



Middle of the road

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Creating opportunities in the space between business and charity

It seems so straightforward. Companies generate revenue and – ideally – return a profit to their owners. Charities, by contrast, do not generate revenue, and certainly not profit. But enter the creative entrepreneur. The word is actually a concatenation of two: in French, 'entre' means between and 'preneur' means taker. Which makes an entrepreneur literally someone who takes from between. And whether it is Debbie Watkins bridging the gap to turn trash from Cambodia into funky consumer products for sale in London (see April 2012 column) or Felipe Vergara building a business between student tuition needs and future earnings (November 2010), it is the job of the entrepreneur to create opportunities between existing distinctions.

GENUINE AMBIGUITY

In the mountainous country of Nepal, Anil Parajuli takes his job as an entrepreneur very seriously. Operating a nonprofit entity named Himalayan Health Care (HHC), Parajuli takes from between that clear delineation between business and charity to run 'medical treks' that bring foreign doctors into remote villages to treat the sick, train local healthcare workers and build awareness about the needs of his country. Oh – and did we mention? – generate revenue. If you are a doctor with itchy travel feet and the need to perform medicine 'in the wild', the rate



is about £1,800 for a two-week trek (you pay for airfare, moleskin for blisters and any other personal expenses: himalayanhealthcare.org).

CLIENT OR VOLUNTEER?

And while our initial distinction between companies and charities might seem perhaps a little abstract, Parajuli paints the entrepreneurial bridge between them in stark relief. To him, there is no difference between a doctor willing to volunteer time to practise medicine in Nepal and a trekking client, paying to tour a country which is home to eight

of the ten tallest peaks on the planet. In implementation, those two people are one in the same – Parajuli has taken from between.

SELF SELECTION

Parajuli offers us a unique insight into how entrepreneurs can do so much with what seems like so little. They are not only unconcerned by artificial distinctions, they encourage the people around them to help create opportunities that bridge those distinctions. By letting a volunteer self-select into also being a paying customer, Parajuli opens up

the range of people, time and money resources available to him and his healthcare initiative. And while Revathi Roy has no compunction in offering to sell her employees (female taxi drivers) classes on self-defence and first aid (January 2012), established corporations as well as charities are less likely to let individuals self-select into multiple roles – and thus artificially constrain the possible resources available for the creation of opportunity.

DISTINGUISHED ENTREPRENEUR

Parajuli just celebrated 20 years of running HHC. In that time, he has run over 80 medical treks into the Dhading region (the north part that borders Tibet) and the Ilam region (the eastern part bordering India) of Nepal. He has provided primary healthcare services to tens of thousands of rural Nepalese and runs the Parajuli Community Hospital, offering 24-hour service and employing Nepalese medical doctors and 40 staff. Furthermore, he has bridged the gap between hundreds of international doctors and local healthcare providers, and is advancing into education as well as income-generating programs for the people of Nepal. Distinguished? Certainly. Concerned with distinctions? Not at all. ●

Peak practice
Anil Parajuli's Himalayan Health Care brings the worlds of trekking and medicine together

details

By Stuart Read, professor of marketing at IMD, and Robert Wiltbank, associate professor of strategic management, Willamette University, Oregon; authors of *Effectual Entrepreneurship* (Routledge, £35)



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