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## THE STORYTELLING STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS (SUMMARY)

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 SUMMARY **THE STORYTELLING STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS**

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**Principal Topic**

Our goal in this study is to explore the role of storytelling, as a specific form of communication, on the acceptance of social ventures by key stakeholders and, in so doing, help advance our understanding of the legitimating strategies available to social enterprises. Extant literature suggests that storytelling (the stories that entrepreneurs tell about themselves or their ventures) is an effective communication strategy for entrepreneurs seeking legitimacy and attempting to influence the evaluative judgments of key stakeholders. We explore the extent to which the use of stories, and the use of specific story types, helps social ventures gain the acceptance and support of key stakeholders.

**Method**

We used a mixed-methodology design combining qualitative and quantitative analysis. We analyzed the written applications of 82 Latin American social ventures considered for the CEMEX-TEC Social Entrepreneurship Award (a prestigious Latin American-wide award sponsored by CEMEX) in the 2014 and 2015 editions. Social entrepreneurs described their ventures in a semi open-ended format, which allowed us to codify the data in terms of both the extent to which the information conveyed was embedded in a narrative form as well as in terms of the main story lines and their underlying categories of meaning. Because each application was assessed by three qualified judges, we had quantitative data for evaluations on a number of dimensions, which gave us the possibility of examining the relationship between narrative strategies and evaluative judgments.

**Results and Implications**

We found that social entrepreneurs use stories very differently. While some convey the informational content of their communications to a high degree in a narrative form, others do not do so at all. Furthermore, we found that those who use storytelling as a communication strategy have a limited arsenal of available stories at their disposal. We identified four main themes corresponding to four main categories of meaning for the story plots. By providing both a qualitative analysis with rich descriptive insights on the narrative strategies of social entrepreneurs and a quantitative analysis linking these strategies to the evaluative judgments of institutionally relevant stakeholders, we help explain how storytelling may help the legitimating efforts of social ventures.

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