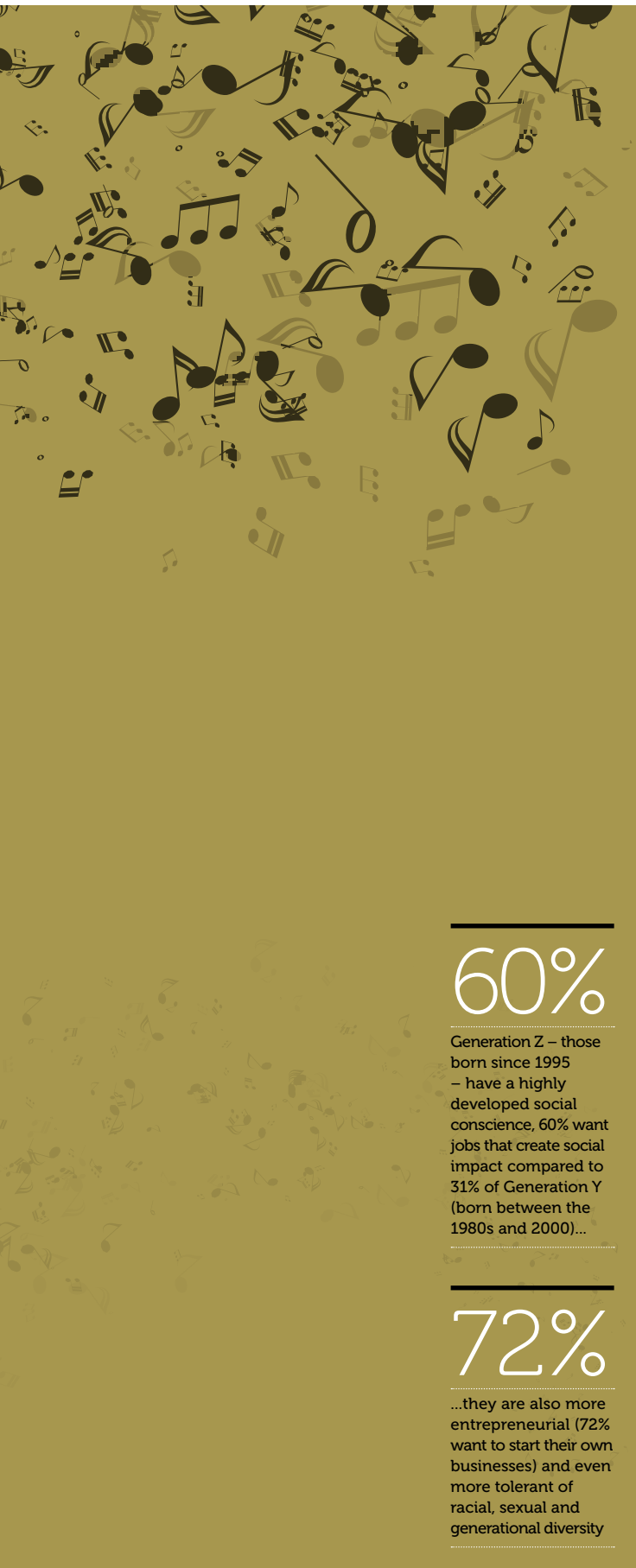




# THE JAZZ AGE

SOCIAL INTRAPRENEURS ARE RARELY INDIVIDUAL HEROES BUT MORE LIKE JAZZ MUSICIANS JAMMING IN A GROUP BUT SOMETIMES, SAY **DAVID GRAYSON**, **MELODY MCLAREN** AND **HEIKO SPITZECK**, THEY NEED EVEN BIGGER GROUPS – A FULLY ORCHESTRATED ‘BIG BAND’



# 60%

Generation Z – those born since 1995 – have a highly developed social conscience, 60% want jobs that create social impact compared to 31% of Generation Y (born between the 1980s and 2000)...

# 72%

...they are also more entrepreneurial (72% want to start their own businesses) and even more tolerant of racial, sexual and generational diversity

A new order of business social innovators is emerging. Canadian author Anne Kingston, citing research by ad agency Sparks and Honey, recently noted key differences between two young groups.

Generation Z – those born since 1995, now 18 and under and who number about two billion worldwide – have a highly developed social conscience. Sixty per cent want jobs that create social impact compared to 31% of Generation Y (also known as “Millennials”), born between the 1980s and 2000.

They are also more entrepreneurial (72% want to start their own businesses) and even more tolerant of racial, sexual and generational diversity than Generation Ys, who are a significantly socially conscious cohort in their own right, according to the 2014 Deloitte Millennials survey .

In 2012 the star Generation Z inventors who made headlines included 15-year-old Jack Andraka, who created an inexpensive, accurate sensor able to detect pancreatic cancer; and 17-year-old student Angela Zhang, who developed a protocol that allowed doctors to better detect cancerous tumours on MRI scans.

Last February, 16-year-old Ann Makosinski claimed the top prize for 15- to 16-year-olds at the Google Science Fair, a place on *Time*’s “Top 30 under 30” list, as well as a barrage of media coverage for her flashlight, powered by the heat of a human hand. This had been inspired by the plight of a friend in the Philippines who had failed a grade at school because she lacked electricity to study at night.

Although far younger than their counterparts currently enrolled in business schools, the emergence of these socially conscious, entrepreneurial Generation Zs represents the crest of a wave of business-based social innovation that we have seen building in our research on social intrapreneurism, which we published in our March 2014 book, *Social Intrapreneurism and All That Jazz*.

### What are “social intrapreneurs” and why study them?

We define social intrapreneurs as “people within a large corporation who take direct initiative for innovations that address social or environmental challenges while also creating commercial value for the company”.

At the Doughty Centre for Corporate Responsibility in the UK, our purpose is to research as well as teach and advise current and future business people on building and developing more responsible, sustainable businesses.

But we are also interested in how people at all levels of a company become interested in trying to build sustainable businesses in the first place.

And we are particularly interested in discovering why and how inventive business people are using the power of their companies to help tackle wide-ranging issues such as climate change, poverty and disease — big global problems that previous generations would not have believed businesses could, or even should, try to address.

The three of us have been investigating social intrapreneurism since 2009 as part of a wider research agenda examining how companies engage their employees with sustainability issues as well as how innovation emerges in responsible companies.

Our interviews with over 40 social intrapreneurs and their colleagues revealed a wide range of projects addressing a broad spectrum of global challenges including over-population, poverty, and inequality of access to financial, educational, nutritional and environmental resources, ill-health and political conflict.

# 40

Over 40 interviews with social intrapreneurs covered a wide range of projects addressing a broad spectrum of global challenges including over-population and poverty to educational, nutritional and environmental resources

What do social intrapreneurs do? Here is a small selection of what our research interviews revealed that social intrapreneurs and their allies have already achieved within their companies:

- Creation of micro-insurance products for low-income people and businesses unable to afford conventional insurance schemes (Allianz)
- Start-up of a business unit within a large parcel-delivery corporation to improve operational efficiency while ameliorating climate change impacts (DHL)
- Reduction of a large brewing company’s production costs to improve competitiveness in developing countries through partnerships with local growers (SABMiller)
- Development of “sustainable IT” service streams at a major engineering company (Siemens)
- Creation of dialogue with a Brazilian community to develop a supply chain relationship at a personal care products company (Natura)
- Development of a commercially viable business unit within an engineering consultancy to address third-world poverty issues (Arup)
- Engineering of environmentally sustainable production processes at a global chemicals company (BASF)
- Creation of partnerships to leverage and develop management expertise in developing countries (Accenture)
- Development of a commercially sustainable strategy for marketing pharmaceutical products to low-income customers in developing countries (Novartis).

Clearly, social intrapreneurism is emerging in companies all around the world. But the number of social intrapreneurs is still comparatively small and many of our interviewees talked about experiencing frustration, isolation and loneliness early in their efforts to pioneer projects in their companies.



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### How did they succeed in spite of these challenges?

Our interviews underscored the point that successful social intrapreneurism is a group (as opposed to individual) activity. Intrapreneurism and entrepreneurship are distinctly different in this respect. A single person working alone inside a company can achieve nothing of significance however heroic their efforts. There is simply too much to do.

Although the first phase of our research focused on individual social intrapreneurs, it became evident when we reviewed our first-round interviews, as well as during our second-phase research into the enabling environment for social intrapreneurism, that an intrapreneur had to secure the continuing support of others in order to bring a project to fruition inside a large company.

For this reason, we altered the language in our second-phase research report to highlight the importance of colleagues supporting an enabling environment for social intrapreneurism.

The Western business stereotype celebrates the heroic efforts of the intrepid business entrepreneur. But a successful social intrapreneur, although perhaps originating an intrapreneurial project idea of their own, must learn to help create and work within “ensembles” of like-minded individuals with complementary skills and ideas in order to succeed. In this respect they must be like jazz musicians, “jamming” together.

If the number of individuals required to grow a corporate project to a large scale is sufficiently large then the intrapreneurial project may entail assembling a “big band” with a diverse range of talents rather than a quartet. As a result, the proportion of orchestral “scoring” needed relative to the amount of free improvisation may increase.

As with jazz ensembles, the mere presence of other players is not enough. We found that the quality of the “conversation” — the collaborative relationships — between social intrapreneurs and their colleagues both inside and outside their organisation (often partners in external not-for-profit organisations) was instrumental in determining whether an idea could get off the ground and secure support in a company.





It was particularly helpful if the intrapreneur was able to find an individual – whom we describe as a “godparent” – who could act as:

- a power broker to provide access to resources and create a protected “space” in which the intrapreneur could develop a project, often “under the radar” of the rest of the organisation
- an effective networker who could connect the intrapreneur with useful contacts and help rally support for a project
- an effective translator of an intrapreneur’s ideas who could highlight the links between a project and corporate purpose and values
- a skilled listener and coach/mentor who could help develop not only the project idea but also the intrapreneur to a point where they could play a leadership role in the project and become an effective advocate for sustainability within the organisation
- someone generally open to challenge by the intrapreneur as well as others
- an intelligent risk-taker prepared to bend rules to enable experimentation to achieve “proof of concept” for an intrapreneurial project.

To conclude, it may take a very big band to create a “tipping point” for social intrapreneurism.

We believe that creating an external enabling environment for social intrapreneurism will require joining up external groups such as business schools, social innovation networks, NGOs, corporate responsibility coalitions, venture philanthropists and so on, all playing roles in helping social intrapreneurs to succeed with their ideas and achieve shared sustainability goals.

These external partners create stages for experimenting and discussing projects as well as potentially finding allies.

In a February 2014 *Ethical Corporation* essay, we concluded that only if such partners join together in connected coalitions – a kind of large-scale big band committed to social change – will we be able to create a tipping point for social intrapreneurism that fosters the scale of co-ordinated activity needed to tackle the myriad social challenges that we face today.

Several business schools and universities either already offer or are planning electives on social enterprise and social intrapreneurism; and / or are working with organisations such as Impact Hubs or the Intrapreneur Lab to co-create learning programmes for aspirant social intrapreneurs. Case studies are also needed to improve the quantity and quality of knowledge about this burgeoning area.

But Canadian author Kingston sounds a note of warning about the challenges that could be facing educational (and other) institutions as Generation Z matures.

The Sparks and Honey survey found that this group places less value on higher education than Millennials (only 64% want advanced degrees compared with 71% of Generation Ys).

Clearly better “improvisation” – with business schools and other education institutions working together with cross-sector partners in entirely new big bands – will be required going forward to engage the talents of this upcoming generation.

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

David Grayson runs the Doughty Centre for Corporate Responsibility at Cranfield School of Management in the UK. Melody McLaren is a Doughty Centre associate. Heiko Spitzeck teaches at FDC, Brazil. Their book *Social Intrapreneurism and all that Jazz* is published by Greenleaf Publishing.

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