

Buy Social Summit Won't Be Prescribing Answers

June event creates space for buyers and suppliers to meet, dialogue, co-create solutions to accelerate social-impact purchasing

As the roomful of small tables will signal, delegates of the June 16-17 Buy Social Summit in Vancouver can expect to find ample opportunity for their voices to be heard as they share in deep discussion with others interested to explore similar issues. The event, which will launch a campaign to accelerate social-impact purchasing across Canada, largely bases the promise of that happening on people joining together to co-create solutions.

Making social-impact purchasing more of the “norm” in society could be considered a tremendous opportunity, rather than another burdensome consideration in an already hectic society.

Fraser Basin Council director of external relations and corporate development Bob Purdy puts it this way: “If you consider money as a form of concentrated energy, how do we harness it differently to do more good?”

Typically, for instance, one arm of government or business deals with purchasing while another might manage social services or run corporate social responsibility activities — in essence, “create the social change.”

But what if purchasing was also enabling social change?

There is ample opportunity to harness the power of purchasing decisions of organizations to help deal with some of our public priorities such as fostering inclusion, ensuring equal opportunity and helping disadvantaged groups.

Environmental purchasing, which has advanced quite considerably over the last

decade, provides a model for this.

Social-impact purchasing is still relatively in its infancy, so how do we better capitalize on this opportunity?

The Buy Social Summit offers one avenue as it convenes buyers and suppliers, presents the issues and then allows the various perspectives to evaluate through small-group discussions. There will be no prescribed answers from the “experts,” though some panel discussions will offer purchaser and supplier perspectives “from the front.”

[The referenced media source is missing and needs to be re-embedded.](#)

A central dilemma in the advancement of social-impact purchasing is the lack of understanding around what’s holding it back.

“Unless we get the suppliers and the purchasers to talk together, how will we break down the perceived difficulties and start discussing opportunities?” says David LePage, principal of Accelerating Social Impact CCC, a co-organizer of the event.

The ultimate hope and anticipation is that these in-room dialogues will be the start of new relationships that contribute to accelerating social-impact purchasing.

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