

Social Enterprise Success – 10 long-term strategies

March 22, 2010 in Small Business, Social Enterprise | by Thomas A. Stewart

Sometimes as we create new ventures we get caught up in the day-to-day activities and begin to be shortsighted. It only takes a few months, and soon enough we're only concerned with our daily work again instead of keeping the big picture in mind. Here are 10 long-term strategies that could help you when you get caught in tunnel vision:

Develop concepts from a business perspective (as opposed to a legal perspective)

Lawyers should be used to create the best structure for implementing a good market idea – not the other way around. Legal barriers can usually be overcome.

Start with the “low-hanging fruit”

Launch the ideas that are the easiest to implement well first. This generates confidence and immediate cash flow.

Remain consistent with your values

I can't stress this enough! It speaks for itself, but do not undermine your values to achieve business success.

Address organizational barriers

Assess your incentive structure, culture, team, recruitment, etc. Prepare your organization to succeed by continuously refining and enhancing your processes.

Be clear about the primary purpose of your business

Is the business being formed primarily to make money or to directly help people? You CAN have both and purpose will vary, but manage your venture accordingly.

Collaborate

There is no reason for your organization to act as an island. Partnerships increase success, expand markets, reduce costs, and reduce risk. This strategy is a personal favorite of mine!

Manage your cash flow

This is a common problem for many small businesses and start-ups and is especially essential for social enterprises. The timing of cash flow can cripple your organization. A profitable organization can still go bankrupt if there is too much gap between when cash is received versus spent. Make sure you have a plan to raise sufficient funds to bridge this gap.

Talk to your customers

Another strategy that speaks for itself, but bears importance. Your customers define your success. Take intentional steps to involve them in defining your organization.

Don't rely on mission only to sell your product/service

Customers make decisions based on their needs – not yours. You must have a competitive advantage beyond simply being a good cause.

Experiment

Test new services or products on a small scale before making major investments. College campus's often (but not always) make for a great place to pilot your new innovation.

Source : <http://commonwealthent.wordpress.com/2010/03/22/social-enterprise-success-%E2%80%93-10-long-term-strategies/>