CREATING CONSCIOUS MOVEMENTS FOR SOCIAL IMPACT

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Contents

The Centre for Social Innovation

The Centre for Social Innovation at Cambridge Judge Business School, University of Cambridge, acts as a platform for research and engagement with social innovators, academia and policy in UK and across the world. Its primary focus is to understand, promote, and engage with social innovators and create and support social ventures and projects.

Social innovation is concerned with the development of creative and practical solutions to complex social problems. While many social innovators work in non-profit organizations, they are increasingly found in government and corporations. Indeed, the boundaries between the sectors have become increasingly indistinct, and much social innovation takes place at the intersection between them.

The Centre for Social Innovation will therefore focus on leadership for social change, wherever it takes place. Leadership for social change involves a different kind of leadership, one that's less adversarial, one that seeks to have a positive impact on the kind of world that we live in, and one that blurs the boundaries between what's for-profit and what's non-profit.

The Centre for Social Innovation will engage in scholarship focused on social innovation and social ventures that aim to create sustainable social and economic value, which encompasses the private, public and third sectors. It will create new academic courses aimed at practitioners who want to use research to enhance understanding of, and the impact of social innovation.

The Centre will also support social innovators through events, training programmes and online materials. A central tenet of the Centre would be that it brings academics and practitioners together in all aspects of its governance and delivery.

About the author

Noa Gafni is the CEO of Impact Squared, a movement building consultancy. Impact Squared has advised clients, including United Nations Foundation, the George Lucas Education Foundation and Estee Lauder, on their digital strategy, social impact and millennial engagement.

Noa began her career as an entrepreneur, founding a social network for women in 2005. She then joined the founding digital team at Hearst Magazines as Head of Social Media. Noa then spent several years as an independent digital strategist with a client roster that included Real Madrid, Xiaomi and Lloyd's of London.

During her MBA at London Business School, Noa became deeply interested in social enterprise as a driver for change. After completing her MBA, Noa joined the World Economic Forum as a Global Leadership Fellow and the Head of Communications for the Global Shapers Community, which brings exceptional young people together to impact their local communities and shape the global agenda.

Noa has spoken on issues of social impact at the World Economic Forum, Financial Times and Harvard Social Enterprise Conference. She holds a Bachelors Degree (High Honours) in Psychology from Dartmouth College and an MBA from London Business School.

1. Introduction

Much attention has been paid in recent years to social movements, particularly those that rose in response to the 2008 financial crisis. A tent city popped up in Tel Aviv. The Indignados walked through the streets of Madrid. Occupy Wall Street took over downtown Manhattan. And of course, there was the Arab Spring. Manuel Castells describes these movements as bastions of "counter-power", of groups that challenge institutions. [1]
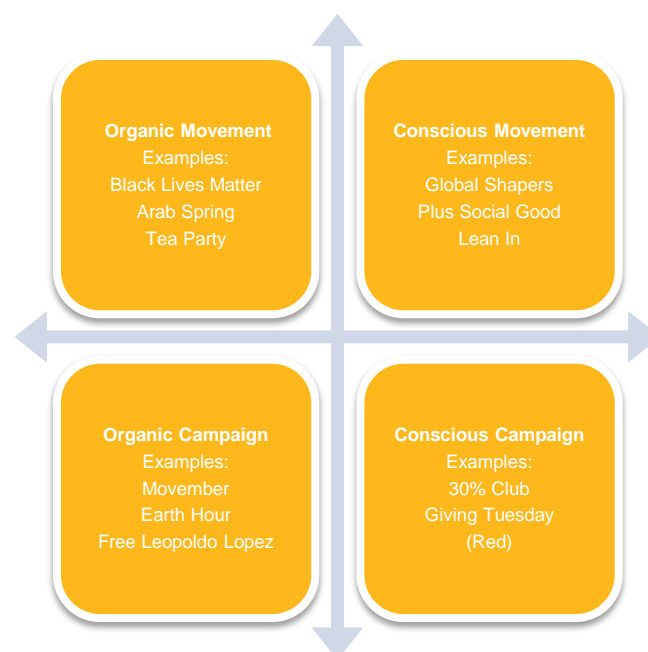
But a new breed of movement has been established in recent years, consciously created by institutions and individuals in power. These conscious movements have adapted the enthusiasm and organising principles of traditional social movements. These new, conscious movements funnel the energy of young people and leverage the gravitas of established institutions to bring about positive social impact.

2. Movements and campaigns

Social movements have been studied since the Industrial Revolution and a general consensus exists around their defining characteristics[2],[3]. Specifically, movements involve a collective effort towards "moonshot" ideas of social change. Additionally, movements exist over a period of time. They utilise "creative human action"[4] to bring about systemic change. Finally, they connect people through a sense of shared identity and a feeling of belonging.

It is important to note that social movements are not campaigns. Campaigns are bound by time and focus on a specific, desired outcome (changing a particular legislation, for example.) They provide a specific set of activities along a "commitment curve"[5] to drive action. They also align individuals around solutions, not necessarily affinity. Many campaigns acknowledge the need for "uncomfortable alliances"[6] in order to achieve their end goal.

TABLE 1

Organic Movement
Examples:
Black Lives Matter
Arab Spring
Tea Party

Conscious Movement
Examples:
Global Shapers
Plus Social Good
Lean In

Organic Campaign
Examples:
Movember
Earth Hour
Free Leopoldo Lopez

Conscious Campaign
Examples:
30% Club
Giving Tuesday
(Red)

3. Characteristics of conscious movements

Movement theory has traditionally focused on movements as bastions of "counter-power".[7] Moyer described "powerholders" as stakeholders who stood in the way of social movements and social progress.[8] For Edwards ,a key component of social movements is protesting.[9]

Not all movement theorists have discounted the possibility of working within systems of power to create change. In the 1970s, McCarthy and Zald described a "resource mobilisation approach" where movements interacted with and relied on the support of institutions and individuals in power.[10] However, this approach was not widely embraced.

In today's world, institutions and individuals in power are not only supporting but actively creating movements. Conscious movements are unique in the way that they amalgamate old and new power, online and offline interactions and global reach with local impact.

Combining old and new power

Heimans and Timms described the rise of new power, which is "open, participatory and peer-driven" as a contrast to the old power of established institutions, which is "closed, inaccessible and leader-driven."[11] The tension inherent in these two types of power makes them seem binary and incompatible.

Conscious movements are able to manage this tension in a way that brings about the best of both power structures. The Global Shapers Community, part of the World Economic Forum, turns this tension into an opportunity. It facilitates interactions between new-power leaders and old power executives during its Annual Meeting at Davos-Klosters. Shapers take part in cross-mentorship schemes where old and new power leaders learn from one another. And, the Global Shapers Community leverages the resources of old power giants (such as Coca-Cola) to scale social impact initiatives launched by Shapers.

Connecting on and offline

Conscious movements recognise the importance of integrated online and in-person interactions to galvanise impact. In a world that emphasises online interactions over in-person gatherings, conscious movements flip this logic on its head.

Lean In, a conscious movement spurred by Sheryl Sandberg's bestselling book, encourages women to launch Lean In Circles- small, in-person gatherings where women discuss their professional challenges, seek advice and share resources. Lean In's website provides Circles with the tools they need to manage meetings, access expert videos (for professional development during meetings) and interact with other Circles nearby. Lean In uses the power of technology to enable face-to-face interaction, placing the emphasis on connections that build trust and affinity.

Bridging global and local

Although the world is more global than ever before, most of our contact continues to take place locally. Of all the telephone calling minutes in the world last year, only 2 per cent were cross-border calls. The average person consumes just 1-2 per cent of their news on foreign sites. And only 2 per cent of university students study in countries where they are not citizens.[12] At the same time, cities are becoming a more powerful force. Over half of the world's population lives in urban areas currently, which projected to increase to 66 per cent by 2050.[13]

Conscious movements make the most of this global-local dichotomy. They rely on globally connected influencers to share ideas, create experiences and adapt movements to resonate with local communities. TED, whose mission is to share "ideas worth spreading," noticed that its content primarily reached an English-speaking, middle class audience. To expand its reach, TED launched TEDx, a conscious movement that spark conversations around the world through TED-like experiences. These events provide elements of the broader TED experience- utilising an 18-minute video format, making all talks publicly available and featuring a diversity of speakers. However, the content, context and language are all adapted to a local audience. TED specifically selects TEDx Ambassadors who can navigate on both a global and local level.

TABLE 2: EXAMPLES OF CONSCIOUS MOVEMENTS

What	Who	Defining Characteristics	Priorities
Global Shapers Community	An initiative of the World Economic Forum	City-based model with hubs in over 400 cities worldwide Select Global Shapers attend Davos and other WEF events whilst all Shapers connect online through a private platform	Engaging millennials to create local impact on a city level and feed into the global agenda
Plus Social Good	A collaboration between the UN, Caterpillar, Gates and Rockefeller Foundations alongside Mashable	Created as an offshoot of the Social Good Summit, which occurs during UN General Assembly Week Open online platform with global network of contributors and a small group of connectors and advisors who meet annually	Creating a global conversation around social impact, particularly around the UN's MDGs and SDGs
One Young World	Founded by two executives at Havas	Annual conference takes place in a different location each year, hosted by OYW members Digital connections take place through social media and local meet-ups take place throughout the year	Connecting emerging leaders and inspiring them to create change within their organisations
TEDx	Created by TED	Ambassador-organised TEDx events bring the TED experience to all corners of the earth All TEDx events are recorded and successful talks appear on TED's website	Bringing TED's power of storytelling to local audiences around relevant themes
Lean In	Founded by Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook	Local circles connect for professional development and mentorship Lean In website provides informational resources and shares success stories	Encouraging women to take ownership of their careers and break the glass ceiling

4. Why conscious movements resonate with millennials

Millennials are not alone in their desire to change the world. But the millennial mindset differs from the youthful optimism of previous generations. Millennials are unique in three key ways- they are pragmatic, empowered and integrated- and these elements make them particularly interested in joining conscious movements.

Millennials are pragmatic in that they are willing to work within existing systems to drive change. Over 90% of millennials believe that businesses can move the dial on key issues and 3/4 believe government has the potential to address society's challenges.[14] Even though millennials want to push institutions to do more, there is a strong belief in the power of these systems to make an impact. With the failure of the protest movements to achieve their aims, millennials are turning to conscious movements and working with institutions to bring about change.

Millennials also expect all aspects of their lives to be integrated. Millennials contribute to social causes because of their passion for an issue (79 per cent) but also meet likeminded peers (56 per cent) and to gain expertise that can help them professionally (46 per cent).[15] Conscious movements provide millennials with all three elements- to give back an issue they care deeply about, to connect with peers and to build their careers.

Finally, with the rise of social media, millennials are empowered by technology. In a digitally connected and open world, millennials have more tools to drive change than previous generations. Millennials are accustomed to connecting to one another- and to those in power- in a way that simply wasn't possible 30 years ago. This empowered mindset and the set of tools available make conscious movements possible.

5. Key considerations

Conscious movements provide institutions with an opportunity to engage young people around "moonshot ideas" that drive lasting social change. They are not appropriate for all organisations and all social challenges. And, of course, conscious movements can be molded towards controversial or nefarious purposes. The Islamic State is using movement principles to recruit young people from around the world into a 'holy war'.[16] In the United States, the National Rifle Association has manipulated the American ethos of 'freedom' to support a $6 billion industry.[17]

However, millennials (and the organisations interested in collaborating with them) tend to support liberal principles and are looking to engage with young people to bring about positive social change. Bringing about change through conscious movements is not easy. Conscious movements require ample resources, broad networks and dedicated support in order to succeed. In order to successfully launch a conscious movement, institutions must be able to answer the following questions around the overall concept, community and structure.

Concept

- What is the big idea we want to take action towards?
- Are we uniquely placed to get this movement off the ground?
- How can we create a unique value proposition?
- In what ways does this conscious movement complement our work as an organisation? In what ways does it differ?

- How will we manage the tension?

Community

- Do we have a strong network of influencers?
- Who can we partner with to augment our network and strengthen the movement?
- What resources will we provide to manage the community?
- How will they interact with one another and with us?

Structure

- What process do we need to put in place as an organisation to get the movement off the ground?
- How can we ensure the movement stays true to its mission, through good governance and guidelines?
- How can we facilitate and catalyse impact?
- What metrics will we put in place to measure success?

With a thorough plan in place for a concept, community and structure, institutions can create conscious movements that engage millennials in a meaningful way that drives social change and create lasting impact.

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