

2010

Can Businesses Be Socially Brilliant?



A report from
the Centre for Social Brilliance
& the Visionary Network
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The Socially Brilliant Business Symposium Report 30th July 2010 in London

Hosted by the Centre for Social Brilliance & the Visionary Network

On Friday 30th July on a beautiful sunny London afternoon, The Centre for Social Brilliance and the Visionary Network co-hosted a half-day symposium to deeply explore and to co-create 'Socially Brilliant Business'. This symposium is really timely as many organisations, businesses and social entrepreneurs are looking at how to positively impact society while embedding social responsibility in the DNA of their organisations.

Business has the potential to evolve society in quantum leaps. There are many signs of them already shape-shifting and showing up brilliantly -- pockets of amazing abundance, creation and social brilliance coming through to create a more vibrant way. At this event, we looked at examples of what is already happening in socially brilliant businesses and then collectively co-created our vision of what socially brilliant businesses can be.

Manisha Dahad, co-founder of the Centre for Social Brilliance, commenced the afternoon with some thoughts on Social Brilliance ...

Social Brilliance is a new paradigm that shifts the way we look at social change and social responsibility in our world today. Through social brilliance we create empowered, vibrant societies where individuals can freely express their unique gifts and talents and where they can create what they truly want. We connect to the inherent brilliance in others and their capacity to contribute massively to the business they're a part of.

Social Brilliance is about being stirred by the interconnectedness of the world so that the collective visions of humanity can emerge. In this new paradigm way, we're profoundly touched and passionately ignited by the social potential in every situation rather than being consumed by the social issues.

Over 90% of the co-creators at the symposium feel they're more connected to the world than ever before and that's coming from something beyond just the technological influence. It's obvious there's a holistic movement of social creation already happening. While social brilliance is a relatively new concept, many of us feel it has been stirring powerfully in us over recent years.

Previously in charitable and NGO efforts, there has been a tendency to provide aid and assistance, connecting with people as disadvantaged and helpless. Social brilliance connects instead to their brilliance, knowing they have the inherent ability to create a life of their choosing.

We looked at how easy it is to tune into the pain of disadvantaged people or tragic circumstances. But we saw that when we do that we are giving energy to that pain and often times creating more of it. Sympathy, empathy and even compassion can be replaced by a more effective relationship to passion and potential, the brilliance of what wants to come through. We were urged to look beyond the chaos to the authentic expression of the potential and the brilliance that is there in the people, businesses and societies that are affected.

These are extraordinary times. The whole of the human race, systems and structures are shifting and we can create the kind of societies and world we want to be a part of.

A new paradigm of play becomes available when we are socially brilliant

Abundance



Grace & Fun

Vibrant Energy

Collaboration

Soleira Green, co-founder of the Visionary Network, spoke of her vision for Social Brilliance...

Soleira kicked off by defining new visionaries. Traditionally visionaries were people who saw into the future for new possibilities, but today visionaries are showing up as people of passion and vision who work collaboratively and creatively to empower and inspire new paradigm possibilities now. Visionaries are no longer futurists ... they're now'ists.

She also spoke about how business had originated as a way of exchanging our creations, goods and services, but today business has the opportunity to expand it's reach by shifting into a completely new paradigm as shapers of the societies and world in which we live. Imagine a world of businesses whose primary purpose is to contribute to a better world while creating abundance in all that they do!

How can we break free of the limitations of business as we know it and create a whole new concept of socially brilliant businesses that contribute to the world? When you're working inside a company it's easy to get swept up in the culture, systems and structures, especially when the company has a huge global presence. Yet today, there are new businesses popping up everywhere that are breaking ground for this new kind of business ... businesses that are inventive, inspiring and operating from passion and creativity.

How can we 'press the bounds' of what is possible and bring that into current business reality, finding new ways and integrating them into our lives and work?

There are many ways to do this – you can be the conversation, stand for what is possible, write it, speak it, coach it and teach it. As a business you can be an influencer of how business is done. You can be a co-creator of a new kind of business for the world. You can look for the potential in every person, situation and business that you encounter, calling it forth in its brilliance.

We looked back over the last 18 months to see the possibilities that have been awakened and found that we're looking at many things really differently now. There are not many of us now that would walk into a bank and open an account without knowing if the bank is in alignment with integrity and what they stand for. We want to work with companies that care.

There is enormous opportunity to press the boundaries for a new kind of business, so we dove into an exploration of how some businesses are already accomplishing social brilliance through their activities.

As a reminder of the power of transformation and potential for business, Charlie Gay, Co-founder of the Centre for Social Brilliance told the story of caterpillars and imaginal cells.

The caterpillar spends most of its life crawling on -- and devouring -- its food source. But when it's time to become an adult, they find a sheltered, safe spot in which to transform into an adult. In all caterpillars, this happens inside a protective shell known as a chrysalis. The transformation itself is amazing. Think of it as recycling -- if you drop a plastic bottle off in the recycling bin, it can be melted down into an entirely different shape. This is what happens inside the chrysalis. Much of the body breaks itself down into imaginal cells, which then become any type of cell. Tucked tightly into its cocoon, the caterpillar begins to dissolve, except for a few cell clusters called imaginal buds. Then those few cells start to grow and multiply. They differentiate and form various organs and structures, such as legs, eyes, and a digestive tract. The imaginal cells put themselves back together into a new shape.

Our symposium endeavored to be this '**imaginal cell**' for socially brilliant business.

We hosted an inspiring panel of speakers with each contributor sharing stories of how business is already being socially brilliant today and what the future of socially brilliant business can look like.



Tej Samani, Ambassador of One Young World Foundation and Entrepreneur www.oneyoungworld.com

Tej setup his first company at aged 17 and since then has founded three companies in the fields of psychology, self-help, sport and education. He is currently recognised as one of the top 5 practitioners in the world in the emerging science of Neuro-Stratology. He was selected as one of the top 500 young leaders from around the world to head up the One Young World Delegation, a summit opened and counseled by Kofi Anan, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, Sir Bob Geldof and Mohammad Yunus.

Tej kicked off with the reminder that while we all believe we are progressing with our technology, around 1 billion people cannot read and write. He gave us some examples of what we can do including Mohammad Yunus who started his micro finance program with \$17.

Muhammad Yunus is a Bangladeshi banker, economist and Nobel Peace Prize recipient. He previously was a professor of economics where he developed the concepts of micro credit and microfinance. These loans are given to entrepreneurs too poor to qualify for traditional bank loans. Yunus is also the founder of Grameen Bank. In 2006, Yunus and the bank were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize "for their efforts to create economic and social development." www.muhammadyunus.org Muhammad Yunus defines social business as a cause-driven business. The objective of the company is to achieve social goals.

Grameen and Group Danone went into a joint venture to create a yogurt fortified with micro-nutrients to decrease malnutrition for the children of Bangladesh. The yogurt is produced with solar and bio gas energy and is served in environmentally friendly packaging. The first plant started production in Late 2006. The 10-year plan is to establish 50+ plants, create several hundred distribution jobs and self-degradable packaging.

Grameen and BASF went into a joint venture because there are areas in Bangladesh where there is a high risk of catching Malaria (58K newly infected in 2007). The product created was a mosquito net, which families would sleep under to protect against malaria. Half a million nets have already been produced. The idea of the joint venture was to develop affordable products for the poor that could protect them from deadly diseases. Grameen BASF have also started the production of micronutrient sachets to sprinkle on food, which provides essential nutrients that are missing from the poor's daily diets.

What these initiatives have in common is that they motivate and sustain. One of the biggest problems that we face is charity. Social brilliance motivates and inspires others to change their reality and to provide a context where they will thrive. The richest 225 individuals on the planet have a combined wealth of \$1 trillion. The money is here. We have had over 15 years of intense competition. It is time now to start co-operating. "We don't need to be macho super heroes; we just need to be good."

When asked "What young people feel about social brilliance?", Tej replied, "With the under 21 year olds there is an eagerness, a willingness to engage with companies and their CEOs and to say you have been competitive, but now through the creation of love brands you can make more money and be bolder, braver and more tenacious. We need freedom and imagination and to create pressure to engage senior people. We want ears and hearts open – ready to listen."

Tromie Lee-Dodd, Programme Manager at Jamie Oliver Foundation

www.fifteen.net

Tromie oversees the recruitment, selection, training and development of the young people that enroll on Fifteen's 12 month apprentice programme and also manages the short courses that engage the local community. Fifteen Restaurant is a social enterprise arm of the Jamie Oliver Foundation that funds and supports youth from diverse backgrounds.

Prior to joining Fifteen in 2008, she worked for School-Home Support (UK), a national charity that helps children and young people make the most of their education, delivering its programme across three London boroughs.

Fifteen offers us a socially brilliant business model and they are doing it in a totally new way. Jamie set up the venture to give back because he believed that young people had untapped talents.

Fifteen is growing and very exciting 8 years on. It's an opportunity for young people from extremely challenging backgrounds to transform their lives. They run sourcing trips to take them to the source of some of the food that they use in their cooking. Teaching them about lambing in Wales puts these young people through a very different environment. They send many of these young people back into education and they use personal development programs to help move them beyond their barriers to build emotional intelligence, anger management and relationships.

"I couldn't believe that they still believed in me. It's like family. I learned a lot of discipline and how to keep my mouth shut. They taught me about all the anger I had in me. They put a light on inside me that I'd never had before." says Ben Chapman, graduate of the 2004 programme.

I've got so much love and time for the people I met at Fifteen. I learnt how to get along with people that I don't get along with. That's something you have to do to get along in life. It's not just about me anymore, is it?" says Lloyd Hayes, 2005 graduate of Fifteen.

Fifteen also collaborates with other resonant organizations such as The Princes Trust. Tromie clearly has her dream job and is filled with passion and purpose for what she does. As she says: "At Fifteen we have a buzz that is our charity and purpose."

Mary Woodgate, Accenture Development Partnerships

www.accenture.com/adp

Mary Woodgate is an International Programmes Manager within the Accenture Development Partnerships (ADP) management team. ADP's goal is to have a catalytic impact on the international development sector by providing development sector organizations with access to Accenture's people, knowledge, assets, and global network. Through partnering with development sector organisations ADP helps them to become high performance organizations, applying Accenture's business and technology capabilities to help them fulfill their missions and maximize their impact on sustainable development, advancing market-based solutions to development challenges which are scalable, sustainable and results-oriented. They also broker and integrate partnerships between the public, private and non-profit sectors to foster collaboration in addressing global development challenges. ADP aims to achieve this mission through a not-for-profit business model, which is scalable and financially sustainable.

Mary's background is in supply chain management consulting and she has a special interest in nutrition. She manages a number of ADP's relationships with Geneva-based organisations, including the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), the Global Fund, WWF, and the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC).

She works directly with Gib Bulloch who created ADP. He was on a train platform at Temple on the London Underground after taking a year sabbatical working with VSO and had a moment of inspiration. At the time, the only way to take his skills to the development sector was through a leave of absence. He felt that there was more ... there were so many resources and 180,000 people in the company, so he wondered how he could harness the power, resources and skills to direct them at the development sector. Today, over 550 people have worked on hundreds of projects, mainly with NGO's, but now also working with businesses who want to be socially brilliant. For example, they are working with Barclays who are looking to offer a service that can support businesses on microfinance to go to the next level. And more businesses are getting involved.

So what does Social Brilliance look like?



And what does Good Business look like?

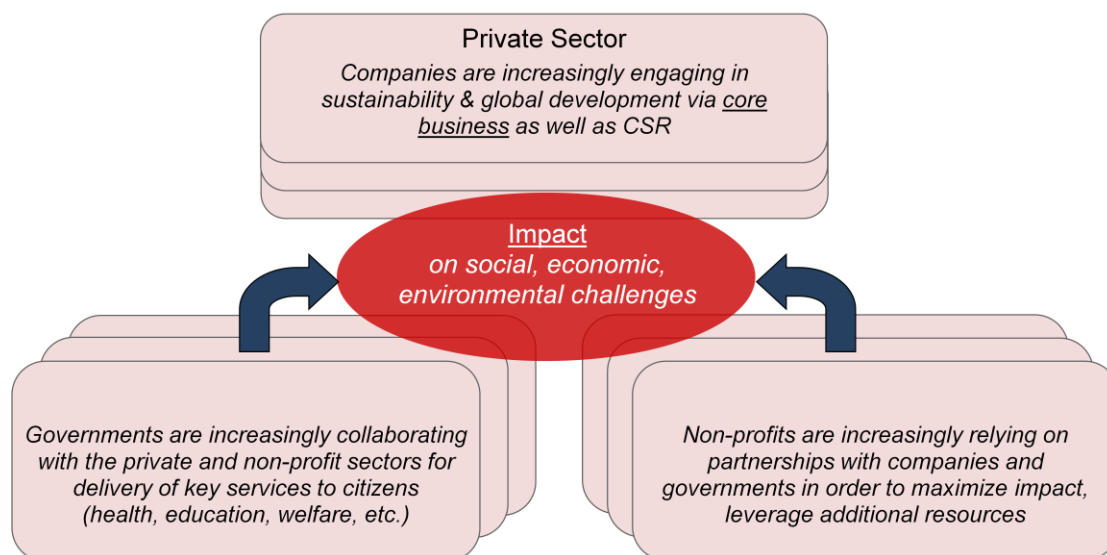


Mary is convinced businesses can be socially brilliant. Many are already. And she says that socially brilliant businesses are like good businesses. She also highlights “If we don’t engage, we are missing the rich potential that is there. 51% of the richest institutions in the world are businesses. There is a lot of synergy available beyond aid and charity.”

Mary recently interviewed someone to join the ADP team. When he did his first assignment in Africa as a fairly junior consultant he was wondering what he could have to offer to the team he was liaising with, including a UN head of logistics. But as he started to share what he knew about supply chain management he could see people were really interested, asking him questions – he could see his own potential on totally new levels. Soon they will have embedded this into their performance development system with leaders assessed on the support that they have given to Accenture Development Partners.

This is a great example of the shift happening within business. It came from a vision, a guerilla movement that worked inside a culturally different context and great passion to create a socially brilliant business. And there is a further trend towards the **convergence of the private, public and third sector to have a tremendous impact socially and environmentally.**

“Convergence” refers to the trend of increasing inter-linkages between the corporate sector, the nonprofit sector, and the public sector in the domains of business, sustainability and global development.



Marcus Jamieson-Pond, CSR Manager at Addleshaw Goddard LLP
www.addleshawgoddard.com

Marcus Jamieson-Pond is Addleshaw Goddard's first CSR Manager. He was appointed to the role in 2006, having spent almost 20 years working in Human Resources, the last eight being at City Law Firms in roles up to and including HR Director. His HR background has given him an insight into corporate culture, leadership and change issues. Having worked in other industries, he can identify opportunities where the firm's CSR programme can be innovative and really make a difference.

Marcus works closely with members of the firm's Board and Management Committee to set the strategy for CSR and is responsible for developing an agenda for action that engages the rest of the firm. He believes in working closely with external agencies and clients to come up with concepts that have a positive end result for others. He focuses on the impact the firm can have through developing such links, whilst helping to meet our responsibilities to our People, Marketplace, Community and Environment.

He is also a Trustee of the disabled paralympic sport of Goalball - having taken up this role after a brush with the Cheeky Girls. Marcus is also passionate about connecting people and founded the CSR network, Convergence, in November 2009. He is about to start a secondment at City Hall, working alongside the Mayor's Special Advisor on Volunteering and Social Action, to put in place strategies to encourage volunteering in London.

Marcus' early beginnings in social brilliance was to launch 'the leap project' for a music retailer in the late 80s. He sold the project to the business as a recruitment exercise rather than a 'charity' initiative and recruited homeless people into the business as sales staff. He was very clear that they were there because of circumstance and knew that he could make a huge difference to their lives by giving them a break to let them realise their potential.

In the beginning as a CSR manager he was largely filtering money around, but now 4 years later it is very different. He is driving social change within business and it never ceases to amaze him the enthusiasm and passion that people have. It gives business the chance to reassess itself and everyone has the opportunity to make a difference.

Judi Richardson, Founder of PONO Consultants International Inc, Canada
www.ponoconsultants.com

International strategist/consultant, author, recipient of International Executive Coach of the Year, Canadian Progress Club Woman of the Year -Entrepreneur and Innovator, and SMU Distinguished Community Service Awards.

Judi is called both an artist and an engineer for her ability to engage others to ignite vision, performance and aligned action in internal teams, with customers/client, external stakeholders and globally in citizen engagement.

Judi advises senior leaders on the impact their vision and leadership strategies have on their organizations' culture and corporate agenda. Capturing the energy of individuals and groups, Judi uses processes that engage creativity, fun, spirit, knowledge, and expertise – inviting others to tap into the spark that ignites potential and change in their organizations.

Judi sees organizations and businesses as a collective expression of the people who chose to show up! She comes with more questions than answers. She believes that it is the quality of the questions we ask that makes a difference. One arm of the PONO agency works with governments, leading change and driving citizen engagement – working also with the internal organizational cultures to fully integrate this transformational way of working.

Judi also says that “Socially brilliant companies say yes to the power of story. Much of what isn't working can be heard in the organizational dialogue over and over – it is so simple to choose to join together and begin to change the story. We often hear how people see Foundations and NGO's as the only ones doing good work and see “for profit” enterprises as “not so good” – we are privileged to work with those who are creating the future. Rather than simply “rose colored glasses” approaches – our work is grounded in strategic organizational transformation. We view PONO as a “profitable source of pleasure” and part of our “pleasure” is co-creating generative societies. We work with the “issues and gaps” identified by clients in a way that generates hope and creativity for transformational movement leading to transformational growth”.

Beyond corporate social responsibility and triple bottom line, Judi sees companies working from a socially brilliant paradigm where they contribute to the creation of the social fabric. In Canada socially brilliant companies have jumped on a corporate social responsibility bandwagon as a fad, but have realized the transition and transformation that occurs – providing loyal staff with meaningful and profound work, autonomy and opportunity to learn and have fun – all requirements for the next generation!

Bringing a “Canadian” perspective to the symposium, Judi shared how her company is evolving a new way of doing business. One such example is that each employee gets to be his/her “own boss”. Staff members also get offered a full day bi-monthly to engage in their passion in the community, and another personal wellbeing day. Each client project is seen as a “playground” as they remind themselves to bring passion and creativity and build capacity. They build evidence of client brilliance with a deep knowing that every single person has something so magnificent within them that it staggers the imagination and takes everyone's breath away when it is touched.

Examples of their work with clients:

Federal Government committed to dialogue, understanding and including Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge in scientific research

Law Firm – whole firm donates time one afternoon a week to follow their passion and mentor at local schools in any area individuals choose

At a conference with corporate America – committed to increase their procurement by working with minority and women owned companies

Citizens directly influencing legislation and program direction in Provincial Government strategies

Large financial institution – give every employee \$100 to do good in the community at their discretion

Largest health authority invests in empowering community health boards to engage communities and advise on care

University Football team creates a “buzz” that generates community support for local foodbanks

Healthcare in Siberia forging new professional relationships improving patient care

In Canada the dialogue is becoming more mainstream with many success indicators:

- Jantzi Social Index
- Corporate Knights: Best 50 Corporate Citizens
- Imagine Canada: Caring Companies
- KPMG: Top 25 Most Respected Canadian Corporations
- The Chemical Industry and Responsible Care
- Retail Industry and Ethical Sourcing
- Energy Industry and the Carbon Disclosure Project
- Canadian Vehicle Manufacturer’s Ass’n and the Auto Green Plan

In February 2010, the World Economic Forum declared we are moving from a Shareholder to a Stakeholder society. These conversations are happening in boardrooms:

- Alcan’s Mission is to be a top company in financial, social and environmental performance -- Dan Ganier, SVP, Corporate Affairs
- “For too long, corporations have been viewed as pursuing their own self-interest that is contrary to the communities they operate within. In the new millennium, we have to earn the right to keep doing business.” Pat Daniel, CEO Enbridge Inc.
- 55% of CDN consumers consciously buy a product from a company based on believing it is a good corporate citizen. 52% have refused for the same reason (Ipsos Reid)
- 84% of CDN CEOs believe ethical behaviour contributes to profitability (Wilfred Laurier University and The National Post)
- 75% of 140 large US-based companies have adopted EHS because of enhanced reputation, competitive advantage and cost saving (PWC)
- In 2003, 79% of CEOs agreed “sustainability is vital to the profitability of any company” (up from 50% in 2002) (ACCA)

Companies in Canada are truly riding the wave of Social Brilliance and creating new cultures in businesses and societies.

Joanna Brill, Founder of Connective Coaching, Singapore

www.connectivecoaching.net

As someone who is passionate about liberating everyone's most brilliant visionary potential Jo playfully and easily co-creates what wants to happen for all the people she connects with, moment by moment.

Living and working in Asia, Jo sits at the heart of one of the fastest developing parts of the world. She has created a business in an international hub of diversity where people from many different cultures connect in one small dynamic island. She works with leaders and business people from all over the region and brings new perspectives and engages with the bigger potential that transforms the world we live in.

Jo visions socially brilliant businesses as entities that liberate potential, creativity and the innate desire to create the world differently for the collective benefit of all. These companies become places of expression where individuals become a voice for something in the world and they interrelate powerfully to create more for everyone. The culture of these businesses values the richness of experiences, engagement, creativity and the power to create and transform.

Our audience creates and contributes

Apart from the amazing contributions from the panelists, we also had an exhilarating audience exchange in which one of the audience members had audited Innocent Smoothies. She shared that everyone in that business was encouraged to take a creative writing course, which opened up creativity throughout the company.

Innocent is a great example of a socially brilliant business ... a new paradigm company that follows its vision 'to leave things just a little bit better than we find them.' For example, they ran a programme called 'Buy One, Get One Tree' where for each compostable carton registered by customers on their website, they planted a tree in the country they buy their fruit from. And now they're doing 'Buy One, Get One Bee' to create good environments for honey bees.

In a YouTube video, co-founder Richard Reed talks about innocent and their approach to the people in their business. He says: "I think the best businesses, especially the ones going forward, are going to be the ones that ask the people that work in the businesses to remain as those people while they do their business work, to keep their personal values, to not check in their personality at the door. I want people that can come in and make business decisions that while financially astute are actually socially aware. I can't expect people like that to stay around if they're going to be working in a business that doesn't have integrity. If you can find people that are commercially aware and socially aware, it's such a killer combination. ... It means we can all be prouder. It means it's a more exciting place to work. It means we can keep these talented, intelligent, passionate people engaged for longer and that's surely got to be the best route to being a successful business." The energy for all of this is embedded in their company's culture in every way. In 2004, Innocent set up the innocent foundation and since then has donated £1.3M and helped improve the lives of over 500,000 people across the world through the various projects it supports.

Another of our participants, Malcolm Lewis, Corporate Alchemist, spoke about socially brilliant business using a computer analogy, saying ***"This is not about loading new software. This is about a completely new operating system."***

Brilliant outcomes

Overall this symposium pointed out just how far some businesses have already come in engaging with social brilliance. They provide wonderful inspiration and examples that we can all follow.

When businesses are being socially brilliant, their culture and ethos is embedded with sparks of brilliance in many areas:

- The business contributes to and positively impacts its customers, suppliers, shareholders and communities -- locally, societally and/or globally.
- Vision sits at the core of the business with the owners, management and employees aligned with the vision and passionate about playing within it
- Creative environments ignite the brilliance of employees -- beyond innovation and beyond talent capitalization. The employees are passionate, highly creative and feel they can contribute to the business.
- A culture of environmental awareness and eco-friendliness is embedded in all aspects of the business.
- These businesses invent new ways of doing things, internally and externally, breaking the boundaries of how things can be done. They begin to influence how business is done.
- Success is measured with new indicators that are important to the growth of the company, its employees and society -- e.g. employee happiness, creativity, collaborative efforts, contribution, brilliance and fulfillment.

Together at this event, we co-created the possibility of a new kind of business in the world, exploring what that can look like and how we can go forward with that, individually and collectively, to make it real in the world.

We also generated some great new ideas including a brilliance exchange within the Centre for Social Brilliance, which Manisha is now in the process of creating. Many other new ideas, connections and concepts flowed throughout the day and everyone went away inspired, ready to take our businesses into greater contribution to our society and world. An awesomely brilliant day with fabulous people and businesses that are making a difference daily!



To find out more about **the Centre for Social Brilliance** and its work in the world, visit www.socialbrilliance.org



To find out more about **the Visionary Network** and its work in the world, visit www.transformingourworld.com