

**Building Better Businesses In The Social Firm Sector
Conference 27-29 June 2005-06-30**

Social Firms - Why Bother?

Workshop Facilitated By James Belton of Forth Sector

At this workshop, attendees were asked to list what they felt were the:

- negatives of running a Social Firm
- positives of running a Social Firm
- negatives of being employed
- positives of being employed

and their responses are listed below. The aim was firstly to acknowledge the problems of running a Social Firm and being employed and therefore help people to mitigate against them. However, it is important to remember the positive and therapeutic aspects of employment in a Social Firm (or indeed any organisation) which makes employment such a crucial and positive part of people's lives, regardless of the possible difficulties.

Negatives Of Running A Social Firm

- Accommodating care/personal needs
- Aims of Social Firm not to be lost
- Ambiguity of what you are and dilemma of how you present yourself
- Cannot work with just one client group
- Change of staff may mean temporarily, technically not a Social Firm
- Finding the right person to run it
- Lack of resources
- More expensive equipment/kit needed
- Often forced to learn by mistakes
- Possibly large amount of training/supervision needed
- Pressures of trading/training
- Public intolerance
- Risk to the client group
- Setting up of Social Firms is quite complicated
- Specialist on benefits needed
- Time taken liaising with third parties

Positives Of Running A Social Firm

- Allowing disabled/disadvantaged people to share the benefits of work ie. being part of a team, earning money, gaining confidence, becoming more independent, taking your place in society, being able to make your own contribution to the community etc.
- Challenging stereotypes, offering examples of good practice
- Community spirit
- Employment
- Financial benefits
- Gives life chances
- Inclusive
- Ownership

- Safe place for people
- Sociable and therapeutic
- Supportive, not patronising

- Teamwork
- Understanding
- Working together

Negatives Of Being Employed

- Bad manager/boss
- Boredom
- Community
- Conflicts/bullying
- Fear of making mistakes
- Feeling distanced from decision making/lack of control
- Hard to work for little reward
- Increasing workload
- Lack of holidays
- Lack of opportunities/training
- Lack of prospects
- Money/resources
- Not feeling valued

- Personality clashes
- Politics
- Poor environment
- Pressure
- Repetitiveness
- Routines
- Stress/anxiety
- Takes up time/travel/shift work
- Undervalued/unequal
- Unsupportive
- Work versus home-life balance, personal family needs

Positives OF Being Employed

- Competitive
- Contributing to community and society and economy
- Escape from home (responsibilities/problems)
- Friendship
- Fun
- Independence
- Job satisfaction/achievements of work
- Legal protection
- Money facilitates lifestyle we aspire to
- More likely to have positive health
- Opportunities to learn
- Paid holidays
- Pension/secure future
- Making a difference

- Personal development
- Physical and mental stimulation
- Place of safety
- Position in society
- Progression/agenda for change
- Reach full potential
- Responsibility/ownership
- Routine/provides structure to the week
- Security
- Self-worth/positive self-image
- Sharing knowledge and skills
- Sociable/being with a group/building social skills
- Status