



Social Business

Good Practice's title

MakeSense: community-based solutions to Social Entrepreneurs' challenges

Main objective

The objective is to improve the social impact and social entrepreneurship in society through challenge solving workshops via community-based methodology and brainstorming, and help sustain this impact in time by promoting the Social Business concept.

MakeSense bring, at the global level, social entrepreneurs who do not have enough money, skills and/or contacts, together with volunteers and professionals who want to support social economy but do not know where to start.

Key words

Social Entrepreneurship, Social Business, open project, web application

Type of organization	open project
Country	France
Year of inception of the good practice	2011
Services and products provided	Business, technology and/or design assistance to social entrepreneurs
Portfolio (€)	n/a
Average loan size (€)	n/a
# of clients	800 actives members, 5.000 registered on the platform, 15.000 participants 'sensemakers'

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www.makesense.org

Institutional profile

MakeSense is an open project built by a community of people interested about Social Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Web applications and IT solutions. It was born in January 2011 after a tour around Asia set on by Christian Vanizette and Romain Raguin, two young Commerce students attracted by Muhammad Yunus' concept of social business. The aim of the tour was to meet Social Entrepreneurs.

Mission of the organization

MakeSense's mission is to accelerate the impact of social entrepreneurs' projects by pulling together a community of social-minded people ("sensemakers") and direct them to challenge-solving solutions. Sensemakers help resolve social entrepreneurs' problems ("challenges"). The main goal of the web-app is to serve as a meeting-point between the two groups, a global network of "sensemakers" who pull together their skills to resolve social entrepreneurs' challenges.



Governance structure

President: Leila Hoballah. **MakeSense** is an open project powered by a “Gang” of Facebook friends (“gangsters”) and co-ordinated by 7 co-backpackers (2 paid, 5 volunteers) (Christian Vanizette, Leila Hoballah, Marine Plossu, Caroline Delboy, Alizée Lozac’hmeur, Vincent Hedjuk, Chloé Hermanowicz).

Good Practice

Introduction

On the one side, many social entrepreneurs aspire to meet motivated people ready to help them. On the other side, there are more and more people wishing to become actors of change. MakeSense therefore strives to make both groups meet.

Members of **MakeSense** community, “gangsters”, identify social entrepreneurs and ask them about the obstacles they face: this brings a challenge to light. Once highlighted, the challenge can be found on the www.makesense.org application. Challenges belong to many different areas of interest: civic engagement, human rights, economic development, environment, health and education/e-learning. Requests for assistance should fit into at least one of these three categories: business, technology and design. Those who want to lend a hand can choose between four modes: I can help; I know someone; I spread the message; and/or I create a “Hold-Up” (Challenge-solving workshop). Challenge-solving workshops (“Hold-ups”) take place offline and are set up individually to suit social entrepreneur’s specific needs.

MakeSense’s web application allows for meritocracy to develop among Sensemakers, thanks to the careful tracking of the challenges they solve. A hierarchy of comics’ superheroes emerges to rank each Sensemaker according to his/her contribution to the community.

Vocabulary insights

Social Entrepreneur: Individuals building innovative solutions to solve the most pressing social and environmental issues of our times.

Social Business: A Social Business is a non-dividend company created to solve a social problem. Like an NGO, it has a social mission, but like a business, it generates its own revenues to cover its costs. While investors may recoup their investment, all further profits are reinvested into the same or other social businesses.¹

Gangster: Gangsters are mainly young people connected on Facebook and Twitter and which have, for many different reasons, a passion for Social Entrepreneurship and Social Business. Every Gangster has as mission to seek out other social business visionaries, to identify their challenges, and to introduce them to individuals who can lend a helping hand. Each Gangster joins out of his or her own volition, driven by a personal sense of loyalty to the cause.

Hold-up: Hold-ups are the offline part of **MakeSense**. The objective of the hold-up is to connect Social Entrepreneurs with individuals so that they invent solutions and take up their challenges.

Sensemaker: any individual who is taking up the challenges on **MakeSense.org** and willing to give their time, skills and contacts.

Challenge: any specific problem faced by the social entrepreneur in implementing his/her project, namely a solution to the social or environmental issue that he/she is addressing.

Target group and accessibility

MakeSense aims at assisting global social business entrepreneurs and “Sensemakers”. Everybody wishing to solve social entrepreneurs’ challenges can become a Sensemaker. Becoming a “gangster”

¹ Yunus’ Social Business definition <http://www.yunus.com/social-business/>



further means to commit to identify social business entrepreneurs as well as their challenges in order to solve them through the creation of hold-ups.

To access the web-app, it is necessary to have an Internet connexion and a computer access; however, registration is free. Any social entrepreneur can share his/her project. Any sensemaker can choose to support projects that are posted on www.makesense.org.

Innovativeness

The main innovation lies in the methodology embodied in the hold-up concept. A hold-up involves the combination of people, technology, creative thinking, to find the more innovative solutions to the Social Entrepreneurs' challenges. Concretely a hold-up is a 2hours (minimum) creativity workshop which gathers 15 persons maximum and which focuses on solving a concrete social challenge featured on **MakeSense**. The hold-up use specific creative methods depending on the type of challenges. It is an interesting way to engage people with specific skills toward social entrepreneurship.

It can be stunning how initially seemingly chaotic random ideas can eventually turn into brilliant and innovative solutions to the problems raised by social entrepreneurs, through collaborative brainstorming.

The steps to organize a hold-up are the following:

1. Select a challenge and a social entrepreneur on www.makesense.org
2. Connect with the Social Entrepreneur to ask him if he is interested
3. Create the event on Facebook
4. Let the community developers know about the hold-up to add it to the global agenda and share the news on MakeSense networks
5. Find a venue for the hold-up, big enough to host around 15 persons
6. Prepare the questions, if needed with the help of the community developers or any other members in the community
7. Foresee some paper boards and post-its
8. Run the hold-up
9. After the event, the hold-up organizer has to send a note to all the participants, which should include at least some pictures – and, if possible, some videos – of the participants and the main concept ideas that emerged during the hold-up.
10. A mini-gang (group of 4 people) can emerge to help implement the idea chosen by the social entrepreneur.

Relevance given the context

Given the current post-crisis financial context across Europe, this project stands out as a good example of what can people do without financial inputs. The financial contribution is indeed not the only way to develop projects; an entrepreneur may also be in needs of contacts, concrete skills, or technology transfers. At the same time, the project also shows that there are people wishing to contribute to social business' projects (sensemakers).

Adaptability to other contexts

The methodology has been used worldwide in different contexts, with different social entrepreneurs and sensemakers. It has been proved to be efficient in a range of case-scenarios: Paris, Berlin, London, Barcelona, Shanghai, San Francisco, São Paulo, Medellín, Santiago de Chile, Buenos Aires, and many other cities.



Furthermore, **MakeSense** adapted its methodology (challenge-solving workshops) to the wider sector of public and private companies, by creating a sister-organization called Commonsense. The start-up, inspired by **MakeSense's** experience, helps public and private organizations create and animate challenge-solving communities around their innovation projects, by proposing events, tools (offline and online) and process to their organisations. That way, not only self-employed people or individual entrepreneurs are targeted but also small and medium enterprises and multinational companies.

The methodology has also been adapted to the academic world with another sister-organization called SenseSchool.

Efficiency

Open source project means that it is mutually created by a community and access is free for all. Despite this, it still holds a value and costs for its creators. Costs are partially covered by the start-up Commonsense and SenseSchool, through a licence fee. The aim is to be able to cover all the **MakeSense** costs with this fee in 3 years' time.

Outcomes

In three years, since January 2011 with the 1st hold-up, **MakeSense** has mobilized more than 15 000 people in more than 600 workshops, gathering 15 people each, in 100 different cities around the world. They have so far supported a total of 436 entrepreneurs.

Sustainability

Today **MakeSense** has two sources of revenues: donations and the licence fee. Our aim and financial projections are that, with the growth of the sister-organizations, the licence fee will cover all the operational costs of **MakeSense**.

In practice:

MAMMU is a fashion design social business that empowers mothers in need. It operates from Latvia today, but soon it will from other places. The MAMMU brand has been brought to life to change society for good with the help of design. As a unique blend of fashion and arts, the MAMMU collection is more than a scarf, it's a concept.

Fionn Dobbin, founder of MAMMU, has benefited from MakeSense. One of his goals was to launch the brand in Paris. Following a "hold-up" (workshop) in Paris, a photo session was held in the capital in order to give him visibility and attract attention. A student got curious and as part of her studies, she proposed Fionn to set his business plan for a launch in Paris. She solved Fionn's challenge this way.

More info on: www.mammu.lv

Further readings

MakeSense's [blog](#)

MakeSense's [online platform](#)

Press releases: Le Monde [blog](#) (FR); Youphil [article](#) (FR); Wired [article](#) (UK); Scribd [article](#) (FR); SlideShare [article](#) (World);

Videos: YouTube [MakeSense in One Minute](#); Vimeo [What is MakeSense](#); Project Hires' blog (videos' compilation) [What is MakeSense all about?](#)