Expectations for the role that business can and should play in society are changing, creating greater demand for business leaders who are attentive to the independency of business success and social and environmental progress. This article outlines a new leadership development program, inaugurated by the Aspen Institute Business and Society Program in 2009, specifically designed to help meet this demand. This First Movers Fellowship Program brings together a select group of high-potential, mid-career business professionals who, we believe, are already acting as social intrapreneurs in their companies, creating new products, services, and management innovations that achieve greater profitability and positive social and environmental impacts. The program’s objective is to strengthen their capacity to innovate and lead change in their companies. In turn, we believe they can help their companies develop competitive advantage by more effectively integrating social and environmental value into core strategic priorities. The article discusses the genesis of the program, the rationale for its design and pedagogy, the target audience, and the key components of the fellowship experience.
It also presents early positive findings from an independent program evaluation and highlights challenges ahead.

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"Time out in the midst of chaos" is how one individual described the First Movers Fellowship Program launched by the Aspen Institute Business and Society Program (Aspen BSP) in 2009. “A window and a mirror” is another. “Development accelerator” is a third. Each of these assessments was offered by one of the Fellows in the inaugural class.

The fellowship program is designed for a specific type of business professional: exceptional innovators in for-profit companies—the First Movers—who are helping their companies grow in ways that produce financial results and contribute to our collective well-being. They are individuals acting on the conviction that business can leapfrog the competition by embracing innovations that achieve financial success and social and environmental value. Like Peter Drucker, they dare to imagine that “Every single social and global issue of our day is a business opportunity in disguise” (Cooperrider, 2008).

The need today to develop business leaders with these capacities is great. To meet global competitive pressures and changing public expectations, there is increased urgency in companies to adapt and innovate and to do so with attention to the footprint they are leaving on communities and the planet. Companies already have experts in their midst, the First Movers, whose efforts are helping their organizations meet these pressures and expectations. At present, however, we believe they are an under-recognized and under-developed pool of talent. The First Movers Fellowship endeavors to change that equation.

The fellowship experience offers selected individuals a chance to become part of a community of business men and women who share a passion about their work and belief in the new possibilities for business. It also serves as an innovation lab where Fellows develop the skills to realize their vision and succeed even when they have to work against organizational impediments to change. By identifying these First Movers and offering them a tailor-made development experience, we hope to encourage them to be even more daring and inventive and to become more effective leaders and champions for change within their companies and across industries. The ultimate goal of the program is audacious: to nurture and empower individuals who can improve the way the world does business so that the business sector lives up to its full potential as a contributor to a sustainable society.

The program design reflects a view prevalent within the Aspen Institute that open dialogue can be a powerful learning experience if it is structured to call on the knowledge and experience of the participants in the room. As a result, presentations in the required seminars are few, and plenty of time is allotted for Fellows to help each other identify challenges and work through them. Various readings, assigned in advance of the convenings, offer context for discussion. Fellowship projects, designed and executed by each Fellow, serve as a focal point for learning.

Our inaugural class of sixteen Fellows, announced in April 2009, successfully completed their fellowship the following year. As of this writing, the second class of Fellows is actively involved in the fellowship experience, and we are recruiting the third. Fellows in the first two classes are diverse. They come from many companies in different industries, including Best Buy, Colgate-Palmolive, Dow Chemical, IBM, IDEO, Method, Microsoft, MetLife, Pick n Pay, State Street Global Advisers, and WalMart. Ethnicity, years of experience, and age vary, although most Fellows are in their thirties and forties. The Fellows have
Developing Business Innovators Who Integrate Profitability and Social Value

come from nine countries and have a wide range of functional responsibilities, among them purchasing, leadership development, design, brand, risk, general, and executive management; and sustainability. What the Fellows have in common is enthusiasm for exploring possibilities for integration of financial, social, and environmental value; a conviction that they have as much to learn as they do to teach; humility about their own accomplishments; and unbridled eagerness to work with a group of individuals who share their passion for this kind of business innovation.

This chapter situates the fellowship in the context of changing expectations about the role business plays in society and summarizes what we have learned to date about the First Movers themselves. It also tells the story about how and why we came to develop the fellowship program and provides an overview of the program and the rationale for the program design and pedagogy. Included throughout are highlights from the independent evaluation that was conducted during the first, pilot year of the program.1

Changing Expectations for Business

For years, leaders in business and academia have been calling for a fundamental mind shift in business, to encourage the sector to pay far greater attention to the interdependency of business success and social progress. A few references are illustrative. As early as 1984, R. Edward Freeman wrote Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach, a seminal work (reissued by Cambridge University Press in 2010) that contributed to our understanding of the importance of relationships among stakeholders for achieving business success.2 In the past decade many more voices have been raised. In 2002, for example, three pioneering business leaders collaborated to produce Walking the Talk: The Business Case for Sustainable Development (Holliday, Schmidheiny, & Watts, 2002). Three years later, the managing partner at McKinsey (Davis, 2005) called for a new implicit social contract that recognizes the obligations, opportunities, and advantages for both business and society. In the following year, in the pages of the Harvard Business Review, companies were urged to reevaluate the relationship between their corporate strategy and society and move beyond thinking of “corporate success and social welfare as a zero sum game” (Porter & Kramer, 2006). At the end of the decade, the same publication included a call from leading strategist Gary Hamel who argued for no less than the reinvention of management, exhorting managers to “ensure that the work of management serves a higher purpose” (Hamel, 2009). Even more recently, in their cover article on how to fix capitalism, Porter and Kramer offered further perspectives on the imperative of creating “shared value” to achieve business success (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

1The objectives of the evaluation were to track the effectiveness of the program in achieving the intended personal and organizational impacts; to provide real time feedback; and to assess the sustainability of the program over time. The evaluator was present as an observer at all three seminars and participated in the program’s design team. The evaluation report is based on three Fellows’ surveys, three rounds of Fellows’ interviews; a survey of thought partners; interviews with thought partners after the completion of the program; interviews with members of the design team after the completion of the program; program assignments and other documents. The evaluation was conducted by Shari Cohen, PhD, Intersections Resources.

2Through a faculty pioneer awards program, over the years Aspen BSP has conferred “lifetime achievement” awards on several faculty, including R. Edward Freeman, who have taught thousands of business school students and provided a theoretical basis for rethinking this mindset in business. (Information about recipients of these awards is available at www.facultypioneers.org.)
Since 1999 Aspen BSP has been examining what this mind shift would mean in practice. In that year we organized the first of several convenings of leadership development experts from corporations and academia to ask two fundamental questions: If we want business to produce results that take financial, social, and environmental impacts into account, what kind of leaders do we need? And, how do we develop individuals with these capabilities?

Over the ensuing decade we continued to bring experts together to examine how exemplary business leaders, at all levels of the firm, manage complex and interdependent social, financial, and environmental dynamics and thus achieve results that create long-term value for the firm’s diverse constituencies. These conversations have taught us a great deal about the kinds of leadership development experiences most effective for meeting the needs of such leaders (McGaw, 2005). Although we have been inspired by many of the pioneering efforts in the field, we believe that leadership programs typically available to these business professionals do not fully address their needs. Thus, we have come to realize that companies are not taking full advantage of a valuable resource already within their midst.

### Social Intrapreneurs: Emergence of a New Business Resource

The kinds of business leaders referenced above generally fit an entrepreneurial profile. They see opportunities where others don’t because they bring characteristics typically associated with entrepreneurs: “inspiration, creativity, direct action, courage, and fortitude” (Martin & Osberg, 2007). A key driver for them is their desire to make a direct connection between their personal aspiration to make a difference and their professional endeavors. Fellows often recount the early formation of personal commitments to address social inequities or environmental challenges that sprang from experiences living abroad or working with community groups. However, unlike some of their peers who have escaped business to join non-profits or start mission-based social enterprises, they have made a strategic choice to stay in mainstream, often very large, companies as the best way for achieving maximum impact.

These individuals are, in effect, social intrapreneurs. Like the exceptional performers described in How to Be a Star at Work, these individuals are “blazing trails in the organization’s white spaces” (Kelley, 1998). But the white spaces they are looking for in their companies are places where they can create new products, services, business models, or processes that achieve greater profitability and positive social and environmental impacts. As they do so, they are helping their companies take leadership roles in this complicated arena.

Only recently has there been any focused attention on understanding the characteristics of this group (Grayson, McLaren, & Spitzbeck, 2011). While some social intrapreneurs have public profiles (Sustainability, 2008), most work below the radar in corporations and certainly don’t have social intrapreneur or First Mover designations on their business cards. The most effective of these intrapreneurs know their companies well. They are respected by superiors and peers for the quality of their work. Because of their track record, they can get a hearing even among skeptics. However, they often have to swim upstream and work against the odds. Many tell us that they are constrained within their companies by risk-averse cultures that favor the status quo and fear failure. Moreover, because most social intrapreneurs are recommending metrics that go beyond short-term financial results, they are constrained by skepticism about the business case for the kinds of innovations they espouse.

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1Debra Meyerson, with her research on “tempered radicals,” was an early contributor to our understanding of such innovators in business (Meyerson, 2001).
To find candidates for this program, we reach out to hundreds of individuals who know us well and understand the type of business men and women we are looking for. The recruitment and selection process for this program runs about five months (see Figure 29.1). We stress that we are looking for mid-career business professionals recognized as high-potential talent in their companies who have demonstrated passion and capacity for working at the intersection of business growth and positive social and environmental change. We also make it clear that ideal candidates come from core business functions within their companies: finance, marketing, design, leadership and organizational development, etc. Moreover, we emphasize that successful candidates will have a new idea or business opportunity they urgently want to implement in their companies that will move the company further into the zone where business growth and social well-being intersect. These ideas form the basis for the next-stage innovation projects that they work on during their fellowships.

As we assess candidates, we consider their:

- Track record of innovation, coupled with a sense of humility about their accomplishments;
- Enthusiasm for learning from others and commitment to supporting other Fellows;
- Willingness to reflect honestly and openly on their personal objectives and aspirations;
- Comfort with a program that is largely self-directed;
- Ability to meet the requirements of the fellowship (attending the seminars, working with thought partners, paying the fellowship fee);
- Access to executive decision makers in their companies.

**Figure 29.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Mover Selection Process</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Nominations</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Initial Screening</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Phone interviews with staff</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Applications</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Phone interviews with Fellows</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Design Team Review and final selection</strong></td>
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As the selection process continues, we take a close look at the nature of the project that the Fellow intends to undertake during the fellowship. We are looking for projects that are innovative, feasible, closely aligned with the core strategic priorities of his or her company, and potentially game-changing for the company/industry.

The First Movers Fellowship Experience: Meeting the Needs of Social Intrapreneurs

Realizing there are few leadership programs available for high-potential professionals who fit the social intrapreneur profile, we sought to develop a distinctive program with this type of business professional in mind. To do so, we called on the lessons gained from dialogues with leadership development experts about the most effective ways to develop leaders with the will and ability to find innovative pathways to achieving business success that integrate profitability and social value. To help envision and implement the fellowship, we established a small design team with deep expertise in innovation and leadership development.4

What emerged is a program with several basic elements. First of all, the program gives Fellows access to a powerful and selective network of exceptionally talented and diverse colleagues. These individuals come together for three mandatory seminars, twelve days in total, held at Aspen Institute conference centers or other retreat facilities. Designing and implementing a “next stage innovation project” is a requirement of the fellowship. Each project must be based on a compelling idea about a new product, service, process, or business model that would help the Fellow’s company move toward greater strategic integration of some critical social or environmental objective. Fellows are selected, in part, on the basis of their early stage project proposals. We look for projects that have game-changing potential and that are closely related to a company’s core strategic priorities. Figure 29.2 shows a sample of the kinds of work Fellows undertake during their fellowship.

Fellows are also expected to select at least two thought partners, generally from within their own companies, to work with them throughout the fellowship.5 Thought

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4The design team includes Robert Adams and David Sluyter, The Fetzer Institute; Matthew Breitfelder, Black-Rock; Shari Cohen, Intersections Resources; Fred Dust, IDEO; Mary Gentile, Babson College; Nancy McGaw, Sarah Rienhoff, and Judith Samuelson, Aspen Institute Business and Society Program.

5The individuals whom Fellows invite to serve as thought partners represent a range of functional responsibilities within their companies. Sample titles are illustrative: Vice President, Strategic and Executive Communications; Chief Marketing Officer; Head of US Product Engineering; Chief Technology Coordinator; Executive Vice President, Strategic Insights & Analysis.
partners serve in many capacities: they help the Fellows build support within the company for their innovations; serve as sounding boards and skeptics; and challenge Fellows’ thinking in productive—and often disruptive—ways. Their involvement also makes it more likely that lessons learned by the Fellows will be leveraged within their companies and that the fellowship will therefore have deeper organizational impact. Fellows’ experiences working with thought partners have been mixed, but many report that even a limited amount of time with these individuals can produce “small bites of nourishment” that can lead to very big breakthroughs. Moreover, they come to understand that even if an executive declines the opportunity to be involved, the ask itself is powerful. One Fellow reported that he kept approaching senior executives to find his partners. Initially, many said they couldn’t do it, but all said “keep me posted on your progress.” The impact of that response is tremendous. Even before he started the fellowship, he had already built a network of support within his company. This network has paid off for him in remarkable ways.

Each of the program elements noted above is important, but what really distinguishes the program from other leadership development programs, along with its singular focus on social intrapreneurs, is the interweaving throughout the program of the four thematic building blocks: Innovation, Leadership, Reflection, Community. Each of these is discussed in greater detail below.

Innovation. We sought to develop a program that would serve as an innovation lab where Fellows develop the skills they need to make next stage innovations real and successful in their organizations. Emphasis on this particular building block of the program arises from a simple premise: that the most effective way to ensure the adoption of a new management mindset is through the path of innovation. Every company understands the imperative to innovate. Still, many ignore the powerful innovations that are being launched by employees who are finding ways to integrate financial success with positive social and environmental impacts.

First Movers who are the focus of this program are often not identified as innovators by their colleagues. Sometimes they don’t even see themselves in that light. Being designated an Aspen First Mover Fellow gives them a new perspective on their work and calls attention within their company to their efforts. What Fellows have told us is that simply having this imprimatur gives them “wind at their back.” It validates their corporate contribution and makes them eager to hone their capacity to innovate.

The fellowship seminars help Fellows learn and practice a range of innovation tools and methods so they can better conceptualize and implement game-changing innovations within their firm. Fellows are introduced to the concept of design thinking as one broad framework for developing their capacity for innovation. Design thinking, as defined by Tim Brown, CEO of IDEO, is “a discipline that uses the designer’s sensibility and methods to match people’s needs with what is technologically feasible and what a viable business strategy can convert into customer value and market opportunity” (Brown, 2008). With its human-centered tenets, a focus on what is possible, and a recognition that a new social contract is required if all are to thrive in an interconnected world, design thinking is an approach that has great utility for those trying to create business models, products, and services that will achieve positive financial outcomes and social and environmental benefits as well (Brown, 2009).

Design thinking essentially helps the Fellows zoom out and in: to study the system in which they work to better understand and position their own endeavors and also to examine the specifics of these endeavors. Thus, it provides a pathway for Fellows to become more systematic in their thinking. We cover a range of design
thinking topics. For example, in the seminars there is a session on helping Fellows discover the ecosystem of their organizations. As they do so, they consider the myths that empower and constrain innovation at their companies. They map the official and unofficial channels for innovation and become more intentional about finding ways to get things done. Looking at the system in this way is eye-opening for the Fellows. As one said, he now sees “all the avenues, contributors, obstacles, and gatekeepers and the multiple channels for innovation versus established protocols.”

Fellows are also encouraged to step back and examine the problem or situation that they are trying to address. They come to realize that defining a problem correctly is critical for figuring out the solution. They learn techniques for reframing problems and explore the assumptions that are behind the approaches they are taking in their project work. They ask, for example, how might others see the problem they are working on? What constraints could they add to the framing of the problem that might result in greater clarity? Where is the silver lining in the situation as they see it? In collaboration, Fellows ask themselves these questions to reframe and rethink the situations they are trying to address. As a result of this exercise and others, many Fellows revise their projects significantly throughout the fellowship and enhance their chances for success. “My ability to reframe issues and challenges and to help others do so,” reports one Fellow, “has made me more effective in the company.”

Leadership. Often social intrapreneurs work against corporate norms and accepted habits of practice. Even those who work in environments that are hospitable to change struggle with the usual impediments to new thinking: dismissive bosses, corporate inertia, short-term planning horizons. The seminars help Fellows explore ways to lead change in their organizations and to build the political and social capital they need to succeed. Fellows and their thought partners confirm the effectiveness of this aspect of the program. At the end of the fellowship, Fellows report much greater confidence and appetite to take on leadership roles, and their supervisors agree. As one noted, for example, the Fellow he worked with could now “lead sustainability efforts at the company more autonomously.”

We encourage Fellows to look at storytelling as a powerful leadership tool. They see that stories engage listeners much more effectively than presentations of facts and data. Stories also give the storyteller a chance to paint a picture of possible futures that others need to imagine if they are to become part of a change initiative. Fellows are given multiple opportunities to practice this art. Throughout the fellowship, they share stories with each other about strategies they have used for bringing others on board. By telling stories of past successes and naming the strengths they have relied on to achieve results, they become more aware of the personal qualities they bring to current challenges. They think about “coding and decoding”: how to frame ideas for different audiences and to listen more actively. The impact is significant. As one Fellow commented, “I realized I had to start engaging with others in conversations rather than being the one to propose the solution.” Doing so has helped him achieve corporate buy-in—and a promotion. Another Fellow said she had never realized
“the validity that stories had in the work environment,” and she is now using them extensively to engage colleagues.

Fellows also examine the role of experimentation and failure in innovation. One Fellow said he learned that success and failure are “twins.” One moment you are leading an effort and making great progress; everybody is enthusiastic and on board with next steps in the process of implementing an innovative idea. A minute later, momentum is stalled by some new challenge, a powerful detractor, or simply organizational inertia. To be a leader, Fellows come to understand that they have to be prepared for both eventualities, and that failure can offer critical and ultimately empowering lessons. Perhaps ironically, they also consider how to “cope” with success. Robert Redford’s admonition to “return to zero” every time you achieve success served as a touch point for the Fellows. Redford, an acknowledged disruptive innovator in the film industry, argues for the need to “commit yourself to some new sacrifice and some new risk” with each success or risk being lulled into complacency (Meyerson & Fryer, 2002).

Reflection. Over the years in discussions with leadership development experts and with social intrapreneurs themselves, we have heard repeatedly that individuals are more likely to stay the course—even when obstacles abound—if they connect their work to their own deeply held values. So we unabashedly state that seminar objectives include an intentional focus on life’s big questions. We give Fellows the opportunity to wrestle with these questions, to reflect on the meaning of life and work and develop a compelling sense that there is a link between their projects and their deeper sense of personal purpose.

We also share the Giving Voice to Values (GVV) approach to dealing with values conflicts when they arise in the workplace. GVV is an innovative curriculum for developing the skills, knowledge, and commitment required to implement values-based leadership. Rather than a focus on ethical analysis, the GVV curriculum focuses on ethical implementation and asks the question: “What if I were going to act on my values? What would I say and do? How could I be most effective?” Although speaking up about ethical issues is often envisioned as learning how to say “no,” to resist the pressure to violate one’s values, GVV is presented to the Fellows as a tool that can also help them use an “affirmative Voice” to generate support for their values-driven initiatives. Fellows are encouraged to think about how to reframe and script possible conflicts in their own workplaces and realize that taking control of that narrative is a particularly powerful tool in voicing and enacting values (Gentile, 2010). Although positioned here as a core component of the First Mover emphasis upon Reflection, the seven principles at the heart of GVV link back to Leadership, Innovation, and Community as well. For example, the story of GVV’s origin and development is shared as an example of the use of “piloting” to launch and fuel innovation. And the emphasis upon peer coaching and upon building and practicing influence skills tie directly and respectively to Community and Leadership.

In advance of the first seminar, the Fellows rarely anticipate the impact these reflection activities will have for them. One Fellow’s reaction illustrates this point. In the first of the three fellowship seminars, we travel from the Aspen conference facility to a spectacular site in the Rockies, have dinner, and tell stories around a campfire.

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6Giving Voice to Values (www.GivingVoiceToValues.org) was developed by Dr. Mary Gentile with founding partners the Aspen Institute and the Yale School of Management. The program is now based at and supported by Babson College. Conventional ethics training is often centered on helping students figure out what is “right.” GVV takes a different approach. It is designed to give people tools so that they can act with confidence and conviction when they know what is right.
The assignment for the evening is to share a story of a moment, or the period of time, when clarity about life purpose emerged for you and gave you a sense of what you are supposed to do for the rest of your life. As we wrapped up a recent seminar week in Aspen, one of the Fellows confessed that when she was packing for the seminar, dealing with the stress of organizing work and arrangements for a young child so she could be away from home for a week, she complained to her husband about this part of the program. It made her wonder why she had decided to commit, since time spent in this way seemed so extraneous to her immediate concerns. At the end of the seminar, however, she reported to the group that the campfire experience and the emotionally honest stories that were told in this beautiful setting were transformative for her and actually had enormous impact on the way she planned to approach work when she returned to the office.

This focus on reflection is consistent with findings that support the notion that leaders who become more self-aware and conscious of the world around them become better leaders (Mirvis, 2008). Most Fellows come from companies where reflection is rarely a part of daily work life so it is not surprising that they are skeptical about the impact these practices can have on their effectiveness and level of engagement.

To encourage reflection, we include poetry and essays as an important part of the readings that Fellows do throughout the fellowship. Excerpts from A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life have special relevance for the Fellows who strive to bring their whole selves to work (Palmer, 2004). Acknowledging and exploring the divide they often feel between their professional and personal personae allows them to imagine and then live a greater integration. This alignment is empowering. They speak of feeling “renewed, refreshed, emboldened.” Greater engagement and commitment not only reenergizes them but, they say, serves as inspiration for their colleagues as well.

Community. The professional life of a social intrapreneur can be a lonely one. They often work alone, lacking support for their ideas and feeling out of sync with supervisors and colleagues. So we knew that establishing a strong bond among the Fellows had to be a central focus for the program. Thus, we choose the class with extreme care and then strive to create an environment that contributes to relationship building. Our objective is to help the Fellows connect with and learn from a group of innovators who will remain a lifelong source of inspiration, encouragement, collaboration, and support.

When we evaluate candidates we look for people with a collaborative, generous spirit. We only select Fellows who are eager not only to achieve their own goals but to work hard to help others achieve theirs. We want Fellows to find themselves in the midst of a diverse group of exceptional business people who are accomplished, daring, and humble. Community building begins as soon as the class is announced. A joint press release focuses on the cohort of Fellows so that the public—and especially colleagues in the professional life of a social intrapreneur—are aware of the Fellows who are striving to bring their whole selves to work.

As we are in the very early years of the program, we don’t yet know to what extent we will achieve this objective. Many efforts are underway to keep the Fellows engaged. They are asked to participate in the selection process of new Fellows by nominating and interviewing candidates. They are invited to join conference calls. When opportunities arise, we invite them to present their work to various audiences. Program staff collect and send updates to Fellows. The independent evaluator conducts follow-up interviews. Reunions happen when Fellows are in the same cities; and there are plans for a reunion for the first two classes in 2012.
the Fellows’ own companies—can see the breadth of the experience represented within the class. A First Movers section on the Aspen Institute website offers a full profile of each Fellow and a hint of the scope of work each will undertake during their tenure as a Fellow.

Quickly into the first seminar, Fellows acknowledge the growing bonds among the Fellows and express relief as they realize they are no longer alone. Realizing the potential that resides in the community for support and mutual understanding, Fellows are highly motivated to connect personally and professionally. And being part of this group spurs Fellows to be more daring in their own companies. As one Fellow said, he was inspired to push harder because he didn’t want “to let the group down.”

During the twelve days the group is together during the program, there is plenty of time for Fellows to interact, offer feedback on challenges, and learn about each other’s initiatives. Sessions are dialogue—not presentation—based. The first two hours of each seminar are devoted to stories. Themes from these opening stories are picked up and threaded through the rest of the sessions. In the first seminar, for example, we typically ask each Fellow to provide an introduction by responding to the following question:

> Reflecting on your own experience, if you were asked to highlight one exceptional story of innovation when you were working at your best to realize an objective that achieved business growth and achieved a positive social or environmental impact (e.g., it also served as a force for peace, or green value creation, or poverty eradication, or community well-being), what real-life story would you tell? Be sure to tell us what personal strengths were particularly critical for achieving this success.\(^9\)

In subsequent seminar sessions, in conference calls between sessions, and informally throughout the program, Fellows provide updates on project progress, coach each other on overcoming challenges, and celebrate wins—big and small. Over time, the sharing of joys and challenges binds them in a friendship that we expect will extend well beyond the conclusion of the formal fellowship period.

**Looking Ahead**

As we arrive at the mid-point of our second class of Fellows, we know we are just beginning our own learning journey. There is so much more we need to explore about the social intrapreneurship phenomenon and the kinds of experiences that help these innovators thrive within business. So far, however, we believe we are on the right track. As the independent evaluator of this program wrote about the first pilot year, “At its best, the fellowship program helped the first class of Fellows become bolder, think bigger, develop tools to succeed as change makers, and establish meaningful relationships with peers from other companies. It also helped them make step changes in their own leadership and in projects of strategic significance to their companies and industries.”\(^10\)

There are many challenges ahead for this work. To name a few: developing a useful database to track long-term impacts of the program; strengthening the connections with the thought partners; improving the rigor of project development, especially

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\(^9\)This question and other aspects of the seminar agenda draw heavily on the scholarship associated with Appreciative Inquiry, an approach to organizational change (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008).

\(^10\)Final unpublished evaluation report prepared by Shari Cohen, PhD.
between seminars; sustaining connections to program alumni; facilitating the development of teaching case studies of individual projects and Fellows so that the lessons of their experiences can be shared with students who aspire to become First Movers.

The Fellows have generously advised us about ways to strengthen the program and we are acting on many of these suggestions. For example, we now ask thought partners to complete an online survey after the first seminar rather than before (as we did with the first class) so that Fellows can use the responses to help them communicate more effectively with these individuals. We schedule conference calls more frequently between seminars and now rely more on the expertise of the Fellows in these sessions. And we are working diligently to meet the challenge of keeping the Fellows connected within and across classes. We know that these connections are critical to the long-term success of the program and that they can’t be achieved by dedicated staff time alone, although that resource is essential. The Fellows themselves have to take the lead. Early evidence suggests Fellows have the will and determination to do so, but only time will tell if the Fellowship lives up to its full potential.

We will know we have succeeded in achieving the objectives of this program when we see evidence that the Fellows have risen to greater levels of leadership and influence; that their fellowship projects have paved the way for greater integration of financial, social, and environmental value in their companies and industries; and that the network of Fellows has been built, creating a critical mass of leaders across industries who can collectively begin to change the way business is done. Along the way, we’ll watch a number of indicators to be sure we are on the right path: size and depth of the candidate pool; additional nominees from participating companies

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Figure 29.3

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Value: New Mindset

1. How do we shift values?

Offer: New Capabilities

2. How do we engage new skills?

3. 4

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“Developing Business Innovators Who Integrate Profitability and Social Value” by Nancy McGaw.

The Handbook of Teaching Leadership: Knowing, Doing, and Being. Editors, Scott Snook, Nitin Nohria, Rakesh Khurana. Copyright 2012 by SAGE Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, without permission in writing from the publisher.
and from the Fellows themselves; satisfaction levels measured in evaluation interviews and surveys; career progression of the Fellows; number of viable and innovative collaborations across companies launched by Fellows.

The impetus to make headway on all these fronts is great. We believe that calling attention to the contributions of social entrepreneurs and helping them implement the game-changing innovations they are undertaking has significant, positive implications for how quickly and effectively businesses move toward greater integration of financial, social, and environmental value.

The promise of the program is demonstrated by the results of a simple exercise that we ask Fellows to complete. With their project in mind, we invite them to place a pin on a graph.11 (See Figure 29.3.) The location of the pin is meant to represent their best assessment of where their companies fall on two dimensions related to the implementation of social and environmental innovations. The vertical axis represents corporate mindset. Moving up the graph shows the extent to which a company values these innovations and considers them core to strategy. The horizontal axis represents capabilities. Moving along this axis indicates the ability of companies to implement these new innovations. The results of the exercise in both classes are telling. In each class, a significant majority of Fellows placed their pin in the second quadrant on the graph: high values, relatively low capabilities.

Fellows’ perceptions demonstrate what we believe to be true: Many companies understand the critical need to integrate greater concern for social and environmental impacts into their core strategic priorities, but they lack the know-how to execute. Our objective with the First Movers Fellowship is to help individuals within business who have particular expertise and commitment in this regard take their companies much more quickly along the capabilities continuum. By doing so, they will be raising the bar for defining business success.

References


11The exercise and the graph were developed by Fred Dust, IDEO.


