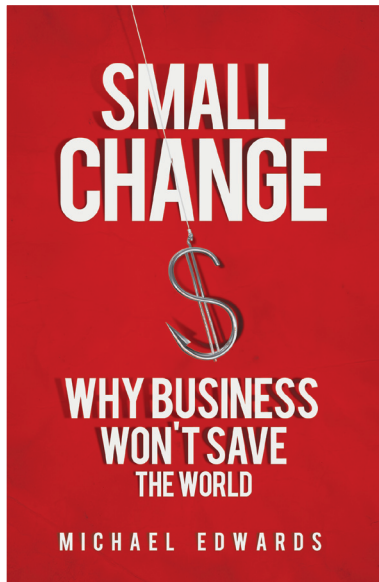


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Michael Edwards

Small Change

Why Business Won't Save the World

- A powerful critique of a seemingly beneficial trend that is actually undermining efforts for social change
- Written by an insider—a former official with several high-profile nonprofits and foundations
- Copublished with the prominent New York think tank Demos

A new movement is afoot that promises to save the world by applying the magic of the market to the challenges of social change. Its supporters argue that using business principles to solve global problems is far more effective than more traditional approaches. What could be wrong with that?

Almost everything, argues former Ford Foundation director Michael Edwards. In this hard-hitting, controversial exposé, he marshals a wealth of evidence to reveal that in reality, a market approach hurts more than it helps. Real change will come when business acts more like civil society, not the other way around.

Despite the good intentions and hopeful rhetoric, Edwards shows that there is simply no proof that a business approach is better. Quite the contrary. He cites examples from his many years in the social sector to demonstrate that business by its very nature is not equipped to attack the root causes of major problems like poverty, inequality, violence, and discrimination. Achieving fundamental social transformation requires a different set of operating values—cooperation rather than competition, collective action more than individual effort, and patient, long-term support for systemic solutions over immediate results.

Edwards argues that people give their money and time to social change organizations to serve a cause, not a balanced quarterly spreadsheet. If these organizations compromise their higher purpose in the name of a narrow version of “efficiency,” they’ll erode the very basis of their impact and importance. And relying on business as the engine of change ends up concentrating power in the hands of a few major players, mirroring the very inequities these organizations should be trying to rectify. With a vested interest in the status quo, all business can promise are valuable but limited advances: small change. It’s time to turn away from the false promise of the market model and reassert the independence of global citizen action.

“Lays bare the mythologies surrounding philanthropy and shows it to be exactly what it is—an essential part of our capitalist system, with all the flaws and foibles found elsewhere, good at what it does best but bad at what it’s sometimes expected to do. Anyone who wants the truth of philanthropy in America should read this book.”

—Robert B. Reich, Professor of Public Policy, University of California, Berkeley

Michael Edwards is a writer and activist affiliated with the think tank Demos, the Wagner School of Public Service at New York University, and the Brooks World Poverty Institute at Manchester University in the UK. From 1999 to 2008 he was director of the Ford Foundation’s Governance and Civil Society Program, and he previously worked for the World Bank, Oxfam, and Save the Children.

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