

## **Book Review: 'The Social Entrepreneur Revolution' – Martin Clark**

*Available to borrow from the Humanitarian Centre resource centre*

Overtly evangelistic, the back cover boldly proclaims 'Become a social entrepreneur and transform your career, your life and the planet'.

This is no resource book for existing leaders of social enterprises (it will not give you advice on how to manage one or deal with its problems). Rather it is aimed at anyone, indeed everyone, who isn't involved in one already.

Martin Clark takes us on a long journey through inspirational stories, welded into a workbook for potential entrepreneurs, complete with practical tips, advice, and little exercises to prod you on your way.

As an introduction to the world of 'social entrepreneurs' it is excellent and comprehensive, if exhausting in big doses. It tells stories of social entrepreneurs big and small, national and international, engaged in everything from relieving poverty in Bangladesh to saving the environment, and sorts them into useful imaginative categories – social business, citizen, corporate (intrapreneur), environmental, new philanthropist... Out of this melee of different inspiring enterprises he draws out, in the style of a text-book, lessons and key characteristics, constantly bearing in mind that he wants his intended audience to be sitting there thinking, as I was: 'Is this me? Can I do this? Do I have the right character and skills?' In the course of the book we are taken through stories of people with remarkable qualities and achievements and, conscious to tread the line between realism and encouragement, he stresses that there is no one set of skills or character traits you must tick off. Even if you find yourself thinking 'this is not for me', he says, there are many other ways of getting involved.

In some ways I found myself wishing that there had been more space given to these 'other ways', and to the social enterprise as a collective, often community-based and community-dependent endeavour – there is a lot more involved in the transformation to a social enterprise paradigm than just lots of individuals deciding to go for it. However, lots of individuals deciding to go for it is a good start, and Martin's contribution is very welcome.

The workbook section takes you through quite a simple process of back-of-beermat thinking, and a first little process to follow in taking those ideas slightly further to reality – a mini crash-course in the process of setting one up. I found myself slightly daunted, but encouraged that when my good idea comes I will know slightly better what to do with it, and that if I try to do something with it, I will be in good company.

So: Read it

- if you would like to get a broad-sweep picture of the stories of (mainly individual) entrepreneurs, and a 'tour through the landscape of social enterprise'
- if you want to pit your character against established entrepreneurs and see how you measure up(!)
- for a little push into action
- even if you are only slightly interested – as such you are its target reader – but be prepared to be inspired, daunted and reassured, and to put it down thinking 'when can I start?'

*Reviewed by Mark Corbin*