

## Social Business - Business as if People Mattered

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### Keynote Speakers

- **Sameer Deshpande** - *Seeking a balance between demand creation and demand fulfilment in the social marketing and social business context*
- **Gerard Hastings** - *Marketing in a post-consumer society*
- **A. Fuat Firat** - *The Symbolic and Social Business*
- **Ken Peattie** - *Places Where People Matter: The Marketing Dynamics of Fairtrade Towns*

### • Seeking a balance between demand creation and demand fulfilment in the social marketing and social business context

#### Sameer Deshpande, University of Lethbridge, Canada

While debate rages on whether marketing creates demand or addresses an existing one, those behaviour change strategies likely succeed that achieve a fine balance between the two ends. The presentation proposes this approach in the social business and social marketing context of explicitly promoting behaviours where some demand already exists but is not embraced due to internal and external barriers, discusses its likely effectiveness and the conditions under which it is likely to succeed.

### • Marketing in a post-consumer society

#### Gerard Hastings, Institute for Social Marketing, University of Stirling

Marketing facilitates the process of consumption. It informs us about products and services, ensures they are distributed to maximise our convenience, priced to our advantage and designed with our needs in mind. Technological innovation is making this a ubiquitous, perpetual and 360 degree process: Amazon and Google can, in virtual terms, create a bespoke world for us. Consumption has never been so easy, enjoyable or self-reinforcing.

Herein lies the rub: consumption brings with it many – and growing – problems. The most tangible of these form the bedrock of public health: the consumption to tobacco, alcohol and highly processed food are driving unprecedented health harms. One in two smokers are killed by their habit; alcohol is the third greatest cause of premature death (despite the fact that half the world don't drink) and both these plagues will be soon be outstripped by the tidal wave of illness being driven by obesity. Such is the evidence implicating marketing in this carnage that for a decade now the scientific literature has routinely referred to these as 'industrial epidemics'(1).

To these individual harms must be added even more disturbing social ones. Because the munificence of marketing is limited to those with money it drives massive inequalities: to those who have is given ever more, while the have-nots languish. The resulting divisions have accelerated in recent years with marketing-friendly neoliberal policies in the ascendancy; the UK, for example, is now as unequal as it was when Charles Dickens wrote *Hard Times*(2). This unfairness is lethal. The reason there is now such a desperate scramble to produce an Ebola vaccine is that it wasn't profitable enough to do it before. The equatorial countries where the virus thrives simply did not

present a lucrative enough market for the pharma corporations to bother. And the remorseless logic of a system which rewards wealth with more wealth means that corporations are massively out-growing countries. World Bank data from 2011 shows that 110 of the 175 largest global economic entities in 2011 were corporations, not countries; the revenues of Royal Dutch Shell, Exxon Mobil and Wal-Mart each exceed the combined GDP of the 110 poorest countries(3).

Yet still this is not the worst. Consumption is now threatening our planet; marketing's promise of perpetual material satisfaction is utterly unsustainable. As climate scientist Stephen Emmett explains, summing up the consensus of the scientific community: "we need to consume less. A lot less. Less food, less energy, less stuff. Fewer cars, electric cars, cotton T-shirts, laptops, mobile phone upgrades. Far fewer"(4). But marketing is too successful and "every decade global consumption continues to increase relentlessly". In desperation, he concludes with Anglo-Saxon brevity: "we are f--ked".(5)

There is no refuting Emmott's science, but his pessimism must be challenged – if only for the sake of our sanity. There is time and capacity to turn things around, but only if we completely rethink marketing. Actually it is not so much a matter of rethinking, as repatriating. Marketing is as old as human society because it explains our vital ability to cooperate with each other. Its core principles of mutually beneficial exchange, doing deals and seeking to identify the win-wins that make cooperation pay for multiple parties are the essence of collective living. Richard Layard takes this thinking way back to the origins of our species, arguing that cooperation and mutually beneficial exchange were key to our success on the African savannah. "If human beings had not been able to cooperate in this way they would probably not have survived the rigours of the savannah – or subsequently of regions much colder. At best our lives would have been, as Thomas Hobbes put it, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. We survived because our genes gave us the ability to cooperate."(6)

Marketing is the timeless protocol behind this vital human cooperation. This presentation will discuss how we can make it fit for purpose to meet the challenges now facing humankind.

- (1) Jahiel, RI, Babor, TF. (2007) Industrial epidemics, public health advocacy and the alcohol industry: lessons from other fields. *Addiction*, 102, 1335-9.
- (2) Dorling, D. (2012) *Injustice: why social inequality persists*. Bristol: Policy Press
- (3) Pingeot, L. (2014) Corporate Influence in the post-2015 process. Working paper from Strategy Meeting. New York: Global Development Forum. Available at: <https://www.globalpolicy.org/publications.html>; 2014 [accessed 28.07.14]
- (4) Emmet, Stephen (2013). *10 Billion*. Penguin. p.184.
- (5) Ibid p 196
- (6) Layard, PRG (2005). *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*. London: Allen Lane. p.98.

## • The Symbolic and Social Business

### A. Fuat Firat, University of Texas-Pan American, USA

Every order of life is based on a set of mostly abstract concepts and categories that symbolically inform what meaning is sought for human life. Modern orders of life, which have largely globalized, and the role and purpose of business within these orders are thus organized to realize a principal meaning, which may or may not be conducive to socially conscious practices by businesses. In this address, I intend to explore with the audience the symbolic institutionalizations, the human subjectivities, and the organizing principles that determine meaning across human history to discover needs for new categories that will enable social business principles

- **Places Where People Matter: The Marketing Dynamics of Fairtrade Towns.**

**Ken Peattie, Cardiff University, UK**

The Fairtrade Town movement has been a remarkable social business success story during the past decade. It was in 2001 that Garstang in the UK became the first town to achieve Fairtrade accreditation. Since then the number of UK Fairtrade Towns (and Cities) has expanded to almost 600, and the movement has also spread rapidly to other countries. As a phenomenon, the Fairtrade Towns movement represents a novel form of social business. As with Fairtrade marketing more broadly, it seeks to connect consumers in relatively wealthy countries to the plight of commodity producers in other relatively poor countries. Unlike conventional Fairtrade marketing, it translates the abstract concepts of the market into more specific place-based communities of consumption within which Fairtrade activists seek to connect local organisations, businesses and consumers to the Fairtrade agenda often combined with ideas of local identity and belonging. In doing so it creates a boundary-crossing approach to marketing that may represent a blueprint for other forms of more sustainable, localised and socially responsible business for the future.