

## The Top Moments of the Decade in Social Entrepreneurship

according to *Nathaniel Whittimore*

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Here is my list of the top moments in social entrepreneurship of the decade. As any list, this is subjective, and reflects my biases. That said, I've tried to look across a pretty wide scope of happenings and chose key moments that reflected larger movements and shifts that have shaped the field. One regret is that the list is largely US-centric.



This is a matter of my failings to know the whole world far more than the lack of the world's impact on social entrepreneurship. Without further ado:

**#10: Launch of the Office of Social Innovation (April 2009)** - While it is muddled through the messy business of reforming health care and cleaning up foreign wars, this administration has also quietly put into motion the most high level collaboration between social enterprise and government the US has seen. With \$50 million in approved funding, the Social Innovation Fund provides a chance to live up to the promise of the office.

**#9: First Issue of Stanford Social Innovation Review (Spring 2003)** - The 2000s saw a huge number of academic programs based around social entrepreneurship and innovation. Indeed, it's increasingly a prerequisite that MBA programs have significant social innovation offerings. I've chosen the publishing of the first issue of the Stanford Social Innovation Review as the moment to capture this movement because, as any good academic will tell you, every field needs a journal. Since 2003, SSIR has been the place to get into the real research and scholarship behind our field.

**#8: Andrew Zolli Joins Pop!Tech (2003) and TED Talks Move Online (June 2006)** - Pop!Tech and TED are perhaps the two most important public faces of this broader world of creative social innovation. Both networks are anchored in conferences that bring together big thinkers from across the spectrum, and both networks have used the incredible distribution power of the internet to help make the world safe for smart. Although they have their roots in earlier decades, there are a number of identifiable moments in the

last ten years that stand out. For Pop!Tech, the emotional and intellectual force of curator Andrew Zolli has taken the network into a new league that continues to evolve at an incredible pace. For TED, the decision in 2006 to begin giving away the talks for free online has allowed anyone with an internet connection to be inspired, and with 100+ million views, that impact can hardly be calculated. I am totally convinced that these communities will continue to bring new people to social entrepreneurship as well as push those of us in the field to think differently about who and what we are and do.

**#7: Unilever's Acquisition of Ben & Jerry's (April 2000) and Cadbury's Shift To Fair Trade (March 2009)** - These twin events are something of the Yin and Yang of corporate involvement with social good. Ben & Jerry's sold itself to European conglomerate Unilever in early 2000 with the promise that Unilever would keep its myriad social good programs intact. Unfortunately, they didn't, and the fallout has had a profound impact on how investors like the folks at Good Capital think about structuring their investments. On the flip side, the Fair Trade movement has become increasingly mainstream - particularly in Europe. In March 2009, famous UK Chocolate maker Cadbury announced that its entire Dairymilk line would subsequently be produced with exclusively Fair Trade certified chocolate. A few months later, as Kraft circled for a Cadbury acquisition, many wondered if it would be Ben & Jerry's all over again. Exits for social enterprise will be a major factor in determining how far the field advances in the next decade.

**#6: The Launch of the iPhone (June 2007)** - Regardless of how you feel about Apple or social media, it is pretty inarguable that the iPhone is the first consumer electronic device to truly put the power of the computer in your pocket. It is truly the modern Swiss Army Knife that allows you to do everything from finding parks that kids can play in to posting status updates on Facebook to performing microtasks that help give work to refugees in Kenya. The iPhone is accelerating the shift in how we self organize, and I believe that we're only seeing the beginning of how the devices we carry in our pockets will allow us to shift how we act collectively and individually for the common good.

**#5: Teach For America's 2009 Recruitment Class Numbers (May 2009)** - Who turned down more than 30,000 top college graduates last year? Who received applications from a full 11% of graduating Ivy League seniors, including 16% of Yale's class? Who was the top employer of graduating seniors from Brown, Georgetown, Trinity College, the University of Chicago, Marquette, and about a dozen other schools? Not Goldman Sachs. Not McKinsey, Deloitte or any other consulting firm. It was Teach For America. In a field predicated on the idea that social innovation can be scaled to achieve widespread change, we have precious few examples of organizations that have actually begun to achieve it. While TFA isn't where it wants to be - still facing often contentious relationships with teachers unions that limit placements, for example - it has achieved a scale, particularly in the hearts of the vital next generation of change leaders.

**#4: Bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers (September 2008) and Launch of the Social Capital Markets Conference (October 2008)** - The first Social Capital Markets conference in San Francisco, held in October 2008, was notable in that it was explicitly about this emerging market structure, and brought together a hugely diverse cross-section of the actors involved. Only a month before, Lehman Brothers crashed in the largest bankruptcy in US history and sent shivers through the mainstream financial world. The events feel tied to me because at its core, the attendees and planners of the first (and subsequent) SoCap are fundamentally reshaping capitalism.

**#3: Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank Win Nobel Peace Prize (October 2006) and Kiva.org Founded (March 2005)** - Every field needs its shining exemplars. Perhaps nothing has done more to make people take note of the idea that markets can be used for good than the Nobel Peace Prize committee recognizing Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank he founded in Bangladesh in the 1970s. Since then, Yunus has become an increasingly household name, and as he has told the story of microfinance, he has opened the door to the conversation about "social business," as he calls it in a book of the same title, more broadly. Of course, the action engine that made Yunus' increasing renown so powerful for our field is Kiva.org, the microlending site that just passed \$100 million in loans and that has given millions of average citizens the chance to be a part of microfinance.

**#2: David Bornstein Publishes "How To Change The World" (February 2004)** - Before I knew what social entrepreneurship was, exactly, I knew about David Bornstein's "How To Change The World: Social Entrepreneurs And The Power Of New Ideas." . Bornstein's collection of stories of some of the world's best performing and least known social innovators was the book that brought together a seemingly interesting idea and made it real, tangible, and tasteable. In terms of building the field, it's hard to calculate how important this book has been and will be to the new generation of young people clamoring to create or help grow the innovative institutions of tomorrow.

**#1: eBay Goes Public (September 1998)** - Barron's recently published a list of the Top 25 best philanthropists. Right on the top of the list at #1 and #2 respectively were Pierre Omidyar and Jeff Skoll, the founder and first employee of online auction site eBay. In September 1998, when eBay went public, it created the wealth and the opportunity that have done arguably the most to build social entrepreneurship into a recognizable field over the last ten years. Omidyar's Omidyar.net has functioned as a venture capital/philanthropic investment firm, making grants and investments in groups working in microfinance, digital access, and social entrepreneurs working on a host of other issues. Skoll barely needs a writeup. He has pumped more than \$1b of eBay stock into his Skoll Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship.

*Source: Stanford Social Innovation Review blog*

### Quotes of the Fortnight

#### 名句精選

"First, it is ridiculed.  
Second, it is violently  
opposed.  
Third, it is accepted as being  
self-evident."

#### Schopenhauer on 'Truth'

### Video of the Fortnight

#### 精選名片

#### Better Place

**A world without petrol-run  
cars!**

You will be hearing a lot about this  
company in the years to come. In  
ten years' time, it will be as well  
known as Google of today.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kU7I90AooOE>

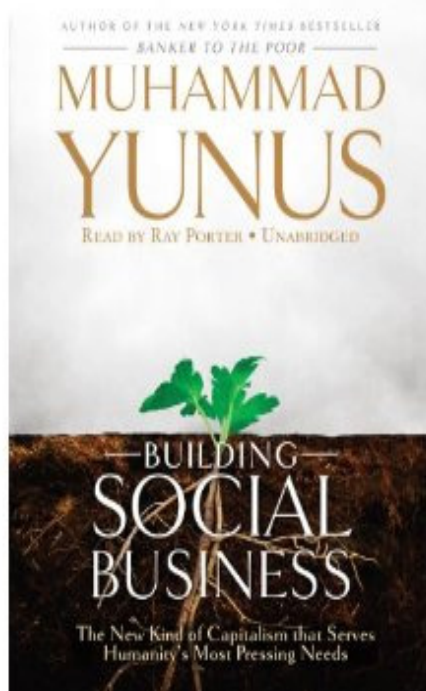


### Book of the Fortnight

#### 新書精選

A 2010 book by Muhammad Yunus  
arguing that capitalism is incomplete  
without developing a new type of  
enterprise – social business.

(New York: Public Affiars, 2010)



### Website of the Fortnight

#### 精選網站

#### Starter Kits for Social Entrepreneur

A powerful and user-friendly set  
of tool kits for aspiring social  
entrepreneurs

<http://ashoka.org/story/starter-kits-social-entrepreneurs>