

Best Practice Submission: “Famous Problem Solvers” Classroom Exercise

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This exercise challenges students to address a social need by creating a sustainable new business venture.

Students practice the following skills during the exercise: problem solving, critical thinking, creativity and innovation, collaboration, and verbal communication.

Tell students to write down the names of three famous people (still living) on separate slips of paper. Do your best to think of widely known famous people so everyone in the classroom will know who they are.

Ask students to line up according to their birthdays (Jan 1 – Dec 31).

Combine all of the famous names and have each student randomly draw one.

Go down the line and create pairs of famous people who will work together.

Each student will assume the identity of the famous person that he/she picked. Assume that these two famous people have agreed to partner together to start a social venture.

Give students approximately 15 minutes to think through the following questions and come up with a social venture that makes sense for both famous people.

1. What causes or social issues do each of them stand for?
2. What contributions have they made to society at large?
3. What natural talents, skillsets, or strengths would help them become successful social entrepreneurs?
4. What other resources or personal connections could they use to start a social venture?
5. What is the approximate net worth of each famous person?
6. Ultimately, what jointly-founded business makes sense for these two individuals, and why?

Each pair will deliver a **one-minute elevator pitch** in front of the class that addresses the following:

- A. **FOUNDERS:** Who are you, and why are you launching a new business together?
- B. **PROBLEM:** What social issue are you trying to solve, and why is it important?
- C. **SOLUTION:** How does your innovative product/service create value for customers while also meeting the social need?
- D. **IMPACT MEASURES:** What specific data points will you track, and what are your long-term social impact goals?

Provide the following resources as high-level guides for the exercise:

- [Social Business Model Canvas](#)
- [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#)