

PEACE OUT MEDIA COMPANY BUSINESS PROPOSAL

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ABSTRACT

In the 21st century, relationships, connections, media platforms and organization's profiles are launched and thrive in a virtual world.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are on an edge in this technological age, because to successfully attract donors and sustain relations with them, it requires an accessible online interface. However, many of these development groups don't have access to such resources or aren't aware of how to best attract potential donors over the Internet.

Meanwhile, due to the increasing demand of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), the business world is now, more than ever, pressured to build social relations with community groups at the development level.

In effort to build a bridge between the two, I propose a media company that works both with NGOs and corporations to create and sustain partnerships between them.

Through my research of peace journalism as well as field experience with Sarvodaya Shramadana in Sri Lanka, the idea for the Peace Out Media company was inspired and proven as a need for future social work.

INTRODUCTION

Has there been a moment in life when you asked yourself, "Am I actually in a movie right now?"

One of the few times this resonated for me was in a hill village outside of Kandy, Sri Lanka.

I was bracing myself with a firm grip on a truck handle above my head as the Toyota lurched and climbed the roller coaster of a dirt road. I was sitting beside the international coordinator for Sarvodaya Shramadana and the founder of Project Sri Lanka, a professor from the U.K.

Between head bumps and palm branches slapping our arms through the window, Professor Joy handed back her card and encouraged me to visit the PSL website. She then said one sentence that transformed my experience, career aspirations and present research into one idea.

In her charming British accent, she said "We have someone who manages our website and media accounts full time with updates, because I believe that is the only way to be successful today in this type of work."

No, it may not be as profound as one expected, but it is critical and an unforgettable moment of my month long experience as a non-government organization (NGO) media researcher and volunteer.

Professor Joy is a Western woman who has years of experience in grassroots work and who is an active bridge between donors of the projects and the ground level effort required to implement those projects, particularly drinking water wells for rural Sri Lankan villages.

She knows the key to sustaining channels between donors and development groups is to create an online presence for investors to see. This virtual interaction confirms the existence and quality of work that would be done with their money. In today's world, an online brand or image is validation to those who work within a modern society.

If development NGOs don't have the access, skills and resources needed to create their own effective online platform, they are guaranteed to lose attention and the ability to attract other donors or volunteers.

My field experience confirmed this and that journalists could network within NGOs while analyzing NGOs' own forms of peace journalism. Those weeks working for Sarvodaya and meeting other organization leaders like Professor Joy, revealed new dynamics to peace journalism that I had not yet discovered.

The beauty of Peace Journalism is it's an alternative genre, so it's experimental, boundless and virtually undocumented. And now, I recognize how that openness can be utilized to better grow development work.

From brainstorming how to transform organizations' online presence bloomed the idea of a platform that could provide NGOs the online brand needed to sustain donorship as well as create an outlet for peace journalists to publish their work and expand their ground level networks.

The answer is a media company that would act in three areas.

One, it would plant media consultants or journalists on the ground with international NGOs to provide the resources needed to launch and maintain a website and social media presence that reflected the purpose, character and location of the organization. The company would also coordinate volunteer internships for college media students interested in this type of work to aid and learn from the consultants working in the field.

Second, the company would network with corporations and big businesses to propose the need for their company to become active in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), the trending demand that corporations should take on humanitarian efforts. With pressure to be active in CSR, the media company could

recommend particular NGOs it works with to the corporations, so they can take on and support projects related to their field that need the aid.

Third, the media company would maintain the bridges built as connectors between the corporations and the ground level groups and ensure the development organizations aren't being taken advantage of or misrepresented and the corporations are actively promoting their support as to raise awareness of global issues.

Basically, NGOs need media representation to attract and keep donors, which could be maintained and used by peace journalists. Corporations are under pressure to be socially active and have media proof of their social efforts, but they have no connections to or understanding of ground level organizations.

The proposed media company suffices the needs of all parties.

LITERATURE REVIEW

At the root of Peace Out Media company is social entrepreneurship.

Social entrepreneurship is a relatively new term that is sweeping the business world, which is fueled by our generation's DIY attitude. A social entrepreneur, fitting of the 21st Century individual, is a blending of various traits not usually combined in a typical business employee.

They are business savvy and driven by social passion, which results in bottom-up change with humanistic thinking sustained with determined economic skills.

The definition of social entrepreneurship implies that its practitioners come up with new ideas for solving pressing social problems and replacing old, ineffectual ones; they are creative and purposeful, determined to spread their ideas beyond their immediate circle; moreover, they are highly ethical. (Nowak, Praszkiar 2012, 13)

A key trait to successful entrepreneurs is their networking skills.

Networks can grow infinitely and progress through four subsequent stages. One stage is *social capital*, where the network's relationship generates a high level of trust leading to a rise of social capital. The network comes alive with opportunities and connected nodes that are "bubbling" and "vibrant" (Nowak, Praszkiar 2012, 101).

This successful community of relationships is the exact type of professional networking Peace Out would need to embody.

The business plan must portray how the social entrepreneurs who manage it are creative and dynamic enough to launch media consultation and networking both on a corporate business side and an NGO side. They must also know how to manage people on both ends who are tailored to either side of the bridge.

Peace Out Media uses a bridge metaphor, because its work connects two polar sectors of the global society with communication and partnership. These connections act as a highway of exchange, which allows social change, monetary support and information to flow between the two parties.

... we should seek out collaboration both at the local and global levels... a knowledge and understanding of what is going on at the national or the international level can help us work out local priorities. Being local doesn't mean being isolationist. (N'Dione 1997, 374)

Peace journalism is an alternative style of reporting and networking within the realm of the media profession that could sustain and implement this connection.

A peace journalist strives to network with contacts from all possible angles, so the information can be compared and equally presented. The goal of peace journalism is to find the connections between various groups, so they ultimately realize that there are points of similar interests between them. So much so, that they would be inspired to work together on an issue instead of ignoring its existence entirely or immediately resorting to war (Keeble, Tulloch, Zollmann 2010).

Peace journalistic work provides a discourse between conflicting societies, whether it be internally or internationally, to have opportunities to discuss and resolve social issues. Not only does this alternative journalism utilize several views of one issue, it spotlights how the various acts affect a community over a long period of time instead of only highlighting immediate consequences.

This bridging form of discourse can also translate into the relationships built between NGOs and the corporations who support them through CSR efforts.

My previous research was aimed at conflict resolution through journalism. With this system in mind, the media company could resolve social issues with Peace Journalism instead by coordinating corporate sponsorships with NGOs.

For example, there are five stages the media progresses through in attempt to play an active role in intervention of a conflict situation (Romano 2010). Since the first two are general aspects of journalism (reporters practice objectivity and they strive

to avoid stereotypes or generalizations of people), the last three stages are particularly vital aspects when implementing the proposed media company's work.

In stage three, the journalist must seek stories and sources that capture the layers of any societal issue to establish peace or resolution within the situation.

Stage four is when conventional journalism can no longer handle the responsibility of being a means of intervention. At this stage, the reporter is now a facilitator between the various perspectives, with no ties to political influence or corporate attachment. This means they are so embedded in the situation and networked with sources at all levels of the issue that their responsibility is now greater than traditional journalism, because they have more power to influence with their objective stance.

The last stage, in its own way, transcends our idea of journalism all together. Stage five is utilizing any means of story telling from plays to books to videos to spread the message and teach others about what is going on and how conflicts can be resolved.

The stages reflect the alternative nature of peace journalism, all of which could be carried out through my Peace Out Media company plan.

This also ties in another factor explored in the proposal, which is journalists need an umbrella media organization to help train in the craft and also create a forum for other peace journalists.

The Peace and Conflict Journalism Network (PECOJON), formed in the Philippines in 2004, is a growing body of journalists and media educators who strive to flip mainstream news to peace or conflict-sensitive journalism in a free-market world.

However, PECOJON acknowledges that training is not enough to be an effective peace journalist.

According to Jean Lee C. Patindol, "It is not enough to just train journalists any more. There have to be more regular and consistent forms of follow-up and support, as well as venues for mutual exchange and building solidarity among journalists... (Keeble, Tulloch, Zollmann 2010)."

An alternative type of media company could be that venue and connecting point for the individuals who seek this type of sustainable networking and journalistic investment.

Initially, I proposed to focus my final research on ways an aspiring peace journalist can begin their work in this field besides flying into a combat zone or a developing country with the urge to help by writing stories. I intended to research trends of incorporating peace journalism into media education and journalism schools,

however, presently, I view social entrepreneurship as the more effective and considerable answer.

Also, if a business plan tailored to the alternative journalistic style is successful, it could hopefully grow into its own educational program credible by real world experience and theory.

The media company would facilitate a platform for these possibilities as it works as a communication bridge between two different institutions.

One side of the bridge is corporations and the other is the collection of grassroots organizations and their own personalized media platforms.

NGOs have a failing record of overcoming the economic restraints upon them, which hinders their abilities to advocate their cause and maintain donor relationships (Edwards, Folwer 2002, 86).

The four main causes are an absence of clear strategy, failure to build strong alliances, inadequate development of alternatives to current conventions and the dilemma of donor relations.

Peace Out could offer workshops with NGO leaders to identify the organization's strategy and brainstorm innovative ways to resolve their local social issues.

Through this process, the consultants would gain a more refined understanding of the NGO, which would inspire the design and launching of the organization's online presence via a website and social media.

As the network of NGOs expands, so does the media company's understanding of grassroots efforts and each NGO's purpose. This would qualify their efforts to link corporations to groups that identify with their business efforts, hence sufficing the corporations need to find a channel for their Corporate Social Responsibility efforts.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a global movement in which business, government and civil society leaders insist that businesses and corporations become active in addressing world issues even if they are not the causes of the problems (Bhattacharya, Levine, Smith, Vogel 2010, 1).

As more consumers demand businesses to shoulder the responsibility of humanitarian efforts, especially since the corporations seem to have the most influence both socially and financially, CSR is becoming more of an expectation than a suggestion.

In this century especially as businesses transcend borders both with their consumer outreach and production management, people are tuning in more and more to what affect that has on people around the globe.

CSR has been researched before with the angle of how businesses design their policies and communication strategies about such policies to their employees and investors, but there is a deficit in research in this same relationship to stakeholders like trade unions and NGOs (Bhattacharya, Levine, Smith, Vogel 2010, 161).

This raises questions as to whether there is a lack in research because there is no interest or need to analyze this sector, or is it because these relationships simply do not exist?

Thanks to the few case studies in which corporations successfully worked with NGOs, it is important to explore this unidentified area more, which could be done through a bridging media company that would create and sustain donor and support relationships between corporations and NGOs.

MAIN BODY

The Peace Out Media company will pursue an experimental and trial-and-error process with both sides of the spectrum, NGOs and corporations.

Corporations in particular would experience a type of transparency transformation, because if they are to commit to CSR, they must first ensure they have clean pockets in every part of the company. They would need to embrace the fact that if they want to receive recognition for good deeds, other media would be digging around to try to find if they're actually just hiding something else.

IKEA is a company that approached social partners to take on their own purification, which led to a series of changes in their production making it an ultimately more socially aware corporation.

From 1980-2004, IKEA was scrutinized for a variety of charges from child labor abuse to hazardous furniture components. Through partnerships with NGOs such as Greenpeace and the Global Forest Watch, IKEA continued to pass new policies and regulations to make their products and production more ethical (Bhattacharya, Levine, Smith, Vogel 2010, 161-187).

These third-party organizations and others kept IKEA in line, which pressured them to continue refining their corporate roles in humane and environmentally friendly production. These NGOs took on the role of enforcing the company's CSR.

Of course the media company would not act as an enforcer, but IKEA's case reveals the power of transparency and change through partnership.

If more and more grassroots organizations were bonded to corporations and able to watch what they're actually doing, then IKEA's story would be a common

occurrence. This type of refining and watch-dogging of businesses by NGOs could be facilitated by Peace Out.

Some company's attempt to work with NGOs has proved nothing but successful.

Avon's chairman and CEO, Andrea Jung, calls for all companies to re-invent their idea of corporate responsibility and to serve beyond the traditional corporate philanthropy of just writing a check (Arena 2004, 77).

She and the company she represents clearly have the authoritative voice to say partnering with local organizations is the innovative and effective way to make a difference.

Avon's Breast Cancer Crusade offers education and care for women in 50 countries thanks to the vital partnerships the Avon Foundation built with medical and grassroots organizations. By reaching to local communities across the world and in our own country, Avon has supported more than 600 nonprofit community groups and provided a variety of support services for women (Arena 2004, 64).

Jung flying to the countries, meeting with the groups and being hands-on with activities such as delivering mammograms is what makes this possible. Avon is an example of bridging the big business with the small groups and creating a sustainable relationship that makes a difference.

Peace Out can learn from Avon's work how to successfully network with organizations and implement "hands-on" support compared to just supplying money. Peace Out would encourage the corporate leaders to follow Avon's footsteps in that they build partnerships in person and on the ground. These relationships would result in expansive networking as well as sustainable support instead of immediate relief.

Timberland's CEO, Jeffrey Swartz, agrees that "there are many opportunities for business executives to extend and expand nonprofit relationships beyond the needs of an immediate crisis and contribute to the long-term growth of a nation (Arena 2004, 79)."

In William J. Holstein's "Memo to the CEO: Manage the Media," he concludes that incorporating communication strategies is vital for corporations to be successful in the future. He said the corporate world has shifted to recognize the power of activist groups and their expectations on CEOs and with the increasing use of globalized media through the Internet, messages must be tailored for multiple audiences.

The public relations employees should be in board meetings and implementing communication change from the top-down, because that is how work is done in the corporate world (Holstein 2008, 91).

Of course, this is an angle to help promote CEOs' profile and corporate success, however, if this is what the experts are advising them to do, then the media company could fill that need and provide the connections to bring that guidance up to speed within the company by providing an outside, transparent platform to connect them with social groups and launch a progressive communication effort.

CEOs are adapting to a changing environment, one that now demands them to be socially active, so why not suffice that need with an ethical and active media consultant?

Switching to the grassroots side of the spectrum, these organizations' network reaches two ways— one to the potential corporate donors and high-level institutions, the other to their peers.

If NGOs were able to network and partner with each other, they would be able to collaborate and unify efforts. Also, their online presence would engage and attract new donors and sustain established relationships.

Field media consultants would work within each organization to specifically personalize their site and act as their media representative to interested corporate partners.

We must now focus on how to best manage the media efforts of the company so it balances the tricky beam between businesses and NGOs.

When analyzing four NGOs' work across India and Bangladesh, Michael Edwards concluded that the future success of grassroots organizations relies on their autonomous ground level institutional relationships and linking them with markets and political structures at higher levels (Edwards, Folwer 2002, 275).

Easier said than done, he notes that NGOs must create clarity in mission and try to balance between advances made across societal lines such as livelihood, social and organizational development.

More importantly for my study, Edwards adds two more factors.

He recommends NGOs act as strong links both vertically and horizontally to obtain resources and act as agents for wider structures. Next, organizations must take on more responsibility in management and decision-making.

Overall, Peace Out media could aid NGOs as they sustain constructive engagements with corporations to improve the framework and donor practices needed for future development.

What Edwards advises in this linking is donors must support NGOs as they experiment with a mix of strategies due to the changing contexts of development.

Donors cannot expect or demand immediate results. Once again, the media company could act as the mediator between the two spectras to ensure there is an understanding of how each side works and what kind of support is most sustainable.

There are some existing resources and organizations that do similar work to what Peace Out aims to do. Some are inspirational examples while others show which strategies should not be used.

The World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (WANGO), for example, is a bravo idea and excellent effort to coordinate various groups, however its website and portal is not user friendly or ideal due to many NGOs' lack of resources.

WANGO is similar to a Facebook for NGOs. They can create mini-profiles and are added to the database depicted geographically. Not only is the site not aesthetic and seamlessly functional enough to appeal to potential donors, many of the organizations don't have information posted.

A similar online resource is .ngo.org, which has a more professional and attractive interface, however it still raises the question of how many groups even have access to it.

These, along with my observation of Sarvodaya's efforts to improve their own website, inspired the idea that the media company would implement media professionals in the field with the NGOs. This would give the organizations resources and guidance on how to create and promote their own, unique and interactive online profiles via a website and social media.

An example of a successful organization that carries out what the proposed media company aims to do is CSO Partners of India.

CSO Partners of India's slogan is "Building a vibrant society," which they obviously aim to do with their inviting, user-friendly web interface for both NGOs and corporations. The organization's main page is not only well organized but it also includes news headlines, case studies of their work, specific tabs for each type of user (NGOs, Corporates, Individuals, Partners etc.), clear explanations of how they work and more.

A case study of their work and mission to connect corporations, governments and nonprofits together would yield important guidance for planning Peace Out Media company and would infinitely benefit both groups in the networking process.

Once again, networking is the key to building a successful social entrepreneurship. This not only includes fusing links between people, but it also incorporates connections within the construction of the company.

The beginning sketches of Peace Out would encompass the launching business plan for the company.

A business plan is only as good as the people who can execute it, however, so the first step to organizing the company is deciding what new roles the company's staff will have to take on and who is able to do so (Kreiz, Wolk 2008, 30).

Peace Out Media has a multi-layered mission, which makes it both challenging and critical to outline what roles and expertise would be needed.

The first step would be to send journalists or media personnel into the field to meet with NGOs across the globe. These members would need to have passion both for media and development work as well as interest in complete immersion in a foreign life.

Eventually, they would become well researched in their organizations, able to launch media efforts for their assigned organizations and proficient in creating interconnectedness with other NGOs. When starting the organization's online profile, it would be essential to show members of the NGO how to manage it themselves.

Throughout the process, the media personnel would need to report their work and advice back to Peace Out "headquarters."

The online profiles and social media platforms work both to connect with outside donors as well as platforms for peace journalists. Just like CSO Partners of India has headlines streaming on their page, each organization could be an outlet for independent journalists to broadcast stories of that area.

Eventually, college interns or volunteers interested in this type of work could be coordinated to live and work with these personnel in the field or even experiment in the peace journalism genre.

While these efforts are stirring, Peace Out Media representatives would reach out to corporations and pitch how the company can start their CSR efforts, which is in trending demand by consumers.

This side of the work is a polar spectra to the NGO networking. Representatives of the company who do this work would need to be refined in corporate networking skills and techniques. They must have savvy skills to show CEOs why they should use Peace Out Media to engage in social activism.

Since corporations usually have their own media platforms, Peace Out could offer ways to interconnect the business profile with their NGO partner's online one.

A possibility with these positions is to either identify or plant public relations officers in the corporations who have direct influence on the board as mentioned earlier.

Just like the NGO personnel, these members must have a thorough understanding of their corporations to best connect them with potential partners as well as paint a clear picture of how this type of engagement results in a transparency transformation of the business.

They would also report their findings and experience from the process.

In between these efforts is the suspending bridge, which is the company itself. The company's members sustaining these connections are the mediators between the corporate and NGO personnel.

The beauty of Peace Out Media "headquarters," though, is that it's mobile, forever moving and traveling where its people are and to where they will go.

This will ensure the "in between" staff members are constantly in touch with both sides of the bridge and maintain their ever-evolving network, and most importantly, they can sustain the flow of information, donorship and relation between both spectrums.

As the company grows, its efforts could be the subjects of case studies and research. It could also become an established umbrella organization for peace journalism.

Much like a network, Peace Out Media's possibilities, nodes and outlets are infinite and complex in that they could continuously overlap and make new fusions.

CONCLUSION

We need to find better ways of linking local-level action and analysis with international advocacy. How can the necessary information flows be developed in ways which do not compromise the legitimacy of grassroots views? How can the voices of real people best be combined with the sophisticated conceptual framework, detailed policy work and wider public pressure required to induce significant change at the highest levels... NGOs will require people, systems, structures and capacities to play an effective role in an emerging international movement... How can we best contribute to the development of wider networks and a stronger capacity to enable institutions in the South to play more of a role in international advocacy, both directly and indirectly? (Edwards, Fowler 2002, 97)

Note this is not a statement but a series of questions. How can we do this?

There is a dire need for more experimental research and activism in the development scene with bottom-up strategies and investment in local knowledge.

Whether it is through a media company that bridges corporate donors with NGO partners while supporting independent media or anything else, there is a call for more social entrepreneurs or any creative and purposeful individuals of the like to not be discouraged but instead inspired by the work that needs to and can be accomplished in transforming current world issues.

The key is to narrow in on specific places, people and challenges and work from the minute inside to the grand-scale outside.

Peace Out Media, for example, would begin with one NGO and one corporation to test its model, then adapt with that relationship and carry its work to another partnership, repeat the process and continue on until the network of partners is overwhelming, not the lack of.

Edwards says, "NGOs will require people, systems, structures and capacities to play an effective role in an emerging international movement," so why not give them the needed tools and be those people, systems and structures?

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