

What do you know about the number and profile of mission-led businesses operating in the UK?

I know there are an increasing number of mission-led businesses operating in the UK, however, their profile and voice are somewhat limited. Also, there may be businesses that satisfy all the criteria for being described as 'mission-led' but who may not necessarily consider themselves to be so (perhaps, because they use a different vocabulary). Conversely, there may be businesses that shout very loudly about being mission-led, but under the surface are no different to all the other non-mission-led businesses.

I would say most of the mission-led businesses I am aware of are at the early stages, ie start-up or growing. There are not many mature mission-led businesses, but the numbers are slowly increasing. Another sign of growth is the increasing number of groups/networks related to social impact businesses that are appearing on LinkedIn.

Bristol, especially inner-city, has a high concentration of mission-led businesses. I am involved in an organisation called Babbasa (<http://babbasa.byep.org.uk/>), which aims to develop the professional aspirations of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, many of whom go on to create their own or get involved in mission-led business.

What do you know about the impact of being a mission-led business on business performance and social impact? Please share evidence.

If anything, I think being a mission-led business should improve business performance, foster innovation and increase employee engagement. There is an increasing amount of evidence which suggests that people, and in particular millennials, are more attracted to businesses that are values-based. However, there are still barriers to developing successful mission-led businesses. Some of these are financial (as with any other business) inasmuch as the banks and financial lenders are still using outdated criteria to assess the credibility/potential of a business that is mission-led. The banks, therefore, need to refresh and modernise their view of and approach to supporting mission-led businesses.

In your view, what are the ways that quantitative data on mission-led businesses could be better captured over time?

In order to better capture quantitative data, I think first there needs to be a seachange in conversation and vocabulary and a massive raising of awareness of what it means to be mission-led. As I've already mentioned, there are already businesses that are mission-led, but perhaps don't view themselves as such (because they've "always done business this way"), so data related to these and similar businesses gets overlooked and therefore not captured, thereby skewing what we think is the picture of the sector.

It is good to note that millennials believe that the success of a business should not be measured

by profit. This aligns with my view about value; ***the government should be supporting and enabling businesses to create more value than they extract***. Unfortunately, at the moment, many of the world's largest businesses do the exact opposite. This needs to change.

Though global consumers will pay more for products with social impact, there is still a significant percentage who are deterred by the 'premium' costs associated with some mission-led businesses and would rather buy the 'same product' for less from giants like Amazon. It would be good to see some attention paid to making mission-led products/services more affordable.

How do you see mission-led businesses developing over the next decade? Please share evidence.

I think there will be an increase in volume and maturity of mission-led businesses as consumer demands increase (eg when the millennials start to have more money to spend). I think Bristol is already a hub of mission-led businesses. I think the risk lies with existing, non-mission-led businesses who do not adapt.

Why would a business set-up as or become a mission-led business? Please share evidence.

Mission-led businesses are more attractive to employees. If a business has a binding set of values that aligns with external stakeholders, then it is bound to be more of an attractive proposition compared to a similar non-mission-led business. Also, mission-led businesses tend to gravitate towards other mission-led businesses (given the choice), so mutual collaborations involving businesses with similar values will lead to geometric (as opposed to arithmetic) levels of social impact.

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Do you think these steps could be better communicated to entrepreneurs and businesses? If so, how?

How about a government-managed register of accredited (and trusted) mission-led businesses, perhaps via the current Companies House database? This way, consumers can check if a business is mission-led before they decide to engage with them.

The loss of focus on social and environmental aims has been identified as a potential problem for mission-led businesses (“mission drift”). When do you think this is most likely to happen? What could be done to prevent this?

Mission drift may occur when businesses grow in size, or as executives are tackling other business-critical issues. Ensuring the mission-led ethos is a concrete and intrinsic part of the governance and operations of a business would help.

In your view, what are the barriers to a large corporate (including a public company) to becoming a mission-led business or owning a mission-led business within its group structure?

The corporations incorrectly thinking that social impact and generating a profit are mutually exclusive. Or that it will be too expensive to change mission-led.

Do you think mission-led businesses have or should have a different culture/values system to traditional (i.e. non mission-led) business? If yes, please provide best practice examples of this.

If mission-led businesses do not have a different culture/values system to traditional businesses, then they are doing something fundamentally wrong!

In terms of practical ways of ‘living out its values’ - transparency of operations and directors’ remuneration, openness, inclusivity, partners instead of employees - are some of the things that need to exist.

What challenges do mission-led businesses face when engaging with potential customers, employees and investors about their social impact?

There not being a common vocabulary of what social impact is and how it is measured leads to confusion, uncertainty and misunderstandings. At the moment all the stakeholders will have different interpretations of what mission-led and social impact mean.

What do you think is the role of certifications systems (e.g. B Corps) or of frameworks (e.g. Blueprint for Better Business) in helping mission-led businesses engage with

external stakeholders?

Lack of awareness of the certification systems.

General

There needs to be a much bigger and wider conversation about mission-led businesses.

Awareness needs to be raised amongst the traditional business community and consumers. It's great that the Cabinet Office is actively engaged!