

HOW DITLEV SCHWANENFLUGEL FINDS WORKING WITH IMPETUS CHARITIES

Experienced strategy consultant Ditlev Schwanenflugel has volunteered his professional skills to three Impetus charities over the past four years. He describes below his experience of working with Impetus and its charities, the overlap that he sees between the commercial and not-for-profit sectors, and what he finds most satisfying about contributing his expertise.

You've been involved in several Impetus projects. What is your background?

Well, I am a classical McKinsey-trained consultant. I've been working in consulting for 12 years, and also at a large bank as Director of Business Development. In the last couple of years I've been working independently, mainly on large corporate strategy type projects, and mostly through Eden McCallum, which is a novel-type strategy firm based on independent consultants. I spend 70-80 per cent of my time on those large projects, and then I like to make myself available for interesting social projects in between. Eden McCallum has a partnership with Impetus, and over the past four years, I've been involved with three of the Impetus portfolio charities: Naz Project London, IntoUniversity and Camfed.

What did you do for Camfed?

The Camfed relationship has been exceptionally interesting and rewarding. I started by analysing different ways of measuring impact, which is both extremely important and also very challenging when you are talking about life outcomes across multiple years and extended families. I subsequently became much more involved with programme design and talent management, and did several field trips to Zambia and Zimbabwe to work with

the senior local teams. Camfed is a very impressive organisation, and working this closely with their key people, in town and in the remote villages, was fantastic.

What other types of projects have you done, for other Impetus charities?

One of the other projects I worked on was a strategy presentation for a charity chief executive. First, an Impetus Investment Executive met with me and provided some background about the people and challenges this charity was facing. Then I went out and met the chief exec and we just talked about what he wanted to do with his organisation and what were the broad aspects of his strategy. After a couple of hours, I went away and created a framework for a plan. I created some simple graphs, and he put in the text. After about six weeks and maybe a total of a day and a half of my time, the chief executive had his strategy presentation.

What differences have you spotted, working in the social sector?

There's a lot of overlap between the commercial and the social sector. Even the least commercial charity faces issues of strategy, marketing, operations, etc and may occasionally benefit from some of the approaches of the commercial world. But it's certainly

not a one-way learning street. The best charities are hugely entrepreneurial and motivated organisations, achieving great impact on very lean budgets, at least as inspirational as any successful Silicon Valley start-up. The important thing is to not just come charging in with your private-sector learnings as a take-it-or-leave-it package, but to work in an iterative and collaborative way.

What would you say to others who are considering getting involved with Impetus?

I found it incredibly rewarding and challenging, as intellectually challenging as any of my corporate projects.

On a practical level, I've really enjoyed the flexibility - I've been able to fit the Impetus work around the commercial work, giving me access to the best of both worlds. I've also enjoyed building deep and lasting relationships with the charities; you become a partner not just a one-off problem solver.

Most importantly, there's the feeling of having real impact, both at a general and at the individual, personal level.

