

Faith and Social Enterprise

THE KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISE:

- **Enterprise Orientation – they are directly involved in producing goods or providing services to a market.**
- **Social Aims – they have explicit social and/ or environmental aims such as job creation, training or the provision of local services. Their ethical values may include a commitment to building skills in local communities.**
- **Social ownership – governance and ownership structures are based on participation by stakeholder groups (e.g. employees, users, clients, local community).**

What social enterprise can do for a faith-based organisation?

1. Sharpen organisational focus

As faith-based organisations we are driven by a desire to serve and to meet needs. But too often we end up trying to do too many things for too many people. An enterprise approach forces us to identify our most effective and needed programmes. This does not mean eliminating a programme just because it loses money. If community members wish to focus on programmes that meet important needs we need to meet the managerial challenge to find other sources of revenue to cover the cost

2. Expand impact

Despite having fewer programmes, successful social enterprises are still able to serve more people. Because we are able to concentrate more of our resources on fewer programmes, we have more time to develop positioning strategies and marketing plans that work ... and are able to selectively add new programmes to meet the emerging needs of our communities.

3. Enable financial sustainability and growth

For many community and faith-based organisations, the main reason for going down the 'social enterprise' road is to increase income - sometimes, as will be seen below, with little connection to the primary purpose of the organisation.

The highest form of charity is to give a loan, to help them to find employment or to enter into a business partnership with a poor person so as to make it unnecessary for them to become dependent on others.

Moses Maimonides