

Giving Your Business Some Soul

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SUBJECT(S): Entrepreneurship

GRADE LEVEL(S): 9, 10, 11, 12

≡ OVERVIEW:

In this lesson, students will identify the characteristics of social entrepreneurs. They will brainstorm a list of popular social campaigns like the breast cancer Pink Ribbon campaign. Then they will read the Knowledge@Wharton article: “Kenneth Cole: How the King of Sole Got Soul.” This article reveals how Kenneth Cole leveraged his fashion retail business into a campaign to increase social awareness and benefit an important cause. Students will then get the chance to develop a social campaign that focuses on an issue of their choice and provides an opportunity for them to practice storytelling skills.

≡ NBEA STANDARD(S):

- Entrepreneurship, I. Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurial Opportunities

≡ RELATED ARTICLES:

- [“Tackling the Problem of Hunger in America”](#)
- [“Social Entrepreneurship Spotlight: The Face Inside Your Coffee Cup”](#)
- [“Princess Aghayere Shares Her Love of Basketball to Inspire Young West African Women”](#)
- [“Future of the Business World: Tackling Food Insecurity in Singapore”](#)
- [“Former Olympian Benjamin Lewis Is Revolutionizing Animal Testing”](#)

- “Exploring Social Entrepreneurship: ‘My Generation Is Full of Activists and Humanitarians’”
- “Educator Toolkit: The Power of Storytelling”

Common Core Standard(s): Key ideas and details, craft and structure, comprehension and collaboration, presentation of knowledge and ideas.

Objectives/Purposes: In this lesson, students will identify the characteristics of a social entrepreneur and take a look into the world of social entrepreneurial campaigns.

Knowledge@Wharton Article:

“Kenneth Cole: How the King of Sole Got Soul”

Other Resources/Materials:

- Butcher paper
- Construction paper
- Markers
- Crayons

Activity:

1. (5 mins) Review the concept of social entrepreneurship (a social entrepreneur seeks to create social change by using entrepreneurial means.). Ask students about the different ways companies can have a social impact. Have them brainstorm about companies that run campaigns tied to social messages (example: Gap RED campaign for AIDS, Breast Cancer Pink).
2. (10 mins) Have students read the article: “Kenneth Cole: How the King of Sole Got Soul.” Lead a discussion that covers: Who is Kenneth Cole? What is his business? How and why did he start his campaigns with social messages? What characteristics did Cole possess that made him want to start his campaign for AIDS?

Article takeaways:

- For more than two decades, Kenneth Cole avoided the limelight. He built a \$400 million shoe-and-clothing company, married the daughter of former New York Governor Mario

Cuomo and played golf with Bill Clinton.

- Unlike such competitors as Calvin Klein and Ralph Lauren, he refused to turn himself into a celebrity. Instead of featuring his face in company ads, he lent his name to social issues – AIDS, homelessness, gun control, abortion.
- His beliefs have been good for business. They have garnered attention for his company, New York-based Kenneth Cole Productions, and have benefited Cole as well, creating value in what he admits can be a frivolous trade. “Nobody needs what I sell,” he says. “There is probably not a person in this country who needs another pair of black shoes. Nobody needs more ties, more white shirts. My job is to get people to feel good about buying [these products] ... But at the end of the day, there are things that are more important.”
- “I tell that story often because we need to remind ourselves that in business and in life, the best solution isn’t necessarily the most expensive one, but it’s almost always the most creative one,” Cole says.
- As part of a campaign on homelessness, customers were encouraged to donate shoes they no longer wore. The tag line was: “Have a heart, give a sole.”

3. (15 mins) Kenneth Cole proved it can be good business to tie a company’s image to a social campaign through advertising. Have students work in groups to develop their own social campaigns for a cause of their choosing. Have them come up with slogans, creative logos and items to sell to raise money for that cause. Have them consider where they would place ads (billboards, commercials, etc...), and undertake other activities to promote their cause. Furthermore, make sure that they have tied the social cause with a company’s image. This is a great opportunity for students to begin developing their storytelling skills. Once they think through their campaigns, how will they effectively communicate them to the world? How might they tie personal stories into the social causes and use those to persuade people to get behind them?

4. (15 mins) Students are going to present their ideas to the class. A fun way to keep the class engaged is by letting it act as a board of directors for the company that the presenting group has chosen. As members of the Board of Directors, students will be asked to vote at the end of each presentation, to ascertain whether or not they would like to fund the idea. As decision makers, it will be important for students to ask questions about the social campaign presentations after each group has finished pitching their idea. Students can vote by writing yes or no on a post it, and handing it in after each presentation. After all the groups have made their presentations, tally up the votes and let students know whether their ideas were approved or not.

Tying it All Together: It is important for students to reflect on the special characteristics that a social entrepreneur possesses. Social entrepreneurs face the tough job of balancing all the factors a traditional entrepreneur is concerned with as well as measuring the social impact they are having on a chosen cause. Have students think about what would make a person take on such burdens for the “greater good.” Furthermore, this lesson may build on previous lessons on organizational entrepreneurship because with this lesson, students are taking on the role of both organizational entrepreneurs as well as social ones.

Practice Outside of the Classroom: Take note of how other companies leverage their brands for good causes. Would you support those causes by buying that product? Why or why not?

What Worked and What I Would Do Differently: This lesson works smoothly but you will definitely want to encourage students to ensure that they tie the cause to the organization in a way that makes sense. The best ideas seemed like a natural fit for the chosen organization. You will also want to make sure that students have determined how their idea makes money and how it increases awareness about their cause. Also, how their social campaign raises money or enhances social awareness about their cause. One of the ideas my students came up with was: “Just Dan It” which was a play on Nike’s “Just Do It” slogan, and their campaign was to raise money and awareness for military families. I also had another group create a computer company that had a campaign to fight world hunger, and they created limited edition computers that were in different colors and had special logos on them.

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