

Insight

ME
WE

Who cares? Why bother?

Design Social-Friendly
and be a part of a bigger whole.

By Tajrobeh Design Studio | Winter 2019

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Genuine Encounter

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We write
only about
what we have
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Accepting and fulfilling our "Social Responsibility" is no longer just a chic etiquette. It's not even just a responsible or an intellectual choice. It's a necessity.

Understanding the concept of ecology and interconnectedness of nature and life is one of the fundamental pillars of human interactions and social ecosystems. A nature that is fair and balanced, where all the beings live harmoniously and act proportionately along each other.

The responsible life and design of every person and organization (as a living being) is a part of the organic ecosystem of the human society.

Despite all the efforts of educational systems throughout the world to educate the concept of "Team Work", still most of our works, education and even hobbies are designed around the concept of "Winning" and unconstructive (and even deconstructive) competitions. The rise of Populism through East and West during last several years is a syndrome to indicate "Isolated Social Attitudes". An approach that makes people think that they have to distance from, ignore, boycott or even eliminate some "others" to succeed. These "others" might be some people (as White Supremists think), some countries (As Pro-Brexit people think), or the rest of the world (as Trump thinks).

The concept of "Getting stronger and succeed without others" will lead to personal and social isolation.

One of the reasons for the rise of Populism throughout the world is the public disappointment about governments. "Beautiful and Promising" slogans of the candidates don't get delivered when they get to the office and that causes Social Political-Disappointments. And most of the times it leads to anger, so that people prefer to elect someone that can "turn the table" and "drown the swamp", hoping that it might lead to "change". Someone that can blame his/her predecessor for "not achieving any results" or "achieving bad results" and in doing so, be an agent and symbol for their social anger.

The important point here is that these people usually don't consider themselves "responsible" for anything. They never consider themselves as "a part of the problem" (they imagine that there are always "others" that are causing the problems), and they never consider themselves as "a part of the solution" (they imagine that there are always "others" that are responsible for solving the problems).

One way to change this kind of mind-set is to engage people with Social Non-Profit Activities and Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs). The type of organizations that get their strengths and drive directly from people, not governments. Interacting and working with these organizations can form the habit of taking social responsibility and engaging directly with problems.

IDEA for NGOs

One of the approaches to design an NGO is IDEA. I for Integrity, D for Democracy, E for Ethics and A for Affinity. The D part gives ambassadors and agents of NGOs the ability to

independently put their capabilities and resources to work for the NGO's cause (of course, based on brand identity guidelines) and in doing so, the NGO gets expanded organically.

This democratic approach to manage the human resources develops the culture of Democratic Thinking and Working throughout the society.

On the other hand, people will get along each other better and easier in Non-Profit or Volunteer communities, as they don't compete for the profits. As the result, the culture of collaboration and Team Work rises and people get used to work with different kinds of people. This leads to more collaborative and democratic mood in other parts of their lives, even For-Profit activities and works.

Why should people engage with Social Programs?

The first time that founders and directors of Ghoghnoos (Phoenix) NGO (Burnt Patients Support Organization) approached us to redefine and redesign their organization and brand, Dr. Fatemi, the founder and C.E.O. asked us to find the answer to the following question:

“Why do most of the people prefer to help and donate to a cancer patient, rather than a burnt victim?”

(They found this insight during their two years of working since their establishment)

Our team found three insights and reason for this question. One of them was that “we (people) usually don't imagine burning incidents to happen to us”. We always suppose that “incidents are for others, not us!”. But we usually don't think about cancer like that.

This insight can be the first basis for persuading people engaging with Socially Responsible Programs. They should know that “they, themselves, might need these social services” because “It might happen to them”.

The message “Burning can happen to you” (as unpleasant as it sounds) gave Ghoghnoos the ability to persuade more people and volunteers and engage them with its mission. It's not just about “responsibility”; It's about doing something pragmatic for our own lives.

The second reason for people to work with NGOs is that social problems can have psychologic and economic burden and costs for everyone. Even the ones who are not engaged with those problems directly. Solving social problems can improve the quality of life for all of us.

And the third and maybe the most important reason for people to fulfill their social responsibilities is that

NGOs and Social Activities are among the most impactful forces for us as people to put our ideas and opinions to work for us. We can shape our life style more directly through Non-Governmental Social programs. The social communities are the main pillar for the Democracy. We shouldn't leave that to the governments.

Beyond all these reasons, social activities form human networks and interactions and create a dynamic atmosphere to help the energy and synergy of the people flow in their lives, giving them a sense of belonging to a greater good.

Why should businesses engage with Social Programs?

1- A safer and healthier society is simply better for businesses and their growth. It's better for the businesses that aim the higher levels of Maslow's Pyramid, to help people pass the lower levels, so that they can become their potential target market and audience through forming a healthy, safe and thriving society (and therefore a healthy and safe bedrock for business).

2- Businesses can create a human-touch and feel for their brands and improve their brand experience for their audiences by interacting directly with people through social activities. They can become a living being by doing some humane social work.

Why should governments engage with Non-Governmental organizations?

1- one of the high-performance approaches for national management strategies is delegating "operational activities and works" (especially social work) to private and social sections and in doing so, making the government smaller. The government should be able to think big, and it won't be able to think like that if it is engaged in every tiny operation. Supporting NGOs will help government to reduce its financial and operational costs.

Also, switching from government to private and community-based activities helps to increase the quality of services due to competition.

2- Governments change (usually every 4 or 8 years). When a government has to do a lot of social work (the kind that usually takes a long time to make a sustainable impact), it can not deliver them in high quality. The projects will be changed, distorted, derailed or even terminated when the government changes.

Delegating designing and implementing long-term social programs to NGOs will ensure their durability and consistency through time.

The additional point about governments is Social Tax. Governments can consider some of the social-responsible efforts and programs of the businesses as their Social Tax. The companies spend some of their financial, operational and human resources for social programs and in doing so, can save the same amount of resources for the government.

Why should designers engage with Social Programs?

1- The responsibility of designers

The first reason is simply (as put in this article) the "Social Responsibility" itself. Designers can fulfill this responsibility in many ways. One of the best ways is to help people and brands to fulfill their Social Responsibility! Sometime some people or companies are

determined and committed to do their part, but don't know how to. Designers can facilitate these efforts through designing social ecosystems (system design, service design, campaign design, ...) that makes a connection among social entities, businesses and people.

Designers can help NGOs have a story and create a dialogue between organizations and people via that story in a beautiful way. Also, when an organization is designed with a "people-in-mind" approach, it can persuade people to engage more easily and genuinely.

2- Gaining experiences; The profit of working with Non-Profit organizations.

In most of the social-responsible projects, there is no financial profit, but there is an economic cycle that keeps the organization working. Taking part in these kinds of projects is a great opportunity for designers to encounter and experience financial limitations and challenges, so that they can assay their creative capabilities to refine the operational processes and get financial aid for the organization.

3- Design as a Brand. Influencing into the deep layers of society.

People usually have less mental and cognitive resistance against social services, compared to commercial services and products. Because of that, Social Design is one of the best ways and opportunities for Design profession to render itself and shape the life style of the people. In other words,

one of the most influential ways to change the general perception of people about design -that (at best) think about design as a tool for shaping the visual aspects of their life- is to use it to define and refine the soft issues of society; To shape the big picture.

At the end, maybe one of the loveliest outcomes and impacts of taking social responsibilities and working with community-based organizations for us as designers, business leaders or just simply, citizens, is to find new friends. Finding and interacting with people who have the same interests and common goals. And that's why you can count on them as last-longing teammates and friends.



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