

The business of better: Working for the world

Broadening the bottom line. How to innovate, create and put food on your plate

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The word "business" might summon an image of an unfeeling and profit-making machine. Rarely is it thought of as an exclusively benevolent force that aims to make the world a better place. Or maybe this is just me...but in any case, businesses are ultimately designed to maximize profit and sometimes do so at the expense of the environment or their employees.

More often than not, environmental sustainability, workers rights, and job creation are merely afterthoughts or marketing gimmicks aimed at — you guessed it — making more money.

But there has been a shift in recent years away from this single bottom line of profit towards a triple bottom line. Think of it as the Three Ps: people, planet, and profit. This is the realm of social innovation where innovators and entrepreneurs use novel ideas to solve pressing social issues like health care, poverty, homelessness, crime, and food security.

This change in the conventional business model is resulting in a burgeoning sector and perhaps you're one such



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social innovator or entrepreneur with the next big idea that will change the world...or maybe you don't have that idea yet, but you're interested in exploring a career down this path. Either way, the big question is: how do you dip your toes into this relatively new and exciting sector?

Learn the lingo

Social enterprise. Social finance. Corporate social responsibility. Social entrepreneurs and social intrapreneurs. These are all common words in the world of social innovation and

you should get to know them inside and out if you're planning on starting your own organization or working at one.

Attend industry events and network

Hubs of social innovation are popping up everywhere. Research what's happening around your area and attend any local events. What better way to get to know this sector than by surrounding yourself with the actual change agents themselves?

Conduct an informational interview

After you've attended one of those local events and networked your face off, why not follow up with those new connections you've made? Never underestimate the power of getting together over a hot cup of java to ask questions or even

It all starts with a search

This whole sector is made up of change agents, or people who get out there and act. If this is something you want to really commit to, check out:

- Social Innovation Generation: Canada, MaRS Discovery District, Youth Social Innovation Capital Fund, Ashoka and the Centre for Social Innovation for resources, funding and guidance.

share your ideas.

Conduct an informational interview with a social innovator and ask him or her everything you've ever wondered about the sector; the specific social problem you're interested in, and even what the job itself entails.

Volunteer

Find an organization that is doing work you are passionate about and gain some hands-on experience. Get your hands dirty and volunteer! Whether it's within your local community or working overseas, there is honestly no deeper learning than practical learning.

Job hunt

Since this is a relatively nascent movement, there are always new roles and opportunities available at social enterprises. Contribute your skills and experience to one that you feel is creating real social impact.

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