Stanford eCorner

Forcing Systemic Change

Laurene Powell Jobs, *Emerson Collective*

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Laurene Powell Jobs, founder and chair of the Emerson Collective, an organization that supports social entrepreneurs fighting for education and immigration reform, describes wanting to introduce creativity and thought leadership to deeply dysfunctional systems to force change. In conversation with Stanford Engineering Professor Tom Byers, Powell Jobs emphasizes the importance of metrics and marketing.

Transcript

Well, it's social entrepreneurship and it's innovating around a system that is rather intractable in finding those points where you can come in with creativity and thought leadership and change things up. In this case, change things up for people's lives and be that inflection point that a rather classified system does allow for typically. So I started in for-profit entrepreneurship, but when Carlos and I went and spoke to that classroom at Carlmont High School we met students like the students who are in that video and in fact exactly one of them indeed who became in our first class of College Track, what we found was though, we saw - we found such a failed system that it needed kind of an exogenous shock, it needed the type of entrepreneurship and problem solving that I was doing in the for-profit space that I thought what a higher and better use of my life to do it in the social sector. But you brought an intensity and a flair to it that we typically see it in tech, but then it to bring and just the whole style about - just the style of that. I mean, there is a bit of theatre in that, because I teared up the other day like I was at a watching at that, just like I was watching a nominee for the academy award. So that you appeal to my empathy. Yes, I think you're right. I think world change requires movements and movement requires communications and marketing and so, that's what you're seeing. It happens to also be the truth and it happens to be deeply powerful because its people's authentic words, but it's nevertheless a type of marketing. The other thing struck me and this is the engineer in me, it's data.

I mean, if you go to collegetrack.org or whatever, if you go to the homepage immediately see that and that grabs your heart, but then I'm satisfied as the engineer below is you set metrics. I mean, you said measurable goals and they - some showed up. You actually have over 2000 already I think, right? Well on the way to ... Yes, this year we're serving 2000 students, but we have - over 200 college graduates who have gone through the entire program. We started off with a high school program that was all about sincere college readiness, but what we discovered is when students are first in their families to go to college, they actually need support all the way through to complete college so then we extended the program to 10 years, so we gave students six years to complete college. Got it. But I just like the attention to the data and bring that into this ... Well, there is no way to know if you are actually reaching your goals and effecting the change if you don't collect data. So you'll have to be data driven. The same principles apply in the non-profit space as they do in the for-profit space.

That's such - that's a really important comment. Can you expand on that a little bit? Because that - we get asked this a lot, the name of our center is the Stanford Technology Ventures Program and they say well that means you don't do social entrepreneurship and so I - help us on this? Well, I think that philanthropy in nonprofit space used to be sort of characterized as a softer space. But actually that's not the case at all. With the advent of venture philanthropy and impact philanthropy - people are really looking to the space to effect change and people go - I think everyone in their lives if they have a notion and a philosophy of what they want to do with their time on the planet, they want to have impact and effect change and the only way you can do that is through metrics and goals and then strategies and tactics. It's the exact same way that you accomplish

anything in either space.