



doSomething

an overview

This document describes the purpose and motivation of doSomething.

Creation of Social Wealth- today's challenge

Traditionally, most efforts in the social sector are centered on distributing existing wealth equitably in the society. The special school for blind people collects charity from those who can afford it, and uses it to fund education of underprivileged people. The old age home finances itself using donations from generous patrons. In all such activities, wealth is transferred from one consumer to another.

While these redistribution functions are valuable in their own right, the one thing we can not afford is to stop the creation of wealth. The equation is clear- if the economic

engine of wealth creation stops working productively, there is no wealth to distribute. *Wealth redistribution is contingent upon wealth creation.*

It is important to understand the difference between *money* and *wealth*. Wealth is an abstract concept of which money is a concrete but limited implementation. Money is

“Wealth redistribution is contingent upon wealth creation”

one way of representing wealth; but not the only one. A leader of the local cooperative who pioneers direct selling of rural agriculture produce in lucrative markets may not change the total amount of money people make in the bigger picture, but he creates an abundance of wealth by eliminating intermediaries and improving supply chain efficiencies. A teacher who inspires young people to go out and conquer the world's challenges may not be paid very well monetarily, but creates enormous amounts of wealth for the society by building leadership for the society. A person who finds a better way of drilling oil wells reduces the time it takes to get a liter of oil out of the earth. She creates wealth because she allows more to be done with less.

One of the biggest challenges for our society is to find newer ways of creating wealth. Innovation is the specific means to reach this end.

Innovation- the tool for building tomorrow

Consider an idea- “A man is flying”. It is an abstract thought, and by itself has no value. An artiste would use this idea to develop a thought provoking representation on the canvas. A scientist would take it and develop equations for a hypothetical airplane. An inventor like the Wright brothers can take the idea and develop the first airplanes. However, it is the innovator who takes the idea and the related invention (the airplane), and develops the commercial airline industry, allowing millions of people to travel thousands of miles in a matter of hours. The ultimate significance of his work lies in that he allows those millions to do more with less. *He creates social wealth*, because without the full implementation of the idea, we would be living in a very large, inaccessible and inefficient world today.

This is but one example. Today innovations in personal computing have allowed us to write, read, print and exchange documents such as this one with efficiencies unfathomable 50 years ago. The internet allows us to exchange information across continents instantaneously. Other Innovators are using these platforms to make farming more effective in Southern India and to provide literacy to thousands in interior Africa.

“Innovation is the key creator of social wealth”

Innovation is about converting ideas into action and setting them in the concrete of reality. Through innovation, social wealth is created. According to Robert Solow, Nobel laureate in economics, at least half of the economic growth during the past 50 years came from innovations that have created new technologies, industries and jobs. The US semiconductor industry (based on the evolution of integrated circuit technologies) alone is estimated to have created 226,000

jobs with world-wide sales of \$166 billion in 2003. Clearly, the verdict is out in the corporate world today that Innovation is not an option but a necessity to survive in the rapidly changing business environment.

However, Innovation is not the prerogative of the corporate world. In fact, non-profit organizations, governmental agencies and any institute that has a stake in the future of society can not separate itself from the practice of Innovation. Innovation is the calling for building not just modern day corporations, but a modern society.

doSomething and systematic Social Innovation

About one hundred years ago, Frederick Taylor laid out the principles of scientific management, and this led to manifold productivity improvements in factories where work could be neatly planned and systematized. In the 100 years since then, we have learnt various things about the general practice of management, and today have reasonably successful models of how to *sustain*

businesses of various natures (including the non profit).

“doSomething is a non profit organization which uses Innovation to create social wealth”

However when we make the transition from sustenance to change, we need the practice of systematic Innovation to make the leap. However, Innovation is a tough job! The battlefield for innovative products and services is littered with failed initiatives and unrealized dreams. Companies which put millions of dollars in Innovative initiatives, report a success rate of about 4%. Social Innovation, with all its added complexities, would be even harder to carry out. Is the promise of Innovation an empty lure?

Thankfully, the answer is no. We at doSomething believe that the discipline of Innovation can be systematized; its activities managed like any other business function. Peter Drucker prescribed such a view of

innovation, and there are people and organizations that have attained close to 100% success in their innovative efforts. It is difficult, no doubt, but it is entirely possible.

Thomas Alva Edison mastered the art of invention more than 100 years ago. Today, we are in a position to do the same for Innovation. And that, precisely, is doSomething’s goal- to practice Innovation with near-100% success rate. We call it *Extreme Innovation*.

doSomething is a social Innovation organization which works with motivated teams of smart, entrepreneurial people on Innovative projects which can create an impact on the society.