ANCHORING PURPOSE

THE QUIET POWER OF STRATEGIC GOVERNANCE IN SOCIAL ENTERPRISES



IRA AGARWAL

Founder & CEO | Wharton Alumna | Board Director | Certified Independent Director & ESG Impact Leader (IICA, SoBE)

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Ira is an experienced board member and accomplished global business and technology leader with over 23 years in the IT industry. She is known for her visionary leadership, driving profitable growth, expertise in emerging tech, and building innovation centres, alongside her commitment to ESG and DEI initiatives. Currently, she holds the position of Chief Marketing Officer at an innovation-driven healthcare technology organisation and additionally serves as an Independent Director on a BSE SME listed company and as an advisory board member to ESG, technology, and investment ventures.

irasahay@hotmail.com

Social enterprises are gently yet powerfully reshaping the landscape of business by blending profit with purpose and reaching where traditional models often fall short. From education and healthcare to sustainability and livelihoods, these purpose-led ventures are addressing deeply entrenched social challenges with innovation and compassion. Yet, despite their noble missions, many struggle to sustain momentum—not due to a lack of passion or vision, but often because of fragile governance, diluted focus, and an over-dependence on angel investments, grants and donations.



Grants are undeniably important. In the formative years of a social enterprise, they provide a much-needed financial cushion—supporting pilots, enabling outreach, and demonstrating proof of concept. However, grants are also finite and frequently come with restrictions tied to donor-specific outcomes. For impact to be enduring, social enterprises must build a strong foundation that includes sustainable revenue models, data-driven strategy, responsible use of technology, and above all, intentional governance.

A common pitfall in the sector is losing focus, as social entrepreneurs often expand into multiple domains for grants or validation, diluting their core mission, straining resources, and risking fatigue and reputational harm.

In these moments, a strong Board can act as a guiding anchor to help founders stay aligned with the core mission and ask thoughtful, often difficult questions that protect the enterprise from fragmentation. Is this new direction consistent with our founding purpose? Do we have the capacity to deliver without compromising quality? Are we building meaningful depth before seeking breadth?

Crucially, the Board must also take an active interest in how grants and donations are used and whether they yield measurable, mission-aligned outcomes. Transparency in fund allocation is not just good governance—it is an ethical obligation. These conversations, when approached with empathy and clarity, reinforce trust, both internally and with external stakeholders.

Beyond safeguarding focus and financial integrity, the Board plays a critical role in strengthening long-term sustainability. It brings together foresight, fiduciary responsibility, and structure—creating the scaffolding for the enterprise to move from grant-dependency to revenue resilience. A well-composed Board can also unlock vital networks—be it investors, ecosystem collaborators, policy influencers, or academic partners—helping the enterprise amplify its reach and relevance.

Alongside the Board, a trusted circle of advisors can serve as hands-on mentors—offering domain expertise in technology, operations, finance, and scaling. Their ongoing support complements the Board's strategic oversight and enables quicker, grounded decisions in fast-changing environments.

It's a common misconception that governance is a requirement for scale. On the contrary, early-stage governance is often a signal of long-term intent and maturity. It moves the enterprise from being founder-led to system-led—building resilience that can outlast any individual and creating space for generational impact.

Ultimately, governance works when approached with sincerity and clarity. Board and advisory members should be chosen not for titles, but for alignment, commitment, and their ability to add strategic depth. Diversity—in backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives—enriches boardroom dialogue and drives more holistic decision-making.

In conclusion, the journey begins not with scale but with stewardship. Because when purpose is paired with thoughtful governance, the result is not just change—it's enduring transformation.