
Networking Tips

Talk about your work

Speak about your milestones and achievements, the kind of support you're looking for, and what's the latest in your sector on professional platforms and relevant social media.

Stay in touch

Make an effort to stay connected with people you've met on your professional journey and build those relationships. Reconnect on email or add them to your newsletter list.

Leverage your board and other networks

Keep your board members updated. Remember that they're there to help – don't hesitate to ask for shout-outs or for help with connections. This is also true of other people in your network.

Be open to people contributing

Let people contribute to your organisation in any way – with any skill and amount of time – that they wish to offer. They will eventually be invested into your work and become the ambassadors to further your cause.

Books to Read

Banker to the Poor by Alan Jolis and Muhammad Yunus

Zero to One by Blake Masters and Peter Thiel

Empathy: Why It Matters, and How To Get It by Roman Krznaric

PAPER PLANES



————— A COLLABORATION



Starter Kit to Being a Social Entrepreneur

For those, whether curious or certain, launching out on their own to spark change

A universally accepted definition of social entrepreneurship is hard to find. Broadly speaking, anyone passionately solving a social problem in a sustainable manner is a social entrepreneur. Of course it's no cake walk – embarking on the journey of being a social entrepreneur is incredibly challenging, but it can also be very rewarding. For those with enough gumption to make a difference and drive real change on the ground, here's what to know so that you can decide if you're cut out for the job.

Crafted with inputs from UnLtd India.

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Dreams Matter, Not Degrees

Let us let you in on a little secret: To be a social entrepreneur, you don't need an educational qualification or any prior work experience in the social sector (or elsewhere). What's more important is dreaming big, understanding the problem you're trying to tackle and the community that it impacts, having the ability to communicate your intent and ultimate goal, and having the grit to see it through to the end.

Dive Deep

All eyes on the finish line. For a social organisation, the beneficiary is almost always the community it's working with. At the end of the day, it's this community that needs to be in a better place because of your work. For this, remember to prioritise understanding your beneficiary in as much detail as possible so that your organisation can serve the community better and meet its goal. This may involve spending time with them to get to the root of their problems. This will also help you discern if you're really up for the challenge.

Not-for-Profits Are Not The Only Way

It is a common misgiving that social ventures are necessarily not-for-profits. But it's entirely possible to adopt a profit-based model to bring about social change. You can hone in on a business model based on the core activity of your organisation. Just remember that, like any business, it might be a slow start but it can be a win-win!

The First Thing I Did

"I started with identifying and 'selling' the idea to a couple of potential team members to share the joys and frustrations of a start-up – there is no joy or strength in doing it alone!"
—Priya Agrawal, Antarang Foundation | Antarang works with young adults, emphasising the importance of completing formal school education and helping them choose a career.

Find Your Goal

What's the difference you want to make? The end goal for a social entrepreneur is to create a sustainable solution to a problem whose impact reaches the last mile i.e. low-income and vulnerable communities. It doesn't matter how big or small the community is – but you've got to identify it. As you move forward, you can choose to expand your impact or deepen it with the same community. Pro tip: If you're looking for a cause to champion but aren't quite sure how to narrow it down, consider looking up the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, a collection of calls to action for a sustainable future.

Make a Map

'Theory of Change' is a methodology that essentially maps out how you plan to achieve your end goal. It's an effective tool to use to connect your vision with your goals. Whether you're an early-stage entrepreneur or looking for investors, this will help you articulate your thoughts and communicate them to the various stakeholders. Take note!

Highs & Lows

"The biggest battle for a social entrepreneur is within. It is often difficult to make tough decisions when it is natural for a social entrepreneur to lead from the heart. The easiest thing is that you get to live your passion, are not caged, and can fly as high as you want to. Your vision of a world as it should be is in your hands to realise."

—Alina Alam, Mitti Cafe | Mitti Cafe offers employment and entrepreneurship opportunities to adults with physical, intellectual, or psychiatric disabilities.

Advice For Funding

"Being honest always works with the investors in the long run."

—Dhruv Lakra, Mirakle Couriers | A courier company that employs low-income, hearing-impaired adults.

Don't Be That Jack

Don't try and do everything on your own. Hire smartly – at the beginning, it might be prudent to aim for a lean but efficient team. Get team members who complement your strengths and are able to think differently from you. Pro tip: Networking at different forums is often a good way to find the right people.

Join Forces

It's a world full of opportunity and potential. Unlearn the idea that collaborations don't work – there are several individuals, organisations, even government institutions and bodies, who can help you achieve your goals. Collaborate and co-create when the opportunity presents itself.

Wish I Knew

"Before I started MasterG, I wish I had heard more examples of how frequently businesses have to pivot before they find the ideal product market fit."

—Gayatri Jolly, MasterG | MasterG trains women from low-income backgrounds in stitching, pattern-making and making garments.

Find Your Yoda

Actively look for mentors and advisors from within and beyond your field. Mentors can offer a lot of insight, help you leverage your strengths and weaknesses, and evaluate opportunities at different stages in your journey.

Impact is Your Yardstick

It's more than social intent. Success for an early-stage social entrepreneur is also the relative impact on the community. Make sure to get honest feedback from the community itself – this will help you see what's working and what isn't. Take this into account while setting your next goals.

Brand-Building Advice

"Be very active on social media, invest time in networking, and follow a strong communication guide from your pitch decks to the emails."

—Poojaa Joshi, Mimaansa | Mimaansa offers remedial education to students with learning disabilities, studying in municipal schools.

Stay Committed

If your initial idea doesn't pan out as intended, don't lose hope! It doesn't mean that your organisation has failed. Go back to the drawing board, there's likely another way to address the problem. Keep your eyes on the end goal.