



# CHARITY VIEWS

Vol. 30

## THE COMMON THREAD:

From well-established organizations to new upstarts and impactful individuals, these are the commonalities amongst philanthropy's great success stories.

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OF SUCCESS

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TAKEAWAY



Over the last few months, Charity Views has taken readers on an origin-story journey. We've examined the rise to success of some of the longest-tenured organizations, the most exciting upstarts and most influential individuals.

From a vision that began in the late 1800s to the recognition of a new-aged need, and much in between, these inspired examples of success have come to fruition in remarkably different ways. And yet, a closer look reveals that there are explicit common threads tying each of these stories together.

With that, let's revisit the histories of the United Way, Boys and Girls Club of America, Girls Who Code, The Lonely Whale, Bill Gates and Jeff Bezos. We ask, "How did they do it?" and follow their unique paths as their accomplishments unfold. Read their fascinating stories in this edition of Charity Views.

As always, thank you for your readership and support.

**-THE IAA TEAM**



# UNITED WE (CHANGE)

One of the most striking keys we've seen to maintaining success in philanthropy is to be willing and able to change. This, most notably, is proven in the examples of the United Way, The Lonely Whale and the life of Bill Gates. The idea of everyday people introducing ideas to create a positive impact is not only brave – it has changed our world for the better.

*The United Way began* in 1887 when three individuals in a town in Colorado felt they could make a greater impact on the community by pooling philanthropic resources together. The organization spent the next century constantly adapting how that mission manifested itself – from declaring war on poverty to reshaping corporate giving by partnering with the NFL – and much more.







# The Whale → and the World Traveler

This propensity for evolution can be seen both in the Seattle-based Lonely Whale organization and in the story of Bill Gates. In the case of the Lonely Whale, they began as a fundraising effort for scientists in search of a rare whale. When their founders realized the consistently emotive way people responded to issues pertaining to the ocean, they knew there was more they could do in the space. With that revelation, they channeled their focus on cleaning up pollution at sea. Since then, their impact on the Northern Pacific and beyond has been extraordinary.

Bill Gates' original overarching objective for his foundation was to bring computers into the libraries of underserved communities. This was a worthy cause, but upon a trip to South Africa he found there were those with needs that far outreached the benefits of accessible computers. Despite already pouring a huge amount of resources, money and time into his original effort, his willingness to pivot and expand his thinking were major factors in the Gates Foundation ultimately becoming one of the most impactful charities in world history.





# WHO DO YOU **THINK** YOU ARE ???

As you've seen, the six organizations we have evaluated over the last three Charity Views have forged drastically different paths from origination to impact-maker. And while we've noted that one commonality to their success has been an ability to adapt and evolve, just as important for each, has been the ability to stay true to their respective identities.

Not only has this proven pivotal to the very initial stages of getting off the ground, it's also the main reason these companies were able to adapt and survive with the constantly evolving landscape of the industry through time. Let's take a closer look at the similarities amongst Boys and Girls Club of America, Girls Who Code and Jeff Bezos.





# THE MOGUL, THE POLITICIAN AND THE CLUB

Let's start with Bezos, who became a famous philanthropist by being named [\*America's largest donor in 2018\*](#). Until then, his giving history had been substantial, but largely pedestrian given his wealth. His turning point was rooted in the identity that had led him to becoming the wealthiest man—centered in the world of the internet. It began when [\*he took to Twitter\*](#) to crowdsource ideas for a philanthropy with short-term instead of long-term results. The overwhelming response would become a historic [\*donation\*](#).

Reshma Saujani couldn't have begun her organization, Girls Who Code, without living by its founding principle: to close the gender gap in tech. Nor would Boys and Girls Club of America be what it is today without an unwavering commitment to its identity in its crucial early stages.

In Saujani's case, it was bravery. She was brave enough to continue to find ways to make a difference after a failed congressional campaign. Now instilling bravery in girls is a cornerstone of her organization. Boys and Girls Club of

America went through a multiplicity of changes in the initial decades of its existence—name changes, moving from boys only to co-ed, and adding hundreds of member clubs nationwide to name a few. The organization remained strong and continued to grow through it all because it stayed true to its purpose: providing a community for underprivileged children.

# THE takeaway



Let's review the histories of these inspiring individuals and how their philanthropic journeys can shape the future!



## SUCCESS LIVES IN EVERYONE

While their ideas were all markedly different, the United Way, Boys and Girls Club of America, Girls Who Code, The Lonely Whale, Bill Gates and Jeff Bezos share the same focus: to create a lasting impact.

## BE OPEN TO CHANGE



The ability to find new ways after failure not only reveals the true flexibility and value of the idea, it reenergizes the importance of the mission.



## BELIEF BECOMES BRAVERY

People like Reshma Saujani, Bill Gates and Jeff Bezos believed they could make a difference. Stepping into new territory was – and is – uncertain, but their passions outweighed their doubts. They persevered and made the world better.



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