



Kerrin: Hello, and welcome to the Untapped Philanthropy podcast. I'm your host and Fluxx co-founder, Kerrin Mitchell. I've spent my career exploring technology's role and amplifying impact within our social sector, and more specifically, helping funders to learn to leverage technology and data to connect and better serve our collective causes, constituents, and communities.

In this podcast series, my team and I will profile social sector leaders, public figures, philanthropists, and industry futurists to explore this fascinating intersection of funding, technology, and policy. We're here to analyze the most critical and formative topics and trends that shape philanthropy both today and tomorrow. We hope this series leaves you inspired to think and act through a more collective and visionary lens.

This week, I'm thrilled to welcome founder and CEO of B1G1, business for good. Masami Sato. Masami is a two-time TEDx speaker, Amazon best-selling author, winner of the Sustainable Business Award and the founder of the global giving movement. Be one G one. Hi there, Masami.

Masami: It's great to be here. Thank you for having me today.

Kerrin: For those of you who are unfamiliar with B1G1, this organization is incredible. It's based in Singapore and collaborates with businesses worldwide under the buy one give one model. Masami, please tell us a little bit about that, about yourself, the business model, all in your own words, we'd love to learn more.

Masami: Yes, you mentioned buy one give one. So, it started in 2007, with an idea of imagining a world where everything we do makes a difference. So, you know, just imagine, if every time you have a cup of coffee, a child in need receives access to life saving water, or every time you read an inspiring book, then a tree gets planted, every time you go to see a doctor or chiropractor, or then somebody else receives access to health care.

So, we connect purpose driven businesses that want to make a difference with meaningful giving activities around the world. So that every time something happens in our day to day lives, then something great can also happen in the world. That's the idea. We began in 2007 and since then we've worked with thousands of businesses, and those businesses have so far given over 240 million to date. And I'm the founder.

Kerrin: I love it. Well, I love the female founder story too. We can get we can talk more about that at another time. But I also would love to hear a bit about what originally made you so interested in social good and sustainability?

Masami: Okay, well, I'm kind of a simple person. So, when I was starting out as a younger person, I was very curious and I had the opportunity to travel around the world and, you know, live and meet with so many different people from different backgrounds. And during that time, I was learning English and learning to really connect, I started to ask these questions about why these things are happening in the world.

So, what I actually saw was that there were a lot of people around me, like my parents who are working so hard to try to have a better life. But out of all the effort and struggle was making quite a lot of people feel unsatisfied or overstressed or not being really fulfilled and happy. But at the same time, I also saw that there were lots of issues in the world everywhere, like environmental



distractions, or poverty or so when I was backpacking in some of the so-called developing countries. I couldn't really understand why it was okay that even young kids, you know, couldn't stay in a safe place or go to school and complete their basic education, and they didn't have opportunities to really thrive in their lives.

At that time, being that simple person, I felt, you know, consumerism and the businesses were causing these issues. So, for me to do something was to say, okay, I will stop buying stuff. So I, at one point in time, I went to the countryside of Japan and lived with farmers for a couple of years of trying to create a self-sufficient life. And then in the end of those two years I realized that actually, I was not right, you know, to just judge things happening, because I also realized that every person I connected with along the way, in my journey, were actually deeply caring.

So that was, then I started to think about what can be actually done. And I continued to travel work in different countries and eventually became a mom. And finally, at that point of time, when I became a mom for the first time, and that was 20 years ago, I looked at my daughter, in my own arms, and deeply thought about what I could do in my life, because I was willing to do everything for my own daughter. But then I realized that, at the same time, there are lots of other kids if we didn't have that same kind of opportunity that my daughter had.

So, I decided to start a business. And I started a food company at that time and wanted to grow the business and give back. But then realizing over the years running my own business, that even if businesses wanted to make a difference and do something, so programs to give back, it was all very difficult, because you know, business owners are always so busy. So, one day, this very simple idea came to me. And I imagined, what if it was not so difficult, but if we all just did something we could do every day, instead of trying to do something big in the future. So that by one give one idea of giving something every time something happens in the business, happened in my own company, that every meal we were selling, we decided to give a small portion of proceeds to help feed a child in India at that time.

And so that really transformed my own thinking about the business and what we could do. And then eventually, it led to the founding of B1G1 as a global giving initiative.

Kerrin: I think what's so incredible about the B1G1 idea the integrated approach is of how you look at it from the perspective of not just philanthropy, but just looking after the ecosystem and understanding that people are coming into different places to consume and engage and how to really tie interesting outcomes to that.

So, I think that integrated concept is something that's very aspirational. I'm speaking to you today about these business models, because even at Fluxx, we have that similar commitment, along with many other corporations in Silicon Valley. We're members of Pledge 1%, which is a community of like-minded organizations who have all committed to give 1% of their product, time, or equity away as they grow and work.

And I think that the reality is, it's essential to the businesses, not just to your point of doing right by the communities they serve. But it also brings us tremendous sense of where we sit in that interlinked world, and I think is a really nice for us at Fluxx to say walk the walk and be committed to philanthropy. We do it on every level, and it permeates who we are, and it defines our value set, as well as our actions. Like your work.



And I know that there's probably a lot of people listening right now, and a lot of guests we've had, that talk about how to innovate from traditional philanthropic models of foundations and nonprofits, and then take different stances. And I think that level of creativity that people are coming up with for these different approaches is really powerful.

Talk to me a little bit about why you believe that taking a business approach to philanthropy can often be a more sustainable model, especially in countries like Japan and Singapore that you're particularly familiar with.

Masami: Yeah, it's quite interesting, because I think in my own culture, charity, and charitable giving wasn't very deeply ingrained in how we run our societies. So, for example, in my own community, where I came from, let's say if there were people who had troubles and issues, then usually the neighbors and the people in the community, or relatives, will all come together to support that person.

And the business concept in Japan has this giving spirit ingrained as well. In Japan the business is there to really take care of people and the community and neighborhood. So, I feel that like, if the world is perfectly running, then our everyday acts, and our everyday business activities should be creating more sustainability where everybody benefits and the people who have challenges are supported.

Then we need to worry less about traditional philanthropy and charitable giving, because all the problems will be naturally solved by business activities or people supporting each other. So that's why I feel like the concept of business and embedded philanthropy work together naturally.

Over the years businesses have become very profit centric. When businesses only focus on maximizing their profit, they create massive issues. So that's why philanthropy is currently required, because there are lots of issues that nobody's interested in fixing, because there's no money in it. We feel that there is now that opportunity to bring, you know, all these connections back into the same ecosystem. So, businesses and charities don't need to operate separately and try to appeal to people in different ways. But we could all unite and it by connecting these dots, then we can create a much stronger ecosystem, where we can, you know, build on the abundance we get to share together. So that's why I believe that the business always needs to be part of this.

Kerrin: Right. And I think that's a compelling point. Because when we talk about the mobilization for philanthropy, a lot of times people make the mistake of just thinking about foundations and high net worth donors. And the truth is, it's almost a trifecta of donors, private wealth, the public, government entities and businesses. It's an opportunity for collective thinking that needs to be able to consider all three of those things together.

And I think to your point, there's a willingness and an interest that comes from being able to align to business goals and structures that I think people are looking for that integration. So, I think it's absolutely brilliant, how you're starting to think about that. And it's something that I think we all need to be kind of aspiring to keep in mind as we build our own strategies. So, when we talk about this idea of where this could go, and the idea of philanthropy and charitable giving, evolving into this more business approach and the sustainable business model – what are some of the biggest gaps that you see that we would need to address to really mobilize this?



Masami: We always think about three things – impact, habit, and connection.

So first of all, impact. Many philanthropic activities can be identified as impactful and have opportunity to really mobilize people in a way that shares a sense of mission and purpose. So that is the importance of impact.

And at the same time, it's not about doing just one big thing once, but rather integrate sustainable practices. We need to tackle those things long term. So, we believe that unless we change our habits, and create a habit of actually making a difference, then it's very difficult to really transform big, complex issues. So that's the habit part.

And then the third part is the connection. And when large number of people or businesses come together, or our everyday small action can come together to make a difference, then even though one person's effort may not change the world, but together, we really can transform things. So that sense of connection and linking and creating these connections across all sorts of individuals and businesses and sectors and day to day activities. There is a power in there. So that's why we believe that the impact of habit and connection, the things that we could do more of or create more of in the philanthropic and the business space.

Kerrin: And I think what's interesting about this concept that you speak of is the power of small and many opportunities that exist in the regard. So, this kind of idea of power of small these small changes we can make in our lives to live more sustainably or give more freely. I think people be really intrigued to understand what are some examples of those ways that we can give. What are ways that you think people could step into that space?

Masami: I feel that that our everyday action is like votes we cast to form the world. So, we might think, I cannot do everything to change the world, because everybody else is throwing rubbish or using unsustainable energy or so we could make excuses. But at the same time, actually, if we realize that every single action that we are taking are all actually impacting the way that world is formed. So, if we become aware of those in a power of those small things, then we can take those actions in a more mindful way. So, if you are part of like organization, whether it is a charity or business, then you also have the power by contributing your thoughts and ideas in making certain decisions or choosing certain ideas or models. So, I really believe that every person really can participate in this.

Kerrin: That's wonderful. And I mean, I think we talked about the changes we'd like to see in philanthropy, and were all those small changes amount to something kind of larger, but what are you seeing? Or what would you like to see change? Or where do you think important trending topics are moving forward?

Masami: Well, I guess, like the world is already realizing, or even larger companies are realizing that power of small matters. And, you know, they all kind of rallied around how to do this and how to maximize profit and in developing the business, but at the same time, today, more companies actually see the true importance of organization culture, it's actually almost as important or even more important as the maximization of short-term profit. Having the right people in the workplace, and those people sharing that clear sense of purpose keeps people engaged.



But we do need to drive this change faster. Because as you can see, you know, in the speed of environmental changes, and we probably need to think about how we can come together to achieve this faster, rather than trying to do it individually.

Kerrin: Right. I'm very curious about this, are you seeing an uptick in different geographies? I've always been really fascinated by places where philanthropy is still emerging. You have places where traditional philanthropy is more established: the US, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, etc. And then there's this interesting up and coming space where philanthropy is being defined in India, Japan, China – places of that nature to where there's less structure.

Are you seeing that culturally, there's different levels of people embracing this concept or how has this gone from an adoption perspective, if we look at it, you know, geographically?

Masami: I do see the cultural difference in geographic differences in the development of business models and NGO philanthropic models, but what I also see is the emergence of social enterprise model and social enterprise doesn't necessarily mean the organizational structure, how it is registered for example, because any business can become charitable too.

So, what I see is that these two separate worlds of the philanthropic world and the business world are starting to blend and merge. I think this like blend of the business model with philanthropic model is merging very differently.

For example, in agriculture, there are lots of social enterprises starting up to solve some of the environmental issues whilst producing food in a more sustainable way, and then making that as a business to make its own activities and benefiting the everyday lives of people. So, I feel that that working towards this middle ground is very important for all entities today, that businesses without a sense of mission and purpose, and some form of social contribution and caring, cannot thrive in the new world.

Because, you know, with all the information around us people know, like, the company that's not authentic, that that's creating harm, like people know that today, right. And, at the same time, charities also need to think more like business, and then go toward more of social enterprise mindset. So, it is very interesting space to watch. And it's really changing fast as well.

Kerrin: I mean, there's so many interesting movements. India was obviously the one of the first countries to enshrine this idea of corporate giving. And I think that back in 2014, or something, they mandated that orgs have to give away 2% of their net profit to charity, if they have revenues over, you know, \$10 billion.

So, I just thought that was so interesting how India set a level of corporate social responsibility, and just from the fringes to the boardroom, you know, it was just a very compelling story. So, I'm curious to how people follow suit. And I think that your point about where it needs to be is not necessarily doesn't need to be at the government level mandate. But the power of small is something we can all be thinking about. So, I think there are ways that we can look at those systems from a couple different viewpoints: from government, to business, and obviously to the individuals themselves as they run their own companies and look at how they integrate that philanthropic approach to their business. So, all of that said, What do you think, is the main value of philanthropy?



Masami: So, I think that comes down to a very simple question about our life. Because all of us here, and all of you who are listening to this, we are all human beings, and we are living this life. And then the shared reality that we all have is that we were born at one point of time, and then one day, we will leave here, and we don't know what's going to happen after that. So, what we are doing is to really try to maximize our life that we have in the time we have on this planet.

So, I feel that that, on the day, by day, people get too busy and worried about what they can get. But the real meaning of life is quite often about what we can give and share. And so, I think in the more like a commercial world that it is today, and we have a more convenience than ever before. And we have a more abundance than before. And, you know, we can access all sorts of things that we never had before. So, it's an amazing time. But at the same time, one thing that that is easily neglected in this time is the real sense of meaning and purpose or of your sense of connection or the view of interaction, and desire to give, and desire to help, and finding the joy in helping and giving. So, I think philanthropic activity is actually a great way to bring that back to us because when we are giving, we are not thinking about what's in it for me.

Kerrin: Thank you, Masami so much. I think we'll end this podcast on a rapid-fire note, I'm going to run you through a series of short, quick questions, and I encourage you to respond with the very first thing that comes to your mind. Okay, all right. So, if you could snap your fingers and instantly fix one of the world's pervasive problems, which one would it be and why?

Masami: Oh, people feeling not the good enough.

Kerrin: If you could go to dinner with anyone in philanthropy, living or historical who would be your dinner partner?

Masami: Oh, I don't know. It could be a bit challenging dinner to have, but I would choose Gandhi.

Kerrin: All right, what's a vacation or activity that you are most looking forward to doing this here?

Masami: Oh as soon as the borders are open, I would love to go back to Japan.

Kerrin: Wonderful. Masami thank you so much for joining us today and sharing more about yourself and your work!