



Case Studies in Social Entrepreneurship and Sustainability: The oikos Collection

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In 2008, Ashoka launched the “Changemaker Campus Initiative” which applies Ashoka’s rigorous criteria to select and support universities as they develop and implement a comprehensive social entrepreneurship plan. Through the lessons learned from this network, and with input from its broader global network of those experienced in the field, Ashoka aims to set a new standard for social entrepreneurship education. Indeed, despite the rising demand, there remains a dire need for quality coursework and global teaching case studies. Social entrepreneurs – and the pressing challenges they solve – are not bound by geographic borders or a single political environment, yet there is a lack of the materials necessary to equip students with the skills and mind-set required to catalyze systemic social change.

What few high-quality case studies do exist typically highlight social entrepreneurs within the United States. This cooperation with oikos within the Social Entrepreneurship Track of the annual oikos Global Case Competition is a critical vehicle for tackling that challenge. As a result of this effort, more locally relevant case studies are being written, peer-reviewed, and judged than ever before, and are able to make their way into the hands of global audiences eager to adopt them into their courses.

Building social entrepreneurship skills and problem-solving abilities are best practiced and honed using real-life examples and strategic challenges – not just learning theories in a vacuum. Case studies provide this exposure and real-time training in systemic problem-solving. Through these 15 teaching cases, students learn that social entrepreneurship is about identifying root causes of problems and applying a solution that tackles the system. As study upon study has shown, the band-aid approach does not work. To effectively address a social problem, the solution must continually adapt and evolve based on market feedback about what works and what needs to change in the model.

Case Studies in Social Entrepreneurship and Sustainability is the second volume resulting from the oikos Global Case Writing Competition – an annual program launched in 2003 to promote the publication of high-quality teaching cases in corporate sustainability. This book expands the collection with award-winning global cases in the rapidly growing field of social entrepreneurship and sustainability.

In view of the growing importance of various sustainability trends, management schools are increasingly challenged to adapt their entrepreneurship and business curricula. Management education needs to reflect the trends and provide a broadened understanding of value creation. Sustainability is a concept that demands that organizations consider the legitimate expectations of different stakeholders in their value creation processes. At the same time, it underlines the fact that many sustainability trends offer new business opportunities that entrepreneurs will seize. As a result, value creation processes need to be reorganized in order to create economic capital while developing social capital and preserving natural capital.

Indeed, entrepreneurial organizations are increasingly dealing with these challenges. The case studies in this book explore both the opportunities and pitfalls entrepreneurs – working with organizations with for-profit, hybrid and non-profit business models – face in targeting sustainability issues and how their values and core assumptions impact their business strategies. They describe new patterns of value creation, new alliances, and the challenges of dealing with existing paradigms. It is clear that new ways of doing business with a common objective of maximizing social impact are substantially shaping markets and society.

This textbook of competition-winning case studies for management education in the field of social entrepreneurship and sustainability provides excellent learning opportunities, tells engaging stories, deals with recent situations, includes quotations from key actors, is thought-provoking and controversial, requires decision-making, provides clear take-aways and is supported by teaching guidance and comprehensive teaching notes available to faculty.

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