

***The Accidental Social Entrepreneur* by Grant Smith**

Reviewed by Richard Frost

The start of a New Year is often a time when we might reflect on our career and how we use our time and skills. We may ask challenging questions: 'Do I still want to be doing the same thing next Christmas?' 'What do you want me to do, God?'

I've always been interested in the jobs people do. Well, when I say 'always', I don't mean when I was in nappies or a grumpy teenager – although at one point I did want to be a coach driver when I grew up (the irony being I didn't learn to drive until I was 38...).

But, not unsurprisingly, God had other plans and after working in a bank for a year (which for someone who was ungraded at A-level maths was not a good career choice), I started working for organisation which dealt in assessing property values – I was much better with a tape measure. But then I was redeployed due to cutbacks and found myself working alongside occupational psychologists offering career guidance for adults. From there began a 40 year career helping people to find or remain in work – specialising with those who experience disability or other health problems. I loved it. I had found my vocation.

Given that many people spend a large part of their life in work, be that paid or unpaid, it's surprisingly (and disappointingly) rare to find a decent book which offers Christian perspectives about the subject. [*Thank God, it's Monday*](#) by Mark Greene being a notable exception.

So given that lifelong interest, Grant Smith's book, *The Accidental Social Entrepreneur* appealed to me and I was not disappointed.

Grant Smith is a quantity surveyor who has managed his own consultancy practice for over thirty years. Alongside that, although at pains to explain he receives no income from it, he is CEO of the Hand in Hand Group (HiHG), a charity which also creates a commercial response to poverty, particularly in Kenya.

'I am not a writer' he says on page one and while the book is a repetitive at times, it doesn't matter because he is a good storyteller. And there are lots of stories. In many ways, the book is both autobiography and biography: the latter being the story of HiHG. They are stories which range between 'disasters and enthusiasm,' as he puts it.

Grant Smith writes with passion and drive. Pulling no punches when it comes to describing the reasons which lie behind poverty and inequality and the difficulties and dilemmas of business.

He gives well-developed arguments about why and how businesses work in good and not so good ways. From sealing the deal right through to those who promised him the earth and didn't even deliver a speck of dust.

Theologically uncomplicated, Grant speaks regularly of praying about a whole range of aspects – from what to do when you end spending waiting 12 hours for the next bus to agreeing what words to use when seeking God's will. Deal-making with people isn't the only form of agreements he seeks and he writes about a number of occasions where God the dealmaker had different outcomes in mind.

Describing himself as, at times, arrogant and stubborn, the author writes how he has learnt over the years to not to use the words 'God has said...'. For this reviewer I would have liked more of those personal, deeper reflections on how God has undoubtedly led and inspired this accidental social entrepreneur.

This book will be particularly helpful to those working in business or who are responsible for the financial affairs of charities and other organisations. It provides a wealth of insights in the joys and difficulties of real world commerce.

For me, there is one sentence that sums up Grant Smith's approach to his work: 'Sometimes you have to go with you gut, fly by the seat of your pants and trust that God can pull it out of the bag. Sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn't.'

That it seems to me is what faith is all about.

***The Accidental Social Entrepreneur* is published by Muddy Pearl Books. [Click here to order.](#)**

January 2022

Richard Frost is a former mental health specialist helping people to find and remain in employment. He also developed and led a national and international initiative providing businesses with support, training and information regarding the mental wellbeing of staff. He was appointed MBE in 2018 for this work. Richard is a licensed lay minister (Reader) in the Church of England and a lay member of a Benedictine Monastic Community. The author of *Life with St Benedict* (published by BRF in 2019), he writes a blog at workrestpray.com.