their* ideas and solutions, whether by building institutions or by strengthening existing solutions through their investing, philanthropy, managing, advocacy, research, teaching, policy making, computer programming, purchasing, writing, and so forth.

Despite this emerging shift, the field of social entrepreneurship remains sharply divided between research and practice, as if research is somehow a drag on action. Although there is a growing body of research on social entrepreneurship, there is not enough interaction between lessons learned and new initiatives. Nor is there a significant effort to collect lessons learned across large samples of breakthroughs. Case studies do provide important insights on how social entrepreneurship works, but we have yet to build the large data sets that can reveal statistically significant findings.

The field is also sharply divided across academic disciplines and the professional schools that train social entrepreneurs. Even when the disciplines and schools are housed in the same buildings, they seem unable to communicate as they fight over ownership of the curricula. Social entrepreneurship has built a sometimes-tenuous relationship with business schools, for example, but has few connections with political science, public policy, social work, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, the humanities, and the hard sciences.

The field focuses almost exclusively on stories about lone wolves who struggle mightily against the odds to achieve impact, even though we now know that collaborative creativity may actually produce more success and fewer failures. The field has generally embraced a one-best-way approach to social change, meaning one hero, idea, organization, and strategy. But this one-best-way may be counter to the trial and error needed for true innovation.

The field has been less than enthusiastic about the need to develop clear theories of change and measuring results. Collaboration is clearly at the fore of the effort to replicate and scale social change, as it should be, but building successful social networks requires the same rigor that business entrepreneurs use to create the waves of creative destruction that knock out the prevailing wisdom (or at least displace it long enough to neutralize the old equilibrium that always lies in wait).

The field has yet to develop an inventory of entrepreneurial failure, even though there are obvious threats to survival as social entrepreneurs drive forward through the many obstacles they face. Success is obviously a great teacher, but control groups of missed opportunities are the coin of the realm for sorting the right lessons learned. We need to create inventories of what must go right *and* what cannot go wrong in conquering urgent threats.

The field sometimes dismisses the contributions of the large, old organizations that bring great experience and connections to social change. These so-called legacy organizations are often characterized as the last destination for innovation, a critique that denies the possibility that most organizations can innovate at moderate levels. The prevailing all-or-nothing wisdom about social entrepreneurship not only creates a singular focus on the individual, but also undermines partnerships with the many participants who contribute to breakthrough.

The field too often ignores the role of power in successful breakthroughs, perhaps because politics sometimes involves partisanship and hardball of the kind that produces congressional and/or media investigations. Yet, power is both part of the scale-up to breakthrough and a central driver in the social networks that aggregate pressure. As I argue later in this book, power, politics, and partisanship are either entirely missing from the dialogue about social entrepreneurship or hidden from view as a way to protect the field from attacks from the prevailing wisdom.

Finally, the field tends to minimize essential issues of organizational structure and management. Too many social entrepreneurs define management as drudgery—they want to imagine, invent, and dream, not raise money for heat, light, and computers. But poorly managed ideas are nearly impossible to scale to maximum impact whatever the tactic. And they are highly vulnerable to simple mistakes that can undermine momentum. Organization and management are too often confused with bureaucracy and red tape, even though business entrepreneurs know that effective management is essential to their ultimate success.

Many of these divisions are built around genuine excitement about the iconic entrepreneur. But this focus on the lone wolf has distracted the field from deeper conversations about building and maintaining the social breakthrough networks that have so often produced the great breakthroughs of the past. At least for now, we still tend to look for social entrepreneurship in one sector (nonprofit), driven by one person (the entrepreneur), with an unusually focused set of skills and motivations (what venture capital firm Ashoka's Bill Drayton calls the entrepreneurial quality), operating in a special setting (almost always new and mostly young).

## A Field Uniting

Despite these divisions, the field of social entrepreneurship is also coming together in important ways, not the least of which involves a growing concern for collaboration and focused advocacy. Consider the following list of gains.

The field contains individual entrepreneurs such as Billy Shore of Share Our Strength, Dr. Paul Farmer of Partners in Health, and Ami Dar of idealist.org (who would never call himself a social entrepreneur) who have demonstrated enormous courage, inspiration, passion, and perseverance toward measurable social impact, while acknowledging that they cannot succeed alone.

The field also contains individual scholars such as J. Gregory Dees, Johanna Mair, Jane Wei-Skillern, Alex Nicholls, Paul Bloom, and Christine Letts who are drilling deeply into the basic concept of social entrepreneurship, looking for patterns that might explain success and reduce failure. Although they are motivated by the hope for impact, we are all contrarians of a sort—we must challenge the conventional wisdom of social entrepreneurship, just as social entrepreneurship challenges the conventional wisdom about social threats.

The field has created new opportunities to share research emerging across the world, most notably the biannual Colloquium on Social Entrepreneurship co-hosted by Duke University's Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship and Oxford University's Skoll Center for Social

Entrepreneurship. The three-day annual colloquium was first convened with a handful of scholars and a modest list of panels in 2008, but had expanded to dozens of researchers and a deep inventory of papers by 2010.

The field is now supported by funders such as the Acumen Fund, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, REDF (formerly the Roberts Enterprise Development Fund), and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation committed to proven concepts and the infrastructure to attain success, and other organizations such as the Nonprofit Finance Fund that are committed to infrastructure support. And there is a growing sense in Washington, D.C., that scale-up is an essential act for both new combinations of ideas and highly effective programs already on the books.

The field now has sources of venture capital such as Ashoka, Echoing Green, and New Profit, Inc., that can provide the kick-start toward invention and scale-up; there are also giant organizations such as the Gates, Ford, and Rockefeller foundations that are putting up substantial sums to generate deep social impact, as well as small foundations such as the F.B. Heron Foundation that are investing substantial portions of their endowments in social engagement.

The field is also investing in studying urgent threats through think tanks, such as the Skoll Foundation's Urgent Threats Fund, that are analyzing and monitoring trends that might reveal oncoming tipping points. Its first two grants went to an organization called J Street to elevate the voices of moderation toward Middle East peace, and the Ploughshares Fund to foster support for a world completely free of nuclear weapons. There are also funders such as the Gates, Hewlett, and Packard foundations that are investing in measurable results while addressing similar urgent threats.

The field also contains social entrepreneurs who are now asking how to create collective impact through social networks such as the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids that have shown significant success in driving policy change. These partnerships are part of the new research and collaboration promoted by new practice networks such as Duke's Center for Social Impact, which is led by Edward Skloot, former head of the Surdna Foundation and one of the first to use the term *social entrepreneurship*.

There are many programs that are scaling to impact in aggressive partnership with national programs such as the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top. Although it has been controversial, the Race to the Top put $4.5 billion at risk for encouraging innovative school reform (Delaware and Tennessee won the first round).

Led in large part by New Leaders for New Schools, the Race was the product of a broad alliance of social entrepreneurs and advocates. Regardless of whether one agrees with the effort to create stronger ties between teacher performance and pay, the alliance has produced major policy changes across the states, including legislation to raise arbitrary caps on the number of charter schools. "This is not heavy-handed Washington command-and-control," *New York Times* columnist David Brooks wrote on June 6, 2010. "This is Washington energizing diverse communities of reformers, locality by locality, and giving them more leverage in their struggles against the defenders of the prevailing wisdom."

The field is broadening to include corporate social ventures such as TOMS Shoes and the Greyston Bakery (think chocolate fudge brownie ice cream) that make a profit in pursuit of social impact; in fact, *BusinessWeek* now publishes an annual list of the most effective social-venture firms, including Books for Good, which resells used books around the world. These firms make profits by producing social impact, which is one way to reduce the dependency on funders who sometimes put their own interests in claiming credit ahead of durable support.

At the same time, many corporations are adopting genuine principles for guiding ethical profit making. These firms do not use social responsibility as a clever marketing tool, but as part of double- and triple-bottom lines that measure their financial, environmental, and social impact. They are key participants in erasing the artificial barriers between business and social change. Instead of using social responsibility to "greenwash" dismal social records, these authentic firms are willing to sacrifice small margins of profit in working toward reducing inequality, intolerance, environmental abuse, unemployment, the use of child labor, and discrimination.

Finally, there are private firms that are creating highly profitable and world-changing innovations toward a new social equilibrium. *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman celebrated several of these firms in his March 7, 2010, contribution. Writing about SunPower and Bloom Energy, Friedman noted the global value of business entrepreneurship in creating cleaner, low-cost energy. Not only are such firms able to raise more flexible capital than most nonprofits, including the new *low-profit limited liability companies (L3Cs)* that are starting to spring up, but they also seem to have faster idea-to-market success.

As this list suggests, there is a growing effort to bridge the divisions both within the field of social entrepreneurship and with other actors in the social-change cycle. In fact, the challenge may not be too little sparking, but too much isolation. There are very real incentives for staying separate, avoiding mergers and acquisitions, creating proprietary projects, and keeping secrets. This may make perfect sense for becoming *the* one place to go for social impact, but can be self-defeating nonetheless. Distinctiveness and exclusiveness do little to increase the odds of social change.

## Defining Terms

Much as the field agrees that social entrepreneurship involves the pursuit of a new equilibrium, we still have work to do in defining how to sweep away the prevailing wisdom and create sustainable social breakthrough in its place. Some definitions offer a more inclusive definition of social entrepreneurship, while others are singularly focused.

The choice of an inclusive or exclusive definition has obvious implications for making choices on how to create social breakthrough, not the least of which involves investment by governments, other funders, nonprofit organizations, businesses, interest groups, and so forth. Should we favor the individual entrepreneur, look for teams and the collaborative creativity they energize, or seek a mix of both?

### An Inclusive Definition

My own work on social entrepreneurship began with a set of challenges that were published in my 2006 article "Reshaping Social Entrepreneurship." My question at the time was not at all whether social entrepreneurs exist—that much was certain in the most cursory sampling of the Ashoka, Echoing Green, and Skoll Foundation award winners from recent years.

Rather, I argued that the field might be too exclusive for its own good. By defining social entrepreneurship more by the characteristics of the individual entrepreneurs who forge social value through their work, I wrote, "the field may have excluded large numbers of individuals and entities that are equally deserving of the support, networking, and training now reserved for individuals who meet both the current definitional tests of a social entrepreneur and the ever-growing list of exemplars."

Hence, my 2006 definition of social entrepreneurship was much more inclusive than the prevailing wisdom that exists in the field:

> Social entrepreneurship is an effort by an individual, group, network, organization, or alliance of organizations that seeks sustainable, large-scale impact through pattern-breaking ideas in what governments, nonprofits, and businesses do to address significant social problems.

Having sorted hundreds of articles on social and business entrepreneurship between 2006 and 2008, I came to a much crisper definition in my 2008 book, *The Search for Social Entrepreneurship:*

> Social entrepreneurship is an effort to solve an intractable social problem through pattern-breaking change.

Social entrepreneurship is no doubt courageous, authentic, and often successful in challenging the prevailing wisdom, but it is best viewed as one of several drivers of change nonetheless. It is a means to an end.

Moreover, social entrepreneurship is not always a full-time organizational activity. Some individuals and organizations may be highly entrepreneurial most of the time, others highly entrepreneurial only some of the time, still others moderately entrepreneurial all of the time, and so forth. It is not clear, however, just which level of engagement is the most productive for social breakthrough. Much as we celebrate 24/7 entrepreneurs, it may be that the most promising ideas arise from rather ordinary people with extraordinary vision. It is the idea, not the level of activity, that matters.

As such, I believe that the amount of social entrepreneurship can be increased by supporting more potential entrepreneurs as they cross over to public leadership at any point in life, from any sector, with any history, and at high, moderate, or even relatively low levels of production. Given my notion that established organizations are perfectly capable of producing social entrepreneurship, many social entrepreneurs are hidden from view, and some adamantly refuse to use the term. These social entrepreneurs may be buried within their organizations, but their social breakthroughs can be found in the innovations that occur on the front lines, sometimes without the slightest permission from above.

## An Exclusive Alternative

My 2006 definition of social entrepreneurship provoked an intense reaction within the field, especially surrounding my notion that social entrepreneurs might not be as rare as imagined. In questioning the focus on individuals, I had mistakenly implied that lone wolves were somehow unimportant to social entrepreneurship.

Ashoka's Bill Drayton put this notion to rest in an emphatic letter to the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* in 2007. Social entrepreneurship comes from the individual, he wrote, in part because each individual is unique: "Leading social entrepreneurs are remarkable. They are doing something enormously important and difficult—something that in many ways is critical for society and, in its nature, demands much of an entrepreneur's life. These strong and often lonely human beings require and deserve our long-term understanding, loyalty, and respect."

Drayton also argued that social entrepreneurs follow a well-worn path into engagement: "Entrepreneurs capable of making profound pattern changes are rare and have a well-understood and strikingly coherent, consistent life history. After a long apprenticeship in established institutions, there comes a time when the entrepreneur is no longer able to grow or move his or her ideas ahead. In most cases, he or she must build new institutions to serve an idea that cuts across the old organizational lines, thought patterns, and disciplines."

Translated in arguably simplistic terms, social entrepreneurs take frustrating jobs, become agitated with the lack of opportunities to make a difference, exit their organizations, and start their own ventures, often without a clue about potential support.

Past research strongly suggests that Drayton was mostly right in his two-pronged critique.

First, there is no doubt that there are successful lone wolves at work on social change—just visit www.skollfoundation.org and scroll down its list of award winners. At the same time, there are also teams, partnerships, families, organizational employees, and even communities that produce social entrepreneurship.

Second, the research suggests that many social entrepreneurs share similar histories. There is growing evidence that most social entrepreneurs start their efforts in the same city and same field where they began their careers, and often use the same networks and the same skills. They either are forced to make the leap because they lose their jobs or choose to leave because of frustration and dead ends. They see an opportunity to create something of their own, and they take it.

There were other defenses of exclusiveness in the wake of my article, including a tough critique by Roger Martin and Sally Osberg. Writing in the spring 2007 issue of the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, they argued that social entrepreneurship should not be used to describe "all manner of socially beneficial activities." Although Martin and Osberg made the case that inclusiveness could be a good thing, especially if plenty of resources are flowing into the field, it dilutes focus during scarcity. "Because of this danger," the authors argued, "we believe that we need a much sharper definition of social entrepreneurship, one that enables us to determine the extent to which an activity is and is not 'in the tent.'"

Martin and Osberg took an important step toward that sharper definition by defining social entrepreneurship as a successful effort to alter the social equilibrium, which I tend to imagine as a dense cloud filled with policies (products), citizens (consumers), organizations (firms), and so forth—or even the night lights of the aurora borealis.

According to Martin and Osberg, social entrepreneurship starts with "an unfortunate but stable equilibrium that causes the exclusion, neglect, marginalization, or suffering of a segment of humanity"; which engages an individual "who brings to bear on this situation his or her inspiration, direct action, creativity, courage, and fortitude"; which creates a "new stable equilibrium that secures permanent benefits for the targeted group and society at large."

This choice of words drew a heavy assist from the work of Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter, who described business entrepreneurship as a form of "creative destruction" that permanently disturbs the prevailing business equilibrium. As such, the article provided momentum toward a more precise definition of impact. But Martin and Osberg's definition still leaves plenty of room for further debate about what kinds of activities actually constitute social entrepreneurship, a debate that Martin and Osberg engaged by arguing that social services and advocacy can coexist with social entrepreneurship in hybrid forms but should not be mixed into the inclusive definition of the term.

## Sorting Assumptions

Much as I admire Martin and Osberg's search for definitional clarity, the following distinction between "rigorous" and "inclusive" creates more heat than light. "If we can achieve a rigorous definition," Martin and Osberg wrote, "then those who support social entrepreneurship can focus their resources on building and strengthening a concrete and identifiable field. Absent that discipline, proponents of social entrepreneurship run the risk of giving the skeptics an ever-expanding target to shoot at, and the cynics even more reason to discount social innovation and those who drive it."

Given my past work, it is no surprise that I might believe an inclusive definition can be quite rigorous, even as an exclusive definition can be based more on casual observation than evidence. In fact, rigor and breadth actually involve two very different variables that cannot be combined into a single continuum. Simply put, definitions can be both inclusive *and* valid and exclusive *but* invalid.

Table 1.1 provides a framework for sorting the many hypotheses about each, along with several examples. Rigor depends on evidence-based research, not the effort to winnow potential grantees by avoiding tough choices based on their own integrity, honesty, trust, and faith. It is absolute nonsense to argue otherwise by creating a definitional continuum anchored by "inclusiveness" at one end and "rigor" at the other.

Despite the need for more evidence, there has been a sharp decline in funding for social entrepreneurship research on these kinds of questions. Stretched to their limits by the recession,

**Table 1.1** Sorting Assumptions

| | **Inclusive** | **Exclusive** |
|---|---|---|
| Rigorous and verified | Social entrepreneurs can be individuals, teams, groups, communities, and so forth. | Social entrepreneurs need a set of specific, identifiable, and distinctive skills to succeed. |
| Asserted but not verified | Social entrepreneurs are born, not made. | Social entrepreneurs are different from other high achievers. |

many foundations are withdrawing from research altogether, thereby increasing the likelihood of serious errors in selecting the most effective interventions. Some errors involve rejecting a true hypothesis without proof, while others involve accepting a false hypothesis on the basis of hunch.

I have committed both statistical errors in my research on social entrepreneurship—errors that I corrected as I searched for evidence to support or deny specific assertions about entrepreneurs, ideas, opportunities, and organizations. I am not done with this work, but do recognize that all of us carry untested notions about our definitions—for example, that social entrepreneurs must work 24/7 to succeed. Although these intensely committed individuals are certainly alluring, there is little evidence that sleep deprivation, emotional and physical stress, and social isolation are essential ingredients of success. Quite the contrary; overworked entrepreneurs often make their greatest mistakes when they put their work ahead of personal health.

## A Blended Definition of Social Entrepreneurship

A more inclusive definition of social entrepreneurship produces an immediate result: Social entrepreneurship can be found almost everywhere. Although award and fellowship programs might yield long lists of names and organizations for possible study, such lists would not contain the sometime-entrepreneurs or on-hold entrepreneurs out there. Similarly, case studies might miss the once-moribund organizations that have suddenly rediscovered themselves, or the self-effacing, non-media-savvy entrepreneurs who prefer to remain anonymous.

Instead of searching for the proverbial needle in the haystack, I believe that there are needles almost everywhere, thereby raising hopes there are more social entrepreneurs the field has yet to discover. Some of these entrepreneurs may need little more than a push to make the leap of faith toward social breakthrough. Others may need a more substantial boost in visibility and financial support to move through scale-up and sustained results. Still others may be doing well as they are.

The challenge is to avoid assumptions that reduce social entrepreneurship to just another term that gets bandied about in funding proposals and niche competitions. Other terms, such as innovation, have gone that route and may never be rescued from overuse. At the same time, social entrepreneurship should not be defined so narrowly that it becomes the province of the special few who crowd out potential support and assistance for individuals and entities that are just as special but less well-known.

In the end, the research goal should be to uncover the factors that make all forms of social agitation successful. If these factors suggest that social entrepreneurs must suffer to succeed, so be it. At least the conclusion would yield insights on how to make the struggle easier. If, however, the research suggests that social entrepreneurs can produce change through a more natural process, even better.

Even though I have moved toward a more exclusive definition of social entrepreneurship over the past four years, I still remain an outlier in the field, in part because of persistent questions about three of the most important assumptions: Must social entrepreneurs always invent alone? Are they truly different from other high achievers? And are there different kinds of social entrepreneurship?

## Must Social Entrepreneurs Invent Alone?

Funders often deify the heroes who create new combinations of ideas late at night in their basement studies, I remain convinced that lone wolves are just one source of social entrepreneurship. This is not to suggest that individual heroes do not exist. Nor is it to argue that the spark of imagination always occurs collectively. Rather, it is to confront the notion that collections of individuals are somehow a poor substitute for brilliant solo artists.

To the contrary, even as we rightly celebrate the heroic individuals who have committed their lives to social breakthrough, the research suggests that collaboration is an equal, if not always preferred, tactic for producing the equilibrium-changing ideas. Collaborative creativity, as it is sometimes called, is a powerful tool for increasing the odds of success and trimming the incidence of failures.

Consider the findings from a recent study of more than 500,000 U.S. patents, which is a sound measure of business innovation. According to the study, innovative teams both *inside* and *outside* larger organizations have not only a higher percentage of successes (defined as patentable innovations), but a lower percentage of failures. They are better at (1) finding new combinations of ideas, (2) selecting successful proposals, and (3) rejecting potential failures. Indeed, teams are not only more effective than the classic garage innovator celebrated in Western culture, but they are also more effective than the so-called mad scientist who works alone within an oppressive organization.

Jasjit Singh and Lee Fleming described the pattern in a January 2010 *Management Science* article. Asking whether the lone inventor is more or less likely to invent breakthroughs, they use 500,000 patents to establish that lone wolves are less likely to innovate outside of where they work. Singh and Fleming conclude that "those who work alone and outside of an organization are least likely of all to invent a breakthrough."

Their summary of the role of teams is well worth reading in its entirety.

> Teams have an inherent advantage in the identification of the best ideas. A collaborative team will consider the invention from a greater variety of viewpoints and potential applications; such broader consideration is more likely to uncover problems. Given the typically greater diversity of experience on a collaborative team, some member is more likely to recall having seen a problem with a similar invention and argue to abandon or modify the approach.
>
> In short, collaborative creativity will subject individually conceived ideas to a more rigorous selection process so that fewer poor ideas are pursued. Independent of the idea's source (lone versus collaborative), we propose that collaboration improves the effectiveness of the selection phase because collaborative selection will be more rigorous than lone selection.

Translated into baseball terms, collaborative creativity produces more hits, steals, extra bases, runs, and home runs, even as it also produces fewer errors, strikeouts, missed signals, and runners left on base.

As Singh and Fleming also show, even collaborative creativity located within a large organization produces better results than lone-wolf innovation:

> Arguments similar to benefits from affiliation with teams can also be made for affiliation with organizations. We propose that a single independent inventor (the image here is of an antisocial individual working in his or her garage) will be more isolated than a single inventor who works within an organization. The assumption is that an affiliated inventor who does not collaborate will still enjoy more social interaction (among colleagues and technical experts) than an unaffiliated inventor. This assumption is consistent with perspectives that the ability to accumulate and leverage knowledge provides a key reason for the existence of firms. Accordingly, firms can be seen as social communities that are a natural extension of teams when it comes to creation of new knowledge. Though there are surely exceptions of highly connected yet independent inventors, our argument depends on the typical independent inventor being more isolated than the typical affiliated inventor. Because isolated inventors will lack multiple and (to varying degrees) uncorrelated filters, they will uncover fewer potential problems and hence develop more dead ends.

Notwithstanding this growing body of evidence on the power of collaboration, the field of social entrepreneurship still focuses primarily on lone wolves. It often seems that the more isolated the entrepreneur, the more likely the funding.

The field is starting to embrace the collaborative model, however. Bill Drayton made this point in his April 8, 2010, contribution to McKinsey & Company's What Matters web site. Although he clearly believes that lone wolves matter greatly to social change, his Ashoka fellows are increasingly working together to forge large coalitions for change:

> Over the last half-dozen years we have been developing something with even more far-reaching impact—*collaborative entrepreneurship*. There has never been anything like it before. However, once there are several hundred leading social entrepreneurs in a field across the continents, one can be confident that a jump to the next paradigm in the field is near. . . . Once it is thus clear where the world must go, the community then determines what one or two things must happen if the world is to get there—and somewhere between a third and a half of the leading social entrepreneur Fellows then work together to tip the seven to ten countries that are critical ultimately to tipping the world.

The same can be said of the individuals and teams that unite to create a new combination in the first place. The field of social entrepreneurship is clearly moving now toward collaborative teams, albeit ones composed of social entrepreneurs who have already created their own initiatives. It cannot be long before the concept expands to teams of all potential players in creating breakthroughs.

## Are Social Entrepreneurs Truly Different?

Even as the field moves toward a more inclusive definition of social entrepreneurship by embracing collaboration, there is still an underlying belief that social entrepreneurs are somehow different from other entrepreneurs in the worlds of business, arts, sciences, and so forth. No matter how and where they create their ideas, whether as lone wolves or in large teams, in their basements or in large organizations, are social entrepreneurs truly a rare breed?

At the start of my research journey in 2006, I challenged the notion that social entrepreneurs were different from other entrepreneurs and high achievers in general. Like other entrepreneurs, they believe in a more hopeful future and are driven by a persistent, almost unshakable optimism. Like other entrepreneurs, they also persevere in large part because they believe they will not fail.

By 2008, however, I had changed my assumption to a more exclusive approach. I came to believe that social entrepreneurs are very different from other entrepreneurs in their deep commitment to address social injustice. Unlike business entrepreneurs, who pursue new ideas for profit and glory, social entrepreneurs are clearly motivated by the desire to help others. Although some social entrepreneurs also make profits through social ventures, and others seem to seek glory, social entrepreneurs are not mere billiard balls deflected by accident into the social breakthrough pocket. Rather, they are motivated by a sense of social injustice that other entrepreneurs do not have.

At the same time, there is mixed evidence at best that entrepreneurs of any kind are really that different from high achievers in general. As William Gartner wrote in his seminal 1988 article, "Entrepreneurs often *do* seem like special people who achieve things that most of us do not achieve. These achievements, we think, must be based on some special inner quality. It is difficult *not* to think this way."

However, Gartner could find little evidence to support this image. Describing his search for "this entity known as the entrepreneur," Gartner concluded that personality characteristics were "ancillary" to entrepreneurial behavior: "Research on the entrepreneur should focus on what the entrepreneur does and not who the entrepreneur is." Twenty years and hundreds of studies later, Gartner's conclusion remains unchallenged.

Despite this evidence, the field is moving toward a blended position on this key assumption. Yes, social entrepreneurs have different goals and perhaps more traumatic childhoods than business entrepreneurs, but no, there is little research that suggests these differences are especially important to their success.

It is safest therefore to suggest that social entrepreneurs are more than another breed of business entrepreneur. They have very different destinations in life and less interest in making money. They make embrace businesslike thinking, but only to the extent it drives their social agendas.

## Are There Different Kinds of Social Entrepreneurship?

The search for social entrepreneurship may be missing the forest for the definitional trees. It is quite possible that Martin and Osberg are defining just one type of social entrepreneurship, while I am describing another. Perhaps lone wolves are particularly useful in creating those legions of imitators or at early moments of the impact effort when hope seems lost. Perhaps collaborations are more effective in massing for policy impact or at later steps of the impact process when momentum is essential.

Consider for a moment at least two somewhat different types of social entrepreneurs, each of which has a role to play in social change. Table 1.2 provides some speculative

**Table 1.2** A Speculative Comparison of Type A and Type B Social Entrepreneurship

| | **Type A Social Entrepreneurship** | **Type B Social Entrepreneurship** |
|---|---|---|
| Entrepreneur: Who does the work? | Lone wolf driven<br>24/7 passion<br>Higher demand for consensus<br>Higher focus on visibility<br>Higher optimism about success | Team driven<br>Lower intensity<br>Higher tolerance of dissent<br>Lower focus on visibility<br>Higher concerns about failure |
| Idea: What do entrepreneurs produce? | Higher focus on program innovation<br>High risk tolerance<br>Higher focus on distinctiveness<br>Lower interest in fine-tuning<br>More intuitiveness | Higher focus on process innovation<br>Less risk tolerance<br>Higher focus on experimentation<br>Higher competition among ideas<br>More long-range planning |
| Opportunity: When do entrepreneurs act? | Higher focus on creating new opportunity<br>Higher need for alertness<br>Higher "David" orientation<br>Greater certainty of success<br>Funded externally | Higher focus on exploiting existing opportunity<br>Higher need for agility<br>Higher "sure thing" orientation<br>More second-guessing<br>Funded internally |
| Organization: Where do entrepreneurs work? | More multitasking<br>Flatter hierarchy<br>Less participation<br>Younger, smaller<br>Weaker governance | More specialization<br>Thicker hierarchy<br>More delegation<br>Older, larger<br>More red tape |
| Social impact: What is the bottom line? | Fewer successes<br>Faster implementation<br>Greatest threats come from outside the organization<br>Potential founder's syndrome<br>Fewer partnerships, greater focus on proprietary protection | Fewer failures<br>Slower implementation<br>Greatest threats come from inside the organization<br>Potential orphan ideas<br>More partnerships, less focus on protection |

comparisons of what might be called Type A and Type B social entrepreneurship.

## Type A

My definition of Type A social entrepreneurship is built upon Martin and Osberg's work—the lone wolf, 24/7 passions, unrelenting optimism, a new organization, and an unshakable commitment to change. Type A entrepreneurs appear to be Type A personalities, meaning they are absolutely and passionately committed to whatever-it-takes change. Their faith in the possible can produce overconfidence, a certain degree of hubris, and an unwillingness to confront potential weaknesses in their plans. They appear to be highly motivated by achievement and possibly more intuitive in choosing drivers toward impact, which exposes them to greater risks of failure.

Driven by their early experiences in life, they persevere against the odds, and may even find greater energy as the conventional wisdom pushes back. They may be more intuitive than Type B entrepreneurs, meaning that they are more likely to be dreamers than scientists, more likely to be inspired by the creative process than by market pressure. In short, they may act out of a very deep concern for curing injustice rather than the need to create new combinations as a way to meet organizational pressure.

Even as they harness their personal passion, Type A entrepreneurs may find it difficult to work with others in their effort even to the point of discouraging dissent within their own organizations. They also appear to struggle with governance and accounting issues and may have greater difficulty measuring pace and impacts. Their organizations appear to be more agile and alert in many ways, but they may be unable to bring resources to bear on potential opportunities, in part because they operate so close to the financial margin. Their greatest vulnerabilities involve a lack of basic organizational capacity, which may reflect the lack of unrestricted and diversified revenues.

## Type B

Type B social entrepreneurship is perhaps best described by the moderately entrepreneurial organizations that I found among the social-change organizations I surveyed for *The Search for Social Entrepreneurship*. The moderately entrepreneurial organizations clearly had the capacity for social breakthrough, but also had some of the bureaucratic weight that makes such activity more difficult.

There were times when the moderately entrepreneurial organizations looked more like highly entrepreneurial organizations compared with their not-too-entrepreneurial peers. For example, respondents at the moderately entrepreneurial organizations reported much higher levels of founder involvement, higher overall performance, and a somewhat lower commitment to being well managed than their not-too-entrepreneurial peers reported.

There were other times, however, when the moderately entrepreneurial organizations looked exactly like their not-too-entrepreneurial peers. For example, respondents at my moderately entrepreneurial organizations reported similar budget growth, demand for services, external vulnerability, and the lack of basic resources such as information technology and training.

Either way, my research suggests social entrepreneurship is not always a 24/7 activity and most certainly not an all-consuming organizational passion. New combinations can arise through chance encounters with reality, and can be stimulated by idea generators such as suggestion programs and internal venture competitions. Instead of the star systems that favor the charismatic inventors, my moderately entrepreneurial organizations allowed innovation to spring from any corner.

Moderately entrepreneurial organizations also reported the greatest diversification of programs and funding as well as the largest budgets among the three groups of social benefit organizations. Although diversification is not a panacea for all that ails nonprofit organizations, it can provide occasional opportunities for investment in social entrepreneurship. Facing slower growth, though growth nonetheless, these moderately entrepreneurial organizations may have used diversification to subsidize their pattern-breaking impact.

## Choosing Types

These comparisons between Type A and Type B entrepreneurship are still speculative, but each type appears in the literature on social change. It could be that Type A entrepreneurship is the best driver for program innovation, while Type B is the better driver for fine-tuning and process improvement. Nevertheless, the comparisons do underscore the notion that social entrepreneurship is not a one-size-fits-all phenomenon. The two types are not either-or, but rather both-and.

J. Gregory Dees was right in 1998 when he described social entrepreneurship as an exceptional act by exceptional people, whatever the entrepreneurial type. He advised, "These behaviors should be encouraged and rewarded in those who have the capabilities and temperament for this kind of work. We could use many more of them." But as Dees cautioned, not everyone is well suited to entrepreneurship: "Social entrepreneurs are one special breed of leader, and they should be recognized as such. This definition preserves their distinctive status and assures that social entrepreneurship is not treated lightly. We need social entrepreneurs to help us find new avenues toward social improvement as we enter the next century."

Although there may be much more social entrepreneurship across the sectors than previously imagined, success still involves a struggle against an entrenched equilibrium that often denies simple common sense. Indeed, if I had to pick one core characteristic of successful social entrepreneurs beyond commitment to vision, it would be perseverance against an array of obstacles, a point well made by Dees in arguing that social entrepreneurs act boldly without regard to resources in hand. This perseverance can exist in lone wolves and teams, in an individual's personal hubris and a well-funded idea incubator, and in new and old organizations. We need to move away from the old one-best-way approach to building high-performance entrepreneurship and toward a more ecumenical approach.

This embrace of a broader image of the entrepreneur as both a singular and a plural term suggests that the number of social entrepreneurs is neither small nor static. Drayton may be quite right that the number of potential social entrepreneurs is quite low (perhaps just 1 in 10 million). But there is considerable research that suggests we can generate more social entrepreneurship through education, training, and encouragement. The federal government has a host of programs for increasing the number of business entrepreneurs, for example, not to mention whole departments and agencies, while the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation has embarked on an ambitious effort to strengthen entrepreneurship education at the nation's business schools. Perhaps a similar focus on potential social entrepreneurs might work just as well.

## A New Inventory of Assumptions

As the research on social entrepreneurship continues to grow, the field must confront its own prevailing wisdom about how breakthroughs occur. This prevailing wisdom is particularly powerful in shaping investment decisions of all kinds—fellowships for individual entrepreneurs, grants for growth, signals to government grant programs such as the federal government's Social Innovation Fund. If social entrepreneurship comes in many sizes and shapes, investors must be much more flexible in their own prevailing wisdom about how change occurs. They must hedge against their own bias in focusing on exclusivity. As Table 1.3 suggests, the prevailing wisdom about social entrepreneurship is built on a series of increasingly questionable assumptions.

**Table 1.3** Alternative Assumptions about Social Entrepreneurship

| Prevailing Wisdom | Amended Prevailing Wisdom |
|---|---|
| ***Entrepreneurs*** | |
| Lone wolves are the primary source of social change. | FALSE—Social entrepreneurs also work in collaborative teams. |
| Social entrepreneurs share very similar strategies. | FALSE—There are different kinds of social entrepreneurship. |
| Social entrepreneurs are different from other high achievers. | FALSE—Social entrepreneurs may have a different purpose, but share many similar skills. |
| ***Ideas*** | |
| New combinations of ideas are essential for social change. | FALSE—Breakthroughs often occur through the expansion of old ideas. |
| Initial testing of new combinations is often a distraction from scaling. | FALSE—Research and development spending is a particularly powerful but often neglected investment strategy. |
| Breakthroughs are usually surprising and novel. | FALSE—Breakthroughs often involve new combinations of familiar ideas. |

| | |
|---|---|
| ***Opportunities*** | |
| Opportunities are discovered, not created. | FALSE—Opportunities can be created through agitation and advocacy. |
| Opportunities arise at essentially random intervals. | FALSE—Opportunities often arise in waves during relatively brief punctuations in history. |
| Opportunities reveal themselves to a special few. | FALSE—Opportunities can be widely identified and disseminated through trend analysis. |
| ***Organizations*** | |
| Social entrepreneurship thrives in flat and porous organizations. | FALSE—Social entrepreneurs can emerge in highly bureaucratic settings, albeit at greater cost. |
| Social entrepreneurship requires new and young organizations. | FALSE—Established organizations can and do produce breakthroughs, and often have the dissemination networks for rapid scaling. |
| Organizational growth is essential for success. | FALSE—Impact, not rapid growth, is the key measure of success. |
| ***Social Impact*** | |
| Social entrepreneurship destroys the prevailing wisdom. | FALSE—The prevailing wisdom is rarely destroyed. |
| Social entrepreneurship advances almost entirely through replication and imitation. | FALSE—Breakthroughs also occur through policy changes that mandate change through regulation. |
| Social entrepreneurship demands proprietary protection. | FALSE—Breakthroughs involve collaboration and information sharing. |

The prevailing wisdom about social entrepreneurship is shifting quickly toward this more ecumenical approach. Investors such as the Skoll Foundation are moving toward the center of what will be labeled "social entrepreneurship 4.0" relatively soon, while lone wolves are moving slowly toward the periphery as the best alternative for change.

This is not to denigrate heroes, of course. They will always play a key role in the breakthrough networks that aggregate pressure. But the current prevailing wisdom has focused on heroes as an almost exclusive source of lessons learned. The search for an exclusive definition of social entrepreneurship will no doubt continue—that is how academic fields are built. But this search for exclusivity can become a barrier to the thoughtful investing it seeks. The focus should be on creating as much entrepreneurship as possible through every means available, including efforts to raise the number of social entrepreneurs.

Moreover, the field must be more careful about defining social entrepreneurship as just another form of business entrepreneurship. Business entrepreneurship offers many important lessons for solving seemingly intractable problems, not the least of which is the role of imagination, invention, research and development, and launch in eventual breakthroughs.

However, the analogy between business and social entrepreneurship can be stretched too far. Perhaps Harvard University professor Graham T. Allison Jr. would agree. Writing in 1979 on government and private management, he asked whether the two were "fundamentally alike in all unimportant respects." Although he found significant overlap between the two sectors on general strategy, production, and marketing, he wondered how much further the learning might go. According to Allison, government can learn a great deal from business about how to deliver services, whereas business has less to say about who gets what, when, and where in the great battles ahead.

Allison might apply the same logic to business and social entrepreneurship: Are they also fundamentally alike in all unimportant respects? Business and social entrepreneurship both create waves of creative destruction, for example, but the destruction is not the same. When the waves crash ashore in business, whole industries are washed away for good. When the waves come ashore in social entrepreneurship, however, the industries of deprivation rarely disappear. Having reaped the profits of deprivation through poverty, disease, environmental degradation, and injustice, they fight hard to regain power and reverse change. They are not known as defenders of the prevailing wisdom for nothing—they prevail through the blunt exercise of power and control, crushing breakthroughs by every means at their disposal.

## A Lingering Question

A blended definition of social entrepreneurship accepts the notion that entrepreneurs bring a special set of skills and motivations to their work. They may or may not be different from other high achievers, but they are high achievers nonetheless. Thus, one of the most important questions for future research and funding involves the key assets of successful social entrepreneurs. Simply asked, what do successful change agents need?

Answering this question is essential for expanding the pipeline of future change agents, but must involve much greater rigor toward developing what the Echoing Green Foundation is now calling the *social entrepreneurship quotient (SEQ)*. Echoing Green readily admits that its SEQ is a work in progress, but the inventory nonetheless represents a very serious effort to pin down the personal foundations of successful change. It also addresses the need for some kind of evidence-based tool for moving past the "we know it when we see it" inventories of individual and team commitment toward a more sophisticated sorting of what does and does not matter for actual success.

This is a critically important effort for the field, if only because it shapes basic investment decisions—who should be funded, what skills social entrepreneurs need, what makes them successful, what can and cannot be taught, who gets into the figurative tent, and who should be discouraged from further action.

Past research on business entrepreneurs has produced at least one agreement and one caveat that are relevant to the search. The agreement focuses on the nature of the entrepreneur as an unconventional thinker. Focusing on scientific breakthroughs in her 1995 study, Carol Steiner identified practicality, authenticity/creativity, and teamwork as the three markers of unconventional thinking among scientists and engineers. For Steiner, science is a necessary component of the innovative idea. "Yet innovation needs visionaries able to take in the big picture. It needs individuals confident enough to shake off the straitjacket of specialist paradigms. Most of all, it needs free agents to creatively and individually interpret a complex world through a complicated interpersonal process."

The caveat involves the lack of hard evidence to make this case. Virtually every recent article on underlying personality differences ends with a call for more research. "What lies beneath?" Norris Krueger Jr. asked in the title of his 2007 article. "The experiential essence of entrepreneurial thinking," he answered. But having summarized the best available evidence, Krueger leaves the specifics to future researchers. "Like Newton," he concludes, "I hope I have offered the reader a few shiny pebbles; and while I hold some of those pebbles quite dear, it is very clear to me that cognitive science offers an ocean of great ideas, theories, and methods that entrepreneurship scholars and educators can explore for many years. There are smoother pebbles and prettier shells yet to be found."

Indeed, the lack of durable findings on the distinctive characteristics of business entrepreneurs has prompted a number of dead ends. "As intellectually stimulating as it may be to find out what motivates entrepreneurs and how they differ from ordinary mortals," Howard E. Aldrich and Martha Argelia Martinez wrote in 2001, "the more critical question is how these individuals manage to create and sustain successful organizations, despite severe obstacles." Writing later in the same article, they posed the central question for their field: "Can we really get to know the key features of those individuals who enter the heaven of successful entrepreneurship if we do not see the actions and circumstances of those who 'were not chosen'?"

Nevertheless, the search for the entrepreneurial type continues unabated and drives much of the contemporary study of social entrepreneurship. This search may be frustrating, but it is also critically important. Perhaps Echoing Green will find the answer through continued research and testing of its template for specifying the entrepreneurial qualities that lead to impact.

## Conclusion

Words matter. By relying on lessons from business entrepreneurship and the concept of creative destruction, social entrepreneurship has become a powerful concept in the conversation about urgent threats. But business and social entrepreneurship are fundamentally different in many ways, most notably how the prevailing wisdom responds to new ideas.

Some argue, for example, that social entrepreneurship creates a new *and stable* equilibrium. But history strongly suggests that a new social equilibrium is almost inherently unstable. There have been great punctuations in modern history that have created lasting change—the New Deal and the Great Society produced lasting breakthroughs such as Social Security and Medicare, unemployment insurance and Head Start, and new regulatory regimes for the stock market and civil rights. But all of these breakthroughs are under fire today, and will continue to be far into the future. This is the nature of power and politics.

Ironically, some argue that the two great social movements of recent history have finally achieved their competing visions of the prevailing wisdom with passage of the 2010 health care reforms and the 2001 tax cuts. The former marks the supposed end of the New Deal, while the latter theoretically ends with the Reagan Revolution. Some pundits argue that these two versions of the prevailing wisdom are now completed into competing statutes and regulations, but neither is cemented. Both continue to battle each other in separate political movements, and are unlikely to be resolved soon.

Indeed, each of these visions is anchored in the very fabric of the U.S. Constitution and the ongoing political contests between political parties and interest groups. They are always at war to some extent, and anchor today's hyper-polarization on Capitol Hill and in the media. The two visions can find common ground during periods of war and domestic crisis, of course. But the visions compete constantly for victory on the major issues of the day, most notably on big-ticket reforms such as health care and economic recovery.

Thus, even as we celebrate the notable success of social entrepreneurship in creating new ideas for changing the prevailing wisdom about education, disease, hunger, and economic development, we must be cognizant of the pushback. Much as social entrepreneurs try to be nonpartisan, their ideas are often sliced and diced into political fodder by opponents.

Volunteerism is a great public good, for example, but paying for it is subject to debate as well-motivated citizens pick their issues and their favorite organizations, left or right. Even as we learn more about disciplined imagination, research and development, launch, market penetration, and scale-up from business, we must also learn from other disciplines as we develop techniques for diffusion and impact. Entrepreneurship not only has different purposes in the political and business worlds; it has very different tactics. Secrecy is the prime directive in business, for example, while transparency is a central value in government.

As such, social entrepreneurs must do more than create, launch, and scale new combinations of ideas. They have a longer-term job description, too:

- Design strategies for achieving lasting agitation.
- Create public support for breakthrough.
- Keep this support alive and focused on meaningful interventions.
- Lobby and campaign.
- Testify both literally and figuratively to the need for policy change.
- Support the faithful execution of the laws that social entrepreneurs' ideas produce.
- Build coalitions with safekeepers, explorers, and advocates to produce, maintain, update, and improve past breakthroughs.
- Insist on an adequate infrastructure for future breakthroughs.

- Celebrate the contributions of social networks even if this means less credit for the social entrepreneur's own organization.
- Prepare for counterattack.

Defined more broadly, the social entrepreneur's job description involves the steadfast application of creativity to both inventing new solutions and fighting for their adoption. They cannot assume that the world will follow their lead—they must recruit support wherever they can, even if this means a loss of distinctiveness.

As Jane Wei-Skillern and Sonia Marciano wrote in the spring 2008 *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, social breakthrough requires a new kind of social-benefit organization:

> Management wisdom says that nonprofits must be large and in charge to do the most good. But some of the world's most successful organizations instead stay small, sharing their load with like-minded, long-term partners. The success of these networked nonprofits suggests that organizations should focus less on growing themselves and more on cultivating their networks.

Unlike business breakthroughs, which must be concentrated in a single organization or supply chain to achieve profit, social breakthrough is strengthened by widespread collaboration with potential competitors.

Wei-Skillern and Marciano found few distinctly business-like characteristics among the members of successful networks. To the contrary, social impact came first, not proprietary interest and intellectual property. Members put their missions first even if they had to forsake benefits such as credit, control, funding, and growth. In doing so, they spread risk across many partners, thereby reducing their own vulnerability. By viewing themselves as nodes, not hubs, of their networks, they continued their own discreet work but benefited from "more holistic, coordinated, and realistic solutions to social issues" than traditional hub organizations.

Building these nodes of impact is now part of the social entrepreneur's job description, too.