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Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly 2007; 36; 528
DOI: 10.1177/0899764007301280

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://nvs.sagepub.com
One overworked truism is that the world is becoming smaller as the Internet and other forms of communication speed access to and transfer of knowledge from one part of the globe to another. Despite the truth of this statement, the focus, for those of us in the United States, is on access to and transfer of our knowledge to others. Although we may provide an exception to this generalization to our colleagues in Europe, not that much thought is given to other areas of the world as sources of new and interesting knowledge relating to the management of social organizations. Hence, it is wonderful to see a book written from the perspective of Spanish-language people in institutions south of the Rio Grande.

The book is a collaborative effort of a research partnership of business schools throughout Iberoamerica and the Harvard Business School. The chapters in the book look at “leadership, strategy, organizational culture and values, organizational structure, human resources, funding, governance, and performance measurement” (p. vii). This is a daunting task but one that is accomplished with admirable skill and grace. Using examples from countries with which few American researchers or managers may be familiar, the authors of this book provide a wealth of information that is not only thought-provoking but also eminently usable. Underlying the book’s chapters is the effort to understand social enterprise, or social initiatives, of effective community service organizations and businesses.

Chapter 1 describes the “social enterprise approach.” Of most use in this chapter is the conceptual framework that allows us to envision what effective organizations have internally and the context in which they find themselves. The four general elements in the framework are purpose, integrative drivers (such as strategy, culture, and leadership), implementing mechanisms (such as performance measurement and governance), and contextual forces (political, economic, social, and other forces) that are understood by the leadership. As a way to research or understand organizations in any part of the world, this framework is most helpful.
The following chapters take the different elements of the model and, following a common chapter framework, provide in-depth descriptions of the model. Each chapter provides information on the definition of the element, a framework for looking at the element, good ways to manage that element, and lessons learned related to that element. This unified approach to explicating the various parts of the overarching model are what make this book so valuable. A great deal of thought was used to design the model, and the application of the framework in many countries and using many examples shows that the effort has paid off.

The final chapter, titled “Integrative Reflections,” details the cross-cutting themes of effective organizations. Although the total list of lessons learned is too lengthy to reproduce here, it is impressive. Suffice it to say, six capabilities stand out for effective community organizations and businesses engaged in adding value to their locales. Organizations should strive for entrepreneurial innovation, capacity building, organizational adaptability, stakeholder management, alliance creation, and strategic alignment (pp. 277-278).

Two caveats should be expressed regarding the material. First, to readers unfamiliar with Iberoamerica and the organizations active there, the examples may be too numerous and too detailed. Fortunately, the major points that the examples illuminate are understandable without going into the level of detail available to readers more familiar with the area. Second, the conclusions may seem old hat and unremarkable. After all, don’t we already know that organizational leaders must be entrepreneurial and build capacity? A response to this concern is yes, and no. We have had evidence from some studies that the cross-cutting capabilities (and other parts of the framework) are important for effective organizational action. Still, few resources are as well designed around a single model, with so many variables within that model, as is this book. The expansion of our knowledge base to include this area of the globe is helpful and needed. Readers with an interest in administration (comparative or otherwise) will find this a treasure trove of information regarding not only what is useful but how to make changes in one’s own organization to increase its effectiveness.

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DOI: 10.1177/0899764007300390

In this book, Emily Barman sheds new light on workplace giving with a view that the United Way and the Alternative Funds present differing