

Namaste

There are some words, messages, themes which are universal. You don't need to be bilingual or multicultural to have some awareness of concepts that transcend the everyday, routine norm. And you don't have to be a yogi to have heard or have an ability to figure out, the essence of 'namaste.' To those who practice and to those who do not, 'namaste' is a greeting, a feeling, both an opening and a closure to an experience that provides uplift, goodness, and wholeness between heart and mind. Pardon the pun, but it really isn't a stretch to think of how the embodiment of 'namaste' connects with the daily practices of a social enterprise.

The true 'business' of a social enterprise is finally finding its own footing, categorized as being part of the "Fourth Sector," with Government, Non-Profit, and For-Profit being the other sectors. The Fourth Sector is an emerging classification of our economy which is built on the ideals of "for-benefit" organizations. These for profit businesses are not only helping to influence and move forward key societal issues, but they also exist to solve a social issue and outcome. It is about harnessing the resources and nimbleness of the business sector to best focus on small or even large community needs. Whether Grameen Bank, which makes small (business) loans to the underserved community, or retail efforts such as Bombas and Warby Parker, who give away their products with every purchase made, or Newman's Own which donates 100% of profits to a foundation which focuses on improve access to healthy food sources, this is the business model for today and the foreseeable future.

We are all familiar with brands that follow the social impact model such as Starbucks, Patagonia, Danone, and New Belgium Brewery but what about the local and small businesses? While many consumers seek out businesses with a purpose, others simply shop at them because they enjoy the product or services without knowing the extent of their impact. The fact is many, local small and medium sized businesses have built this mindset into their organizations. In Grand Junction, where I live, organizations like Kiln Coffee Bar, STRIVE's Alida's Fruits and Hilltop's for profit arm Red Compass all leverage a for profit entity or mindset to make a difference in the community. These are companies that focus on having a positive impact on society, workers, the community, and the environment.

The prominence of the Fourth Sector is taking shape across geographic lines, political divides, and age gaps. With sincerity and fortitude amongst a new generation, it is not about a business's reputation and brand. According to the National Center for Social Impact, located in Colorado Springs 85% of business owners believe there must be a fundamental purpose to their business beyond its profit margin. And if there is any residual benefit, the most tangible byproduct can be seen in recruiting and retention of the work force. Indeed, the internal lens of what people think about, what they are doing, and where they work, has become the guiding factor and the element which makes a company truly sustainable, both as an employer and a free-market enterprise.

Core to our beliefs at Prosono, a Colorado-based Social Impact Management Consulting Firm, is that the only way to truly solve for the world's problems is to unlock key assets, and focus

them on efforts to rise all boats, to support each person, and be actively involved in our local communities. Therefore, we are supporting Invest in GJ, a social enterprise that is working to disrupt the current business of marijuana sales with a purpose of repurposing profits to solve for local funding gaps that will improve the social determinants for health. It is an opportunity for Grand Junction to keep revenue from the sale of marijuana in the community and turn a product that contributes to increasing health care costs into a funding vehicle aimed at reducing the cost of health care through investing in education, housing, healthy food access, etc.

Millennials, the largest generation in the workforce, and Generation Z are the heirs apparent to industry of the future. Their personal outlook and their professional mission have become inexorably intertwined, much like the continuous circle created in the yoga pose Eka Pada Rajakapotasana or more commonly known as the One-legged King Pigeon Pose. The hard work, the sweat, and the commitment of all these moving parts, will bring about the best enterprise of all. A society of harmony, strength, and equality. And to that, we can resound in 'Namaste.'