

Green Entrepreneurship

Successful business cases of Green Entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean



Regional Activity Centre
for Cleaner Production



Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament de Territori
i Sostenibilitat

Actuable: Online lobbying and NGO communication services in Spain

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Name:	The Actuable Network SL
City, country:	Madrid, Spain
Name of entrepreneur/ founder:	Francisco Polo, Álvaro Ortiz y Fernando Blat
Description:	An community of people and organisations who join forces online to inform governments, business and other agents about the changes they would like to see in society (for example political and economic transparency, respect for human rights, environmental justice). Actuable's mission is to be an international online reference for positive social, political and environmental changes.
Investment:	<i>Start up capital:</i> Zero, founders contributed their time to start the project. <i>Rate of return on investment:</i> Not applicable <i>Sources of funding:</i> Premium services purchased by NGOs to help attract members and improve their online profile.
Stakeholders:	Users, social organizations, internet experts and people involved in the third sector.
Employment generation:	1 full time, 2 part time collaborators; the aim is to have 5-7 people working in the organisation in the next 12 months.
Timeline:	In 2000 the founder created an Amnesty International Group at his university, sending letters to the government about human rights. In 2007 he published an article about cluster bombs manufactured by the Spanish government, the media started to take notice and within 15 days the government agreed to stop the manufacture of this type of weapon. After seeing other websites such as change.org the founder decided to create an independent petition making organization that would be free for users and self financing. 2010: January to June: research on the challenges faced by social organizations and the capacity to generate bottom up solutions to social, political and environmental problems. June: a team was formed September: launched website and 10.000 users signed up in 3 weeks November: the founder began to dedicate himself full time to Actuable December: 80.000 users 2011: January: Started to offer Premium services to social organizations February: Awarded the prize for Young Social Entrepreneur of the Year March: 160.000 users
Feasibility study:	An analysis was undertaken based firstly on the hypothesis that people in Spain needed a platform to be able to voice their complaints in their own language and secondly that NGOs would pay for services associated with this platform.
Geo-social-economic setting:	NGOs have difficulties financing their campaigns and have the capacity to pay for services to address this problem (e.g. to attract members). Spain has one of the lowest percentages of the population affiliated to a social organisation, far below other European countries (UK is 55%, France and Germany are 40% and Spain is 5%).

**Key features:
Innovative:**

This does not always imply doing something totally new but sometimes just tweaking something that exists. Websites already existed to sign petitions, create communities or allow people to become members with organizations. **Transformative** – Actuable has a series of concrete examples of cases that have been resolved, ranging from the protection of human rights to small and large scale environmental issues. **Sustainable** – Actuable is self financing through independent sources of membership fees from NGOS. **Values** – Actuable does not aim to be a tool or methodology, rather a community with the following values: Progress, Pragmatism, Empowerment, Collaboration, Diversity, Independence and Innovation.

Overall rational and motivation:

To end injustice in the world and empower people to face their own injustices. The specific motivations come from the individual users of the site; they range from animal protection to human rights, environmental protection etc. In addition Actuable occasionally runs its own campaigns when it sees that there is a need to do so.

Strengths:

User friendly, built on solid foundations, trustworthy, transformative, scalable.

Challenges and constraints:

1) The economic situation of the third sector in Spain, 2) Human resources – finding the people with the right skills to be part of the project, 3) lack of awareness of social entrepreneurship in society at large, particularly from the third sector, government institutions, universities, financial sector.

Direct activities and impacts:

Social: Various social campaigns won. E.g. male gay parents have parental rights of surrogate children recognized, the social charity Caritas maintained open in Rioja. A number of NGOs and individuals from the social sector were consulted in the process of starting the initiative.
Environmental: Various successful campaigns, including the stopping of the manufacture of cluster bombs from the Spanish government.
Economic: 100% of the members who join a certain campaign or NGO through Actuable have maintained their membership (average dropout rate usually 30%).

Use of innovative technologies:

The technologies already exist, the way in which they are being used is innovative – bringing together the necessity of people to support a cause with the social sectors' need to capture more members and raise online profile.

Evidence of a holistic approach/world view:

Insightful creative thinking that challenges assumptions and promotes systemic change. The main systemic change Actuable aims for is to change people's mindsets, by providing a tool to facilitate this process – enabling individual petitions to lead to real changes. The awareness that empowerment can lead to real change is part of this systemic thinking.

Scale of benefits:

160.000 users at time of writing (March 2010) with a predicted 500.000 by June 2010.

Policies, incentives and regulations needed:

1) Public communication campaign about social entrepreneurship, in a similar way awareness about forest fires has become widespread thanks to public campaigns, 2) Legal modifications to facilitate the launching of a social initiative, enabling tax benefits and other support, 3) Finance and support for social entrepreneurship, 4) central point of focus for social entrepreneurship across Spain.

Lessons and recommendations:

Customer development comes before product development. Before creating services or developing products crucial to test the idea and work out how it will be financed. This is very different from the traditional approach of product development. Work up your ideas before launching! 1) Identify a problem that needs solving, 2) Develop an innovative solution to that problem 3) Work out who's going to pay for it

References: www.actuable.es - www.franciscopolo.com - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqYcVE13Qf8>