WHERE DID WE GO WRONG?
“Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.”

– Albert Einstein
Evolutionary Opportunities

We reached out to some folks who we deeply respect and who have dedicated their lives to driving positive change in the world and simply asked them for one word or a sentence about the one thing they would change in the not-for-profit sector.

We had the fastest response of any email ever sent and pages of feedback. It was refreshing to see the willingness of people to thoughtfully embrace failure and to start to unify around opportunities for the future.

There was also lots of feedback on the positive impact from the not-for-profit sector and an emphasis that this is more about evolution, rather than fixing a completely broken system. We know we have lots more listening to do from a range of different people. This is just a starting point on a journey of courageous conversations inspired by Albert Einstein’s quote, “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.”

Below we've tried to summarise the top ten evolutionary opportunities, in the words of the contributors to ensure we capture their collective intelligence. We've also included some of their full responses to ensure we share the wisdom of the great folks who took the time to respond.
**End the fragmentation**

- **Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate** towards a common goal, not towards organisational interests. Partner across sectors more effectively and partner courageously with those who are changing the systems.
- **Merge, merge, merge** and stop fighting for discrete amounts of funds and duplicating efforts. “The sector is fragmented, leading to redundancies and inefficiencies, and also fewer large-scale actors who can coordinate and prioritize actions with real heft.”
- **Step away from incremental, branded “programmes and services”** to drive true, scaled social change.
- **Create more “backbone” organisations** to support with coordination amongst the “glut of organisations”.

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**Listen & step out of the bubble**

- **Pop the elite, arrogant bubble, remove the egos** and step out of our comfort zones to get on the ground with workers and the people we are serving.
- **First seek to understand and then be understood** – empathy, humility and wisdom are crucial.
- **Listen, listen, listen (no, really listen)** – to the right people, the ones who are on the frontlines. Rethink our outdated assumptions of “expertise”. Don’t patronise and dismiss groups outside the “bubble”. “We need to listen with our head (what did we hear), hearts (what did we feel) and our feet (what was the intention).”
- **Stop “group think”** – we spend too much time talking to ourselves – using language only we can understand at conferences only we can get into.
- **Engaging hearts and minds of the disenfranchised and opposed.**
- **Stop creating our own false sense of reality** through processes, procedures, and bureaucracy.
- **Open up honest and courageous conversations.** Not enough sharing of due diligence, failures and successes.
Urgent patience

- **Stop playing the short-term game** - play the long game with a clear, bold, unified vision.
- **Deal with the speed of events with a speed of response whilst also engaging in deeper, longer term dialogue.** The struggle is how best to balance these.

Market for impact and cooperation

- **Move to a “market for impact” model** - where resources flow efficiently to those best able to create lasting change with clear accountability.
- **Stop the “industry of charity”** that is fuelled by continuing the poverty cycle.
- **“Transition the compartmentalization of “doing good”** solely resting on organizations with a particular tax status to all organizations.”
- **End hierarchy and bureaucracy** - rip up the rulebook and innovate.

- **Embrace transparency.** Invest in holding all sectors accountable.
- **Fix the flawed relationship** between those who have the resources and those doing the work – “us and them” – lack of trust and respect. Stop making the wrong decisions to please the donors. Raising money is inefficient and expensive.
- **Start investing more in impact investing.**
- **Attract the best and brightest resources** – fix compensation, board governance and put in place high-performance cultures. Allow not-for-profits to invest in infrastructure, don’t penalise them for this, reward them for strong leadership and impact.
- **Stop the band-aids** – start focusing on root cause and systemic change.
- **Stop rewarding “effort rather than impact”**
- **Competition caused by seeking funds** (grant structure) breaks our natural cooperative DNA structure to work together united. Need to find a way to fund non-profits so they can share info and work as a united front.
- **Don’t underestimate the need for top legal, advocacy and PR support.**
Distributed energy

• **Lift the voices of those who are not being heard** – “end the fixation on organization-centric rather than citizen-centric social movements”.
• **Be careful with your words** – don’t play into rhetoric and propagate the problem rather than diffusing it. Stop giving air to false truths.
• **Effectively use social media** – stop underutilising one of the greatest tools of our time.
• **Invest more in communications/marketing efforts.**
• **The market is missing financial incentives for quality journalism** – nonprofit journalism hasn’t broken through.
• **Celebrate what has worked.**
• **Align on terminology/semantics.**

Don’t ignore the unintended consequences

• Spend more time upfront identifying them, trying to design for them and then sharing learnings when they do happen.

Re-set our moral compass

• **Core values must be the foundation of all we do** – empathy, compassion, understanding, acceptance, tolerance, bravery, togetherness, humanity, kindness, etc...
We are so caught up in our own stuff that we’ve forgotten why we exist.

We forgot the importance of redistribution to close the inequality gap.

We don’t focus enough on listening and supporting this next generation.

We spend too much time fundraising in “elite circles” rather than with those we are there to serve.

Bring back the fire in our belly

- Be brave and bold.
- Stand up (to stand out) and fight.
- Inspire hope.

Never forget why we are here – and who we are serving

- We are so caught up in our own stuff that we’ve forgotten why we exist.
- We forgot the importance of redistribution to close the inequality gap.
- We don’t focus enough on listening and supporting this next generation.
- We spend too much time fundraising in “elite circles” rather than with those we are there to serve.

Bring back the joy and wonder

- We’ve gotten lost in our sea of righteousness – stop taking ourselves too seriously.
- Help lift others through our joy.
- Ignite a sense of wonder.
The wonderful feedback we received in full...

I think we need to learn how to listen better and how to play the long game. We need to invest more in grassroots activism that takes the issues we care about and translates it into issues that everyone cares about, working with faith-based organizations and others to understand what people’s hopes and fears are. We need to provide hope, aspiration, and goals to strive towards. We need funders to invest for the long-term and in communications efforts that build outreach and engagement. We need to work social media channels and do more comprehensive narrative analyses to understand the words and themes that resonate the people we are trying to engage with, not just talk at them in the language we like to hear. And then we need to pick ourselves up and move forward – every movement has setbacks. Our power is in using this moment to continue to drive change. We have to learn and change, but we also have to stand up and fight. We also need to combine that with a few inspirational leaders that can take the lead on 3-5 core issues that we all agree sit at the heart of the movement we are building. Build alliances, messaging and coherence and push forward.

The most inspirational thing about the Women’s March was that it wasn’t a bunch of old white hippies. There was diversity, there was youth, and what is clear is that there is a whole generation that is out there and is going to get very angry over the next few years. Our challenge is to reach them, build movements, provide leaders and empower them to engage in local and national government to move forward.

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The biggest thing that sticks out to me is a lack of collaboration between non-profits. Rather than everyone trying to make their own non-profit the biggest success, there should be more focus on making the wider cause they are championing the most impactful.

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We don’t stand up to stand out. We talk about change, but we tend to stand up to be counted amongst peers and like-minded folks.

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Not changing Hearts and Minds of those with differences. A somewhat controversial idea - some of the sweeping reforms of the recent years (LGBTQ for example) were rejoiced and celebrated by the progressives and liberals. When the legislation was passed the new laws were celebrated inside many communities and the work of engaging those who disagreed (crossing the bridge) never happened. They were left outside with their own narratives.

Engaging hearts and minds of the disenfranchised and opposed - most important thing to change/fix.

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The NGO sector is often scrutinized and penalized for investments in infrastructure in ways that the business sector is not, such as executive pay as well as percentage of expenses on “overhead” as a measure of effectiveness rather than impact on population served. If we truly expect nonprofits to act
more like businesses, they should be rewarded for strong leadership and, more importantly, the quality of product (or impact) produced by the NGO sector has in the past been somewhat shy about taking our seat at the table. That is, we are sometimes not included as stakeholders in major/global negotiations in the way we should be. We are a powerful and intelligent sector and so it may be worthwhile to continue/enhance sector-building efforts with the goal of amplifying our sector’s voice and value proposition to other stakeholders (business, government). If the sector is broken, then there is a need to more effectively highlight and showcase the innumerable positive impacts that NGOs bring to communities around the world.

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“more M&A-like activity “. Reasons are: 1) without this, innovative non-profits always have to scale up themselves rather than benefiting from being “acquired” by an entity that can help them do so, therefore most remain sub-scale 2) the sector is fragmented, leading to redundancies and inefficiencies, and also fewer large-scale actors who can coordinate and prioritize actions with real heft.

...the lack of mutual respect and trust between those with financial resources and those with implementation capability that is promulgated by a culture of selling and fundraising. This fundamentally undermines a sense of community and shared commitment to supporting the needs of society which we are seeing paralleled in a broader society of “us and them...”

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Consolidating efforts nationally and globally. Competing nonprofits (and
for profits) trying to serve the same causes with fragmented resources is inefficient.

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“We have to make the social sector work like a market for impact, a system where resources flow efficiently to those best able to create lasting change. It’s not as dramatic as pink hats in the streets, but if we don’t accomplish it, we’re going to get stuck sitting up in the cheap seats while an ugly drama unfolds on stage.” More here in an article by Kevin Starr  http://bit.ly/2j8ZQZI

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NGO’s are perceived to be too much in the top-down or elite class, part of the band-aid solution, and not a real agent for change that improves the lot of the worker and underprivileged.

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Comfort zones. The NFP sector is filled with networks of people doing/saying/thinking the same thing year in and year out. Our politics, morals and behaviors do not leave the door open for millions of others who feel let down or left behind by all institutions - including the NFP sector. They don’t trust us, we don’t speak for or with them.

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I think the one thing that civil society has to get better is to manage aggressively for actual impact. We do not do enough to hold ourselves to
account for delivering impact, too often we celebrate “effort” over “result”.

If there needs to be a second major area of improvement, it is collaboration within civil society. I am so often so frustrated about the internal rivalry and even jealousy between NGOs. Unrelenting and selfless collaboration is needed in light of the crisis we are facing.

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We are not organized around common ground. We need to have a clearer sense of a unified front. With so much competition for limited resources, and a proliferation of organizations, the social sector/not-for-profit sector has become increasingly fragmented. Also with good years of aligned governments, a certain complacency crept in. I think we need to take this period as a moment to find greater clarity of purpose and coalition building.

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I think the biggest problem has been a fixation on organization-centric rather than citizen-centric social movements, from both a practical and narrative perspective. By org-centric I mean approaches that are more top-down and focused on the brand of the organization, making them slower moving, less responsive and more cautious. By citizen-centric I mean movements that are more dynamic and focused on distributed organizing and empowerment. Hillary’s campaign was more org-centric, Bernie’s was more citizen-centric, etc.

The one thing I’d note is that I don’t think this means that distributed movements shouldn’t have organizations helping to facilitate them - as Occupy demonstrated, having real strategy and organization matters. But it’s equally important to ensure the voices of the participants of the movement are a more prominent part of the narrative and given true power, enabling their collective
energy to be more effectively unleashed.

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We talked too much to ourselves and with people who agreed with us, using vocabulary/language that we liked - and tried to require everyone to use – without building relationships with them and empathising with their perspectives and concerns.

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This is a tough yet necessary question.

When we look at the rise of ‘populism’ (which I think is a dangerously positive term) and the contribution of ‘post truth’ (which is an extraordinary term), we are dealing with a socio-economic demographic in society that does not gravitate towards the liberal (elite) of the not-for-profit sector and equally the not-for-profit sector has shown little desire to engage with those whose values are at odds with their agenda. It would be easy to say that there was a failure to listen and consequently a failure to appreciate the zeitgeist. To some extent that’s true and I feel we need to re-examine how we ‘listen’. We need to listen with our ‘head (what did we hear), hearts (what did we feel) and our feet (what was the intention). We need to be comfortable being challenged, not self-righteous with indignation that we are ‘morally better’. We need to be patient – this will take time, building relationships and really understanding the challenges, perspectives and emotions that bubble beneath the surface. We then need to invest in creating better outcomes and, especially, in learning from the methods that have reaped such ‘winning’ political-social outcomes in the USA, UK and beyond. In particular we need to invest in developing emotional constructs and narratives which fit into frameworks that are familiar
to those who see the world differently.

Yet is this what the times demand of us? That’s where I struggle. I also feel there’s an urgency now not to look back but to confront, to challenge, to use this opportunity to rally and bring bystanders off the sidelines to mobilise those who were not previously engaged and then really delve into their challenges. To some extent we need both approaches – to deal with the speed of events with a speed of response whilst also engaging in deeper, longer-term dialogue. The struggle is how best to balance these.

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#1 for me is that nonprofit leaders (and funders) fail to actively generate demand for social change. So they create a box of self-deception and comfort around a “successful” program that does achieve its intended outcome, but can never scale, because to go from incremental growth to a scale of intervention that can actually solve a social problem you must generate demand through sales and marketing. Nonprofits must learn the same demand-generation techniques that for-profits have mastered for decades. But there is a huge cultural barrier due to deeply held beliefs that govern how nonprofits spend money. These beliefs emphasize delivery of programs and services, the heart of a nonprofit’s mission, and this belief starves off sales and marketing. I like to call this phenomenon “non-profit leadership self-deception” – the inability to see that one even has a problem. Leaders showcase their rigorously evaluated evidence-based practices and programs, YET the impact is very small, and they cannot get to scale because they can’t overcome beneficiaries’ lack of awareness or interest. Scale requires more than a program that achieves intended outcomes. Nonprofit leaders need to generate demand for social change. Unfortunately, this is unfamiliar territory for non-profits because of a “build it and they will come culture,” creating services that they think are
innovative or effective, and expressing surprise (self-deception) when those services go begging for participants. Selling social change means ensuring that the program's design isn't just effective but also spreadable; identifying and describing target beneficiaries most likely to participate in the program or service; and allocating sufficient resources to deploy a viable sales and marketing effort.

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We lost sight of the fact that not all things can be fixed through innovation and the private sector. That compassion and values are the bedrock of human and environmental advancement. That we differentiate ourselves as a species by being inclusive rather than exclusive. That we inspire rather than conspire.

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Too many emerging charities spending too much time and money fighting for a discrete amount of donation dollars. Setting up a foundation is now a rite of passage for every famous sports star, actor or entrepreneur with little long-term impact. Money and handouts can't replace dignity or self respect - the industry of charity has a vested interest to keep the cycle of poverty.

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Millions of invisible people—the former powerful majority of uneducated in the UK and US—felt abandoned to wither without a voice.

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Most nonprofits I don't like are money raising and employment firms and that over-rides the actual mission they are on!
Arrogance, ego, not really walking a mile in other people’s shoes...kissing up to the wealthy donors...and following their guidance because they hold the purse strings. Wasting people’s time. Inconsistent and erratic support...pursuing the new bright shiny object. Unintended consequences.

And most importantly, non-profits do not attract the best and the brightest. Maybe the nicest. And maybe those that want to feed their egos believing they are morally superior or “noble”. But it ain’t about that. It is about attracting the best and the brightest...and sometimes that needs to be rough and tumble.

Compensation is certainly an issue...but not the only one. The politics and board oversight of non-profits is crap.

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Groupthink. We spend too much time talking to ourselves. Now the media is so fragmented, that’s exacerbated.

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My 10-year-old once asked me, “dad, why do they call charities nonprofits? Doesn’t that mean they will go out of business?”

He is right. Just the words “not for profit” smacks of unsustainably.

As a society we need to mentally and practically transition the compartmentalization of “doing good” solely resting on organizations with a particular tax status to all organizations - esp those who understand how to remain accountable to results and financial self-sufficiency.

The wonderful irony is that when for profit companies see the value of doing
good to their long-term bottom line and brand perception, it becomes a business decision and not a philanthropic decision. Which in the end leads to a longer-term commitment to the “doing good.” Not Impossible Labs.

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Mobile penetration offers freedom but also the perils of social media addiction and the social envy and unhappiness this subsequently causes. Greed and consumerism are destroying the natural environment - pressure on resources is overwhelming.

We need a much better and honest narrative about the costs and benefits / winners and losers of Globalization and Technology. We also need to spend more time to just listen and think, and empathize with the pain, loss and fear others are going through due to globalization and the exponential speed of change. We also need to focus on, and invest much more in education and skills for people of ALL ages.

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Ability and willingness to collaborate. Seems like in many sectors the ability to subsume individual brands in favor of the greater good/cause has been lost.

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We talked too much to ourselves and with people who agreed with us, using vocabulary/language that we liked - and tried to require everyone to use – without building relationships with them and empathising with their perspectives and concerns...

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Possibly working outside government institutions and outside their frameworks – in some sense that can be a positive responsive strategy and sometimes can isolate government bodies which leaves them open to political ping-pong.

Lobbying within current political frameworks is the way forward. Finding friends in local and federal institutions. Working closer together – understanding the political pressures that exist and supporting the people who work in these departments. Collaboration can combat isolationism.

I think there is so much fragmentation and little coordination among the huge numbers of non-profits addressing similar problems. We need to have the creation of more “backbone” entities that don’t do any of the direct service work but they act as a coordinator, convener and a focus mechanism for the non-profits doing the direct work.

I worry that nonprofit leaders spend so much time fundraising so that those of us in elite circles spend much more time with the rich than the poor we are trying to serve. And there are very few big gifts given to single organizations to allow them to focus on their mission (and thus free them to take on the status quo in real ways).

Also: Privilege rarely gives itself up voluntarily. We have to ask ourselves about whether we are too dependent on raising funds disproportionately from the institutions that form the status quo. Otherwise we paddle in a sea confused by mission drift and niceties with too many boats steering toward funding rather than fighting for change. If philanthropy isn’t changing the system
itself, it risks reinforcing structures that keep the poor forever poor and the environment forever neglected. In this cycle lies the conundrum.

It is to ALL of us to break the coziness and listen to those who have no voice... maybe that is at the essence...

Not collaborating with other cause partners.

Not looking at actual value-based business solutions as the growth engine for operations instead of donations.

In the progressive not-for-profit sector, I think we have too much faith in the power of facts and altruistic empathy to garner political support for progress on issues that are generally detached from the more basic values that motivate large (often silent) voting majorities of people: economic self-interest, fear, nationalism, tribalism.

We need to communicate and advocate for our issues through a value set (“opportunity”, “freedom from...”, “protecting our children”) that appeals to a much broader political spectrum and simultaneously support political power-building to ensure sustainable governing majorities.

DISCONNECT. I really feel many individuals, families, philanthropists, successful business people have become increasingly isolated and disconnected from reality. This leads to some fundamental issues but one increasingly is a lack of
EMPATHY and gratitude.

Individuals surround themselves by procedures, processes, bureaucracy, family offices, and people to protect and make their lives easier but in doing so create a false sense of reality and start only believing and seeing through a very narrow lens. They don’t leave their offices, don’t walk the streets, don’t get on trains, don’t talk to people, don’t sit and look people in the eye and don’t LISTEN. As my father says who is the most humble and wise man I know - they start believing their own bullshit. There is also a real lack of HUMILITY which impacts people’s ability to work together, to really COLLABORATE with one another and affect change. There is also a sense of impatience and need for instant results (INSTANT GRATIFICATION) ... a consequence of this is also an inability or unwillingness to take some risks, be brave and courageous and commit to the med-long term.

I see so many who get caught up with funding models, timing, grants making etc. and I think they have forgotten the real magic and reason why they exist.

The above is from the donor/philanthropist perspective. From the not-for-profit – too many organisations doing the same thing – duplication, inefficiencies, lack of collaboration, misalignment of interests, transparency and general bureaucracy. The other big thing is not being run professionally and not having the skill set to support them as this is often the area that is forgotten – but for real change, sustainable and long-term impact you need heart, mind and hands all working together. There often is also a lack of DIVERSITY on boards and in management which is also a issue. The other thing is the balance between private, corporate and govt funding.

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Your note is quite provocative: complex and hard to answer in a word. Let me share a few reactive thoughts off the top of my head, starting with a few key assumptions:

• Nonprofits and philanthropy go hand and hand
• Both provide the backbone to civil society
• Nonprofits & philanthropy fill the gap between society’s needs and government’s ability to meet these needs
• The needs are often basic: livelihood (food, shelter, work) and security.

Thinking about what is broken: Government feels broken – and media is like a dysfunctional, co-dependent relative. There is a glut of nonprofits, which has weakened the cause/movement rather than strengthened it. Nonprofit orgs tend to play to their base, frequently preaching to the choir rather than shifting attitudes, changing hearts and minds of those who disagree.

- We let brands (and worse egos!) shadow causes….it should be cause is all (brand sometimes important, ego never)

- We weren’t listening hard enough, we weren’t understanding what we heard. We let established assumptions and our ‘expertise’ cloud our judgment about the changes taking place in the world and prevent us from surfacing, interrogating and responding to new, and often exciting, human habits, aspirations and truths.

- We weren’t good at critically challenging ourselves and being more accountable – despite all our best efforts (and breathtaking resource over decades) the graphs were still mostly heading in the wrong direction but we
were to sure of ourselves to rip up the rule book, innovate and reshape our thinking and action.

- We were not brave and bold enough - we were cautious and risk averse - we were comfortable with the status quo – but we owe it to those who feel disenfranchised, silenced or worse to stand shoulder to shoulder with them and be as brave as we can be....

- We weren’t fleet of foot – we moved too slowly - we let hierarchy, bureaucracy, lethargy and competitiveness stifle our pace and were not agile enough to respond to the scale, pace and complexity of change in the world – agility is all.

- We said it could never happen – we were fixed in our beliefs – we laughed at candidates, scoffed at them as if they were a joke instead of taking them really really seriously and we are asking this question what can we fix after seismic political decisions, rather than before them!

- We were not change activists – we did not stay hungry enough – we did not have the fire in our belly the world needs (but can now be reignited) – we didn’t consider new models, creative alliances, new finance flows, systems changes, new leadership, new governance – all are ripe for revolution!

- We forgot that ultimately we are about redistribution – and so we didn’t deliver it – and so people took the power back the only way they knew how.... and the consequences are potentially devastating...

- We said those with alternative views were stupid, or bigoted or worse – we didn’t try to empathise and understand their values, principles, positions and experiences – we stopped listening, we didn’t debate – we dismissed them did
not engage with them….and societies are fractured along the biggest fault lines now.

- We weren’t high-performance cultures – we could have been creative with incentives, could have better managed talent to thrive, could have (and now absolutely need to) be more accountable, efficient, effective, flexible.

- We weren’t visionary enough – we only thought about our next financial year, the services we wanted to deliver, the brands we wanted to build – not ending global issues and striving to help all lead healthy, happy and sustainable lives. Falling a bit short of a ludicrous target is far better than not setting one in the first place – the world does not have time for limited visions...

- We didn’t collaborate effectively, were not open source – we were closed, we were protectionist but we could dramatically expedite our effort working openly, transparently and in concert – causes should always trump individual organisations and we had a very limited imagination – e.g. refugees/homelessness – there is enough shelter in the world but people are not living in it – there are camps but why are people not sleeping in hotels, in office buildings, in vacant apartments, in public buildings, in transport hubs etc...

- We were not imaginative enough in our engagement with businesses, we were not persuasive enough in our lobbying of governments.

- We did not see the change coming, we were too caught up in the past and not thinking enough about the future – we were not thinking long term enough, likely only to the end of our employment of funding contracts – short termism is the enemy of effective systems change and real redistribution.
- We didn’t maintain our sense of humour – the issues are serious but we forgot to also have many moments of unbridled joy.

- We could have done more to promote empathy, compassion, understanding, acceptance, tolerance, bravery, togetherness, humanity.

- If only the not-for-profit sector truly engaged with the people they were set up to support...I still cannot believe that on a regular basis we find out that people experiencing issues aren’t involved in policies that affect them .. criminal justice system/homelessness etc.

Nor can I believe that many people involved with the sector haven’t ever visited any of the groups they support ... haven’t experienced any of the direct work...

Where has HUMILITY gone?
Where has the HUMAN in Humanity gone?
Few people seem to genuinely be CURIOUS ... to want to LISTEN .. to look people in the eye...
Too often a form replaces this ...
Why are we not listening to people who are experts in their own lives... how is it politicians and business leaders often think they are experts on things like juvenile justice/homelessness/indigenous .. when they have no direct experience.
Where has KINDNESS gone.

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Market is missing financial incentives for quality journalism – nonprofit journalism hasn't broken through.
First seek to understand and then be understood: if a politician wants to have the highest office in the land then surely there needs to be a sense of humility for the role. A politician can’t be seen to be calling entire segments of the population “deplorables” because they have a different point of view. Surely a decent politician would spend time in those communities and listen (because as Archbishop Tutu says: “listening is a healing”) so that productive strategies can be created. There wasn’t a lot of votes difference in the Electoral College and perhaps had there been more humility without assuming a sure victory and reaching out to those swing states in a meaningful way, perhaps we would be living in a different world now.

Education and wisdom as to true motivations: The first principle is when one is in a position of influence by being a politician or a journalist isn’t there a responsibility to educate the public and help them to be wise? There is anti-Muslim rhetoric that has been encouraged by even our most liberal and upstanding Eurotastic media that creates a climate of fear and oppression. We even have incredibly respected publications like the Economist that has the motto: “take part in a severe contest between intelligence, which presses forward, and an unworthy, timid ignorance obstructing our progress” that write editorials as to why they will refer to an extremist group by the name they want to be called, thus advertising that group and furthering their cause: http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2014/09/economist-explains-19 In addition by continuing to propagate the ignorance and fiction there is a “religious crusade” simply furthers the goals of these groups, creates tribalism and fear, when the real motivation of the extremist groups is money and power.

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Competition caused by seeking funds (grant structure) breaks our natural cooperative DNA structure to work together united.

Need to find a way to fund nonprofits so they can share info and work as a united front just as cancer researchers are beginning to do. (E.g. Climate orgs need to use the same terminology. Align on semantics of ‘climate change’ ...Reframe it ‘Pollution Control’. Climate NGOs deliberately use different semantics, terminology, data in order to compete for grants.)

NGOs need to accept that they need to outsource and raise serious funds for top lawyers to fight intractable issues that NGOs cannot do alone. (And subsequently raise funds for top PR campaigns to assist in viewing those old issues through new lens.)

Not enough money goes to advocacy.

Not enough money goes to holding government accountable for their actions and policies.

Not enough money in impact investing. Huge portfolios of assets are invested in companies and managers that cause the problems that potentially the same foundations/people are trying to address with their giving. #stupid.
Raising money is inefficient and expensive. In the US 360 billion is given annually and on average 10-20% of that money is used to raise the total. So that is 36 to 72 billion dollars. I could go on and on about this.

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Not enough collaboration, sharing of outcomes/impact.

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What is needed:
• Collaboration, community, accountability
• And opposite of the above

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We need to act more like investors and less like charities - This involves seeking entrepreneurial solutions that look for accountable positive returns and measurable growth at scale so we can disrupt systems like never before!

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I have a rather critical take on the way in which the different elites, including the non-profits/NGOs, have become disconnected from reality. I know that's a very broad statement but I'm painfully aware that we have isolated ourselves in our own coded, exclusive discourse. Our engagement has become one of elite to elite rather than one of us giving voice to the voiceless. Just look at how the political parties have drifted away from the realities of their constituents, especially the socialist and labour parties. Look at the trade unions and their inability to relate to workers who do not have permanent contracts with full social benefits (SEIU and Justice for Janitors being notable exceptions). The
poor, the unemployed, the marginalised and the precarious are those most impacted by immigration, crime and inequality and yet we tended to avoid those issues because we didn’t want to pander to the agenda of the populists. This kind of denial has cost us dearly. I fear we have also been in denial about the impact of globalisation, trade and free markets. The evidence that they were leading to inequality has been there since the 1990s but we ignored it until Piketty, and now the cleavages are too deep to embalm with liberal values. Yes there have been voices questioning GDP or consumption-based growth, both from a social and an environmental standpoint, but somehow we went along for the ride, and now we cannot get off and the majority of the world’s population got left behind. We need to step off the train and sit on the platform for a few days and talk to the folks living next to the tracks. It’s about reconnecting and renewing our bonds with real people and their real struggles. I could go on for days but let me stop here.

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One thing I hope can be reflected – which I believe is the #1 issue among us – is that too often, we don’t ask community for their input (and obvious expertise) to solve their own problems. The power dynamic and institutional bias/racism/sexism – that exists between the rich and the poor the educated and un-educated, black/brown/white, men/women furthers this unhealthy and unhelpful dynamic. I have seen this so many times across the globe, well-intentioned philanthropists have an “idea” that simply doesn’t work (for a variety of reasons) for the culture, climate or community. It’s also, frankly, arrogant. It assumes that our pals in the bottom billion don’t have solutions. Imagine someone from South Sudan, knowing very little about our community, rocking up in Seattle to tell us how to solve our homelessness problem and then giving us a bunch of $ to do it their way...
To me it’s pretty simple, Listen. Learn. Act... Repeat.

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I think our principle moving forward needs to be less talking and more doing. We are in no short supply of great minds and great intentions, but I wonder if our impact has been limited by two things: more documenting of the problems or conditions than creating interventions to solve them, or more solutions that are delivered to people rather than creating solutions in collaboration with those we are trying to serve. I believe that we get the deepest insights, develop greater empathy and have more opportunities for impact by rolling up our sleeves and working together on solutions. Not a radical solution, but one that has proven itself time and again, no matter how intractable the problem appears to be.

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We are in a period of accelerating change, and we failed to understand that when societies change more rapidly, people get left behind more quickly. There has never been a better time to be at the forefront of change. But to get to where the jobs are – in the USA, the dynamic coastal cities - is more and more difficult, as housing, transport and other costs lock people out of opportunity. While life expectancy across the world has increased by 20 years over the past 40 years, in many parts of societies (including in Mid-West towns in the USA), it is lower than a generation ago and unemployment is higher. Yet escape is more difficult. And vulnerability to risk is higher – be it cascading financial crises or, in African and other regions climate change and other systemic shocks that destroy lives and livelihoods. With globalisation and accelerating change we need
to focus and invest more in building inclusive societies. The danger of people being left behind is greater and with it our attention to ensuring we leave no one behind needs to be at the forefront of our ideas and actions.
Continue the conversation...
#actwisely