

Big Impact: Insights & Stories from America's Non-Profit Leaders

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Author Q&A

Why did you write *Big Impact: Insights & Stories from America's Non-Profit Leaders*?

We wrote *Big Impact* because we care passionately about social change and the leaders who make it happen. Between us we've spent over 40 years in the nonprofit sector empowering organizations to have big impacts in their fields.

We wanted to share insights and stories from the change-makers of the nonprofit world so that those of us with a stake in the sector could learn from and be inspired by the successes, failures and wisdom of these leaders. We interviewed the best of the best, mostly CEOs, from organizations such as the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Ford Foundation, Goodwill Industries International, Share Our Strength (NoKidHungry), the Nature Conservancy, PBS and DoSomething.org.

We felt we could help to amplify the voices of these change-makers. More people need to know about and learn from their successes.

What makes *Big Impact* different?

While there are hundreds of books about corporate leadership, we found very few that focus on nonprofit leadership. We found none that feature leaders from many parts of the sector. Our contributors work in education, social services, arts and culture, environmental organizations, healthcare, religion, international causes and social entrepreneurship.

Over 10% of Americans work in the nonprofit sector, and many more volunteer and donate. They deserve to learn from those who have succeeded in their own sector.

Why did so many high-profile leaders choose to take part in this book?

Our leaders chose to take part precisely because most of them have not been asked to share lessons learned and strategies for the future with a broad audience.

Of course, our credentials and references as leading consultants in the sector also helped.

Who is this book written for?

The book is written for nonprofit leaders, volunteers and philanthropists.

What is the one thing you would like to share with the public about your findings?

There are a lot of good things happening on the planet. We gained an appreciation for how under-reported and under-acknowledged these contributions to society are. We are hopeful that the stories we uncovered will become better known as a result of this book. We also hope that people will reach out to these organizations after they read about them in the book.

What was the greatest challenge in writing the book?

Finding the unifying theme was more challenging than we thought it would be. We had all of this material in the 50 interviews, and we had to find the thread that united them all.

Why are nonprofit leaders going to pick up this book over and over again?

They will pick up the book because it contains so much wisdom on a wide variety of subjects. Our contributors shared about everything from vision and strategy to employee recruitment, management and retention.

Tom Dente, CEO of Humentum, a training and advocacy organization for international NGOs, says, "People always talk about communication, but I don't think that's the most important thing. It needs to be more. It's really re-recruiting. You're always re-recruiting people to the mission, to the value they provide, and to the roles across all levels."

The book is also inspiring. Here is a quote from Shael Polakow-Suransky, President of Bank Street College of Education. He says, "There is a lot of despair out in the world. It can feel at times that despite great efforts, there isn't much progress. Ultimately, we are free to imagine something different and, in doing so, give meaning to what we're doing. That's what matters, that action of giving meaning to the world around us."

How will this book help nonprofit leaders actually make a bigger impact?

Our interviewees have a lot to say about making lasting social change. Most people in the nonprofit sector are in it because they want to improve the world in some way. Our readers can increase their ability to make change by studying the seven principles we developed for bringing about large-scale change. These are:

1. Sharpen Your Leadership Skills
2. Ensure Your Own House Is in Order
3. Be Crystal Clear About Your Goal, and Articulate it Persuasively
4. Campaign on Many Fronts
5. Build Broad-based Coalitions
6. Persist
7. Leverage Your Success