

# CHAPTER ONE

# What's the Problem?

*Identifying the Issue*

In This Chapter:

- Identifying the Issue
- Brainstorming
- The 4 Ws

# Why Identifying the Issue is Critical

### **“Make the world more open and connected”**

– that may be Facebook’s vision, but when Mark Zuckerberg came up with the idea of the social network, he really just wanted to know if the women in his freshman dorm were single or not. I wouldn’t call Mark a social entrepreneur, but he certainly was motivated to make his idea work.

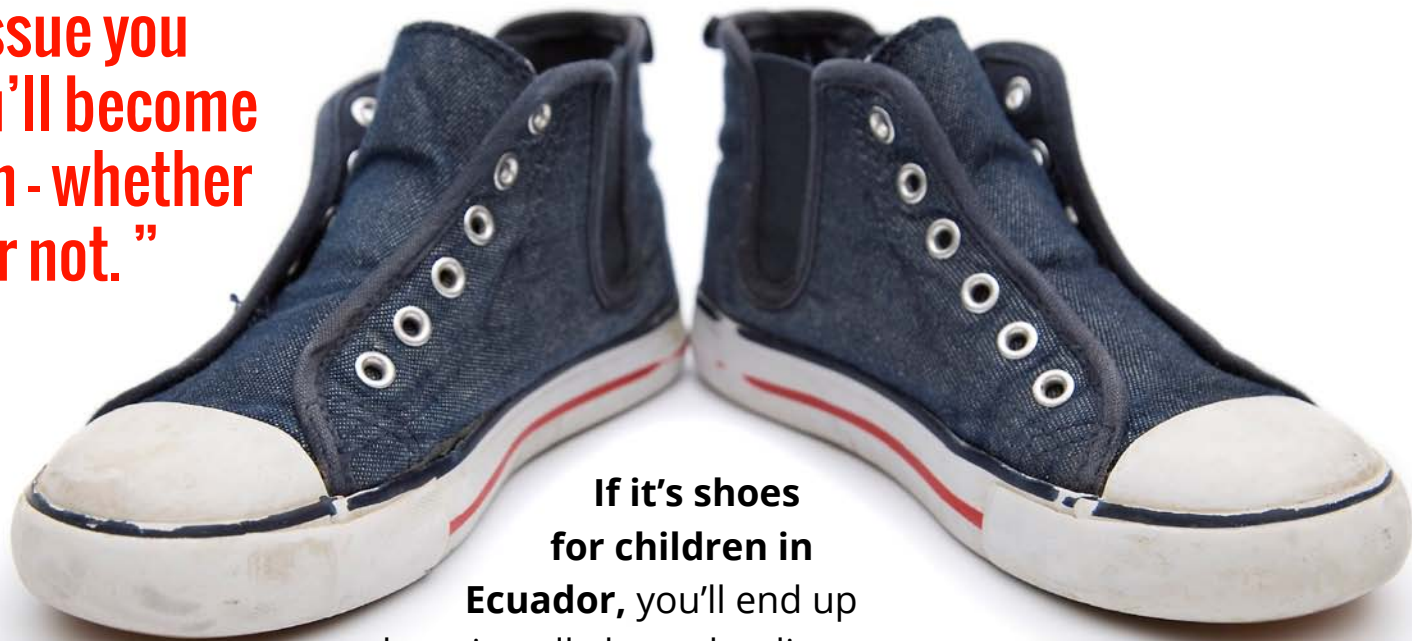
Picking the ‘issue’ that is going to be the focus of your organization is critical. The issue needs to be ‘real’ for you. It could be as simple as the frustration you feel when so much food in your house gets wasted while people near you are living on food stamps. It could be as far away from you as Ecuador, where you travelled to on vacation, and noticed street children who did not have shoes, while at home you have four pairs that you don’t wear any longer. Even though you’re back home, thousands of miles from Ecuador, the idea of being able to help these kids haunts you.

**Jeff Skoll**  
**Founder, Ebay**

“Not everyone can be Gandhi, but each of us has the power to make sure our own lives count – and it’s those millions of lives that will ultimately build a better world.”

[www.doonething.org/heroes/pages-s/skoll-quotes.htm](http://www.doonething.org/heroes/pages-s/skoll-quotes.htm)

**“Whatever issue you choose, you’ll become an expert on - whether you like it or not.”**



**If it's shoes for children in Ecuador, you'll end up**

learning all about the diseases one can pick up as a result of infected cuts on the feet. You'll research the political and social history of Ecuador, talk about the economics of shoe manufacturing at dinner and dream about shoes at night...

Have you ever noticed that dogs and their owners look and act in similar ways? You will be shaped by the issue you pick. When I started an organization that hosts travelling courses, it changed the way I travel – I viewed every new place as a potential site for hosting a course.

**So, pick the issue carefully – it will become your life!**

You may think, “Oh this is just going to be a 2-year gig...,” but it will suck you in. If I had to do it over, I'd start a social enterprise educating people on the health benefits of eating dark chocolate! You may be interested in the issue of 'bullying at school.' You'll find yourself learning a lot about teen suicide and the warning signs. Soon, you'll be attending conferences, networking and considering the feasibility of a call center operated by teens for teens... In other words, it's a “slippery slope” - once you start the ride, there's no going back.

## *Amani Institute*

**Amani Institute** was built on the premise that today's problems are cross-disciplinary and global leaders need intensive, focused education to solve such problems. At the same time, the traditional educational system is too expensive for many and still doesn't provide the skills needed for jobs in international development. **Amani Institute** ('Amani' meaning Peace) is a training center that aims to reframe the concept of socially-conscious education.

Their curriculum combines field-based learning with specific skills training, and encourages a personal journey for the student, enabling an understanding of one's passions and preparing the student for a career facing the world's most pressing issues.

The institute offers certificate programs in Social Innovation as well as other trainings that take place at the Institute's headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya and in Brazil. The institute believes that one should "Train intensely for your career of impact - the way a doctor or soldier or Olympic athlete would train."

> **Source:** [www.amaniinstitute.org/](http://www.amaniinstitute.org/)

**The Issue:**  
Traditional education is  
**too expensive for many**  
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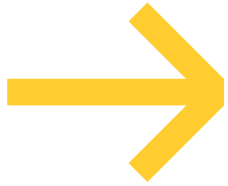


## Critical Questions

*Here Are 10 Questions To Go Through After Engaging In The 'Brainstorming' Process. (You'll Need Something To Write With As You Go Through This.)*

OK, let's get to it!

What's the issue you're going to focus on in building your social enterprise?



1. What's an issue area that you really care about a lot? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Why is the issue meaningful to you? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What's 'awesome' about the issue? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What's something relating to this issue that could be much better?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What's the smallest change you could make that could have the biggest impact?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Who would benefit? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Who might pay for the benefits/ or support the initiative? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Is it a big idea? What could make it bigger? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What are your unique strengths and how do they connect to this issue? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. How energized and excited are you about the ride ahead and becoming an expert in this area? \_\_\_\_\_

# YOUR TURN

## Brainstorming

### Did you know that your brain is divided into two hemispheres?

The left side of your brain is the side that thinks analytically - It prioritizes, helps decide what's most feasible, rational, and logical. The right side of your brain is the one that's in charge of creative thinking. Most of the work you do in school engages the left side of your brain. For this brainstorming process, I'm going to ask you to go into that creative, spontaneous, emotional, unconstrained right side of your head. Yes, see the switch below your ear...

...please turn that on!

### Who is 'BEST IN THE WORLD' at brainstorming?

I'd like to suggest that it's a design company called **IDEO**. They've designed everything from the first computer mouse to goggles that don't fog up.

In their offices in California, they have the following 'rules' up on their walls - it helps them think creatively. I suggest that you adopt the same guidelines for your brainstorming session:

1. There are no bad ideas
2. Don't judge ideas - just write them down
3. Go for quantity...30+ ideas as least!
4. Encourage wild ideas
5. One person speaks at one time (if in a group)
6. Have fun!

> For more, check out: [IDEO.org](http://IDEO.org)

## WHAT?

You'll need to capture and write down your ideas. Your goal is to come with a minimum of 30 ideas. The more the better. Do they all have to be great ideas? No. Do they have to be doable? No. (This is not the time to judge) So why go through this process?

## WHY?

You're doing this because you first want to consider the world of possibilities in order to make the best choice on which 'Problem' you're going to focus on. Sometimes, the idea that seemed 'wild and crazy' initially is the one that you'll decide to move forward with!

## WHERE?

Is there a place that inspires you where you feel you'd be able to think creatively? Some of my best ideas come in the shower, or the coffee shop near my house. You need to identify a place where you could brainstorm for up to 45 minutes without being interrupted.

## WHO?

Is there someone you'll be collaborating with for the social enterprise you'd like to start? If yes, invite him/her/them into the brainstorming.

## The 4Ws of Brainstorming

Jot down a few ideas as you go through the boxes on this page. Use additional paper to capture your thoughts.

*"Social Entrepreneurs make ideas as simple and understandable as possible so that thousands of local changemakers can step up to the plate and make it happen."*

*Bill Drayton,  
Founder of Ashoka*

*"Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life - think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success."*

*Swami Vivekananda*

## Additional Resources

The additional resources below, and at the end of each chapter, have been independently developed and may help you in the process of establishing your social enterprise.

- 1. A guided process: 9 steps on How do Define the Problem:** [www.wikihow.com/Define-a-Problem](http://www.wikihow.com/Define-a-Problem)
- 2. The Power of Defining the Problem (short HBR blog post with examples):** [http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2012/09/the\\_power\\_of\\_defining\\_the\\_prob.html](http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2012/09/the_power_of_defining_the_prob.html)
- 3. The UnLtd Toolkit: Project Concept & Design** <https://unltd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/stage-2.pdf>