

NO MORE THROW-AWAY PEOPLE

The Co-Production Imperative

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Summary by Juliet Adams, Lyttelton TimeBank member (2011)

PART ONE DISCOVERING CO-PRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: THE ROAD TO CO-PRODUCTION – TIME DOLLARS

In March 1980, Cahn suffered a major heart attack, and hated the thought of giving up his fights for equal justice, and the war on poverty, to become useless, a throw-away person. Knowing there was no more government money available for social programmes to help needy people, he thought: “Why can’t we create a new kind of money to put people and problems together?” Why not bank time spent helping others? – like a blood bank. Help somebody. Earn a Time Dollar. Bank it. One hour = One Time Dollar. Use the banked Time Dollars to “purchase” help from another member. This would need a computerised system to keep track, and a co-ordinator.

Amongst negative reactions to his idea, it was taken up at the London School of Economics, and then by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which specialised in health care. Between 1987 and 1990 the Foundation invested \$1.2 million in 6 test sites trying to reduce the need for nursing home care of the aged. In 1992 The U.S. Administration on Aging formally endorsed Time Dollars. The ideas spread, and by 2000 there were 70 communities in Great Britain, Japan, and the United States, and a website: www.timebanks.org

TIME DOLLARS IN A NUTSHELL

1. Members list the services they can offer and those that they need
2. All agree to both give and to receive services
3. Everyone is interviewed and provides references
4. Every hour giving help earns the giver one credit, a Time Dollar
5. Members ‘buy’ the services they need with their credits
6. The computer matches the task, the giver and the receiver
7. Every transaction is recorded on a computer ‘time bank’
8. Members receive a regular ‘bank’ statement
9. One hour is one credit regardless of the skills one offers
10. Members can donate credits to friends or to the ‘credit pool’

11. Everyone is seen as special with a contribution to make
12. All activities maintain set standards

CHAPTER 2: TIME DOLLARS MEET CO-PRODUCTION

Time Dollar programs cost money to run, and at first the sheer novelty generated seed money. But that began to run out, especially as most programmes focused on the elderly. By 1996 it was realised that the difficulty was in getting and sustaining participation from the very people being helped. The missing factor was ‘labour from the consumer’. The term Co-Production signified some kind of parity in the creation of value.

Stories of Time Dollar success showed four core values:

1. Assets. The real wealth of this society is its people. Every human being can be a builder and contributor.
2. Redefining Work. Work must be redefined to include whatever it takes to rear healthy children, preserve families, make neighbourhoods safe and vibrant, care for the frail and vulnerable, redress injustice, and make democracy work.
3. Reciprocity. The impulse to give back is universal. Wherever possible, we must replace one-way acts of largesse in whatever form with two-way transactions. “You need me” becomes “We need each other.”
4. Social Capital. Humans require a social infrastructure as essential as roads, bridges, and utility lines. Social networks require on-going investments of social capital generated by trust, reciprocity, and civic engagement.

The predictable dangers are: Professional monopolization, professional exploitation, and professional domination.

The essential element is a social justice perspective.

CHAPTER 3 CO-PRODUCTION: AN OVERVIEW

Co-Production is a construct: a framework designed to realise four core values (see Ch 2) – the ultimate beneficiary makes a contribution that is valued. This bridges the market and non-market systems.

Co-Production is a process: it establishes a parity between the worlds of the market and money, and community and family.

Co- Production is a set of standards, or goals, the four core values, with universal appeal.

Co-Production operates at two levels: individual and societal, aiding social justice.

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