

Chapter 46

Social Market: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Information technology and communication can expedite the assessment process of Portugal's current economic situation, and subsequently of families diagnosed as poor, in order to optimize the redistribution of non-perishable goods in the context of a social market. By centralizing asset management in various institutions of social solidarity we can improve the efficiency of the allocations of goods. This article aims to present the importance of a technological platform to support the social market. This project was developed under an information modelling organizational analysis based on the current situation, as well as the assumptions of the operations needs of the future information system, which are involved in designing various institutions of social solidarity in the District of Setúbal. The added value of information system in the context of the social market relate to centralized management of information thereby allowing the reuse of non-perishable goods.

INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in organizations can leverage underlying business activities, as well as improve the development of differentiating strategies in order to create organizational knowledge. According to

Reis (2001), the underlying strategies for ICT, particularly with regard to managing the release of information should be to define how resources and ICT will be able to create value. In this case the project is based on using development strategies to promote the reuse of perishable goods to promote poverty reduction and combat social exclusion.

The social and economic changes of recent years, together with the international economic

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crisis, have redefined the role of the state in providing social goods. Simultaneously, globalization and corporate changes have accelerated the international crisis by increasing the risk of social exclusion and poverty, forcing civil societies to address their needs and problems and to minimize social risks through the use of new solutions that involve the commitment of various local social actors. In this context, models of social entrepreneurship repeatedly emerge as the means for promoting solutions based on a set of actions aimed at solving the population's problems.

This project aims at solving an underlying organizational problem in the design of information systems (IS) regarding the modelling of the information and focuses on the optimization of asset management within the Social Market. The goal of this paper is to present a summary of the problems underlying the design of Social Market SIs, which represent a privileged instrument in the fight against poverty. It also takes into account the concerns and strategies of the Agenda of the European Commission in regard to Social Networks and Social Exclusion.

The case study, together with the modelling of information, enables us to reflect on the connections between the various stakeholders in Social Market SIs in regard to the multidimensionality of the phenomenon of social exclusion in order to respond to the needs of the different players involved in seeking solutions. As reported (Touraine, 1989:287), the marginal or excluded who express the collective conscience in resisting the inequality and segregation of which they are victims, perceive the gap between themselves and the world's other citizens, making them potential representatives of a historical movement. However, this movement can develop only by means of a relationship with other organizational forces with the potential for historic change (Scherer-Warren, 2003).

In this context, the creation of a Social Market in Setúbal, which involves several entities acting in the local district in the area of poverty and social exclusion, emerges as an innovative solution to

social problems in times of crisis. Social markets are characterized by the way they involve different types of organizations that cooperate in the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services, based on democratic and ecological criteria and on solidarity. These organizations include the private sector in the form of Private Institutions for Social Solidarity (IPSS) operating in the district, as well as the Setúbal City Council and the Polytechnic Institute of Setúbal, thereby forming a cooperative network.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

There is a shared consensus today that social entrepreneurship constitutes an emerging field in entrepreneurship studies (Swedberg, 2000; Dees, 1998; Fowler, 2000).

Social entrepreneurship is a concept applied to a number of organizations that have created models for efficiently meeting human needs where existing markets have failed (Seelos and Mair, 2005). The approach is based on the adoption of innovative practices (social innovation) that take advantage of market opportunities for solving local problems and meeting local needs in a way that delivers sustainable advantages (Carvalho 2003). Social Entrepreneurship has been developed in several different contexts. However, most studies refer to the public domain (Lewis, 1980; King and Roberts, 1987). Similarly, some authors have studied the development of community models, which support poor and socially vulnerable groups (Cornwall, 1998).

According to Dees (1998), Social Entrepreneurship refers to new non-profit ventures and may also include business ventures for social purposes, such as banks, community development organizations and hybrid organizations. In the view of Mair and Marti (2006), social entrepreneurship is a process that catalyzes social change and/or addresses important social needs in a way that is not dominated by obtaining direct

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