

### Give Smart: Philanthropy that gets results

Thomas J Tierney and Joel L Fleishman  
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Michael  
Alberg-Seberich

Tierney, co-founder and chairman of the Bridgespan Group, and Joel L Fleishman, professor of law and public policy at Duke University, have written with *Give Smart* a very readable, motivating introductory guide to engaged giving. 'Engaged' encompasses here donors giving more than just their treasures. They also give their time, talent and trust (to their grantees).

The authors have organized their guidebook to the world of giving around the following six questions: 'What are my values and beliefs? What is "success" and how can it be achieved? What am I accountable for? What will it take to get the job done? How do I work with grantees? Am I getting better?' It is worthwhile quoting these questions because (a) you will see them in the future on the charts of many advisers and (b) they underline some of the strengths and weaknesses of this book. I want to point out three of these:

- ▶ Tierney and Fleishman present a very convincing case for the observation that all giving is personal. They show how much the success of a philanthropic engagement is connected to the personal interest of a donor, a family or a group of donors. A real strength of the book is that this 'soft' aspect of giving is turned into a 'hard' fact.
- ▶ Like Melissa Berman in her review of this book in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, I was disappointed with the 'accountability' chapter.

Michael Alberg-Seberich is executive partner at Active Philanthropy. Email [alberg-seberich@activephilanthropy.org](mailto:alberg-seberich@activephilanthropy.org)

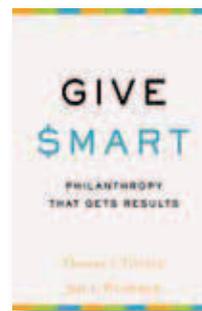
This is another American book on giving, and I think it is a very good one! Thomas

In the third sector there is much talk about the need for transparency, and the authors could have made the case for a lot more transparency on the part of donors. Accountability towards oneself is not enough these days. Giving, and especially engaged giving, is a personal and a public act.

- ▶ A real asset of this book is the introduction to the importance of the donor-grantee relationship. The authors help donors to explore the grantee side of giving. They show, with the help of many examples, how donors sometimes misuse or misunderstand their (financial) power. They also show what it takes to develop a trusting, productive partnership.

The book tells many giving stories. These stories are woven like a net throughout the whole book. From a global perspective it would have been helpful if some of these stories had been about donors outside the US. We talk about partnering all the time in the field of philanthropy, and maintain that philanthropy needs to cross borders and solve problems, but we still do not do this enough in practice. Maybe this is the reason why this perspective is left out in such an important book?

The stories in this book are the stories of wealthy donors. From our own work at Active Philanthropy we know how important these donor stories are to motivate other peers to start their giving journey. But the authors present a very specific giving world through their selection of case studies. It is one in which donors take on, for example, a whole education



system or the global fisheries question. In the European discourse critics may point towards this narrow view of giving. In the end, engaged giving is a principle that every donor can apply. Just think about the power of advocacy.

The latter may also be the reason why Lucy Bernholz of *Philanthropy 2173* noted in her blog that *Give Smart* does not elaborate on the power of the internet in giving. The reason for this may be that the donors to whom Tierney and Fleishman address this book see the internet only as one of many levers. The stories do not present in detail theories of change behind the work of a donor. They create the curiosity to look in more detail into these approaches.

Overall, *Give Smart* – in combination with the Bridgespan Group's [www.givesmart.org](http://www.givesmart.org) website, which was launched at the beginning of April – is a good introductory book to engaged giving. With its storytelling approach this will be a book that many donors will read. It would be great if in future it could be opened up to a more global and even wider readership.

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