

Champions for Social Good Podcast

Democratizing Philanthropy: A Conversation with Brandolon Barnett of Growfund at Global Impact

Jamie: Hello and welcome to the Champions for Social Good podcast. The podcast for people dedicated to social impact. I'm Jamie Serino, Director of Marketing with the Corporate and Foundation Solutions division of Blackbaud. I'm here today with Brandolon Barnett, Director, Partner Solutions Consulting Group, and the lead on Growfund with Global Impact. Welcome Brandolon.

Brandolon: Thanks. Glad to be here.

Jamie: Yeah. We're glad to have you. Brandolon, why don't you just start off by telling us a little bit about yourself.

Brandolon: I am born and raised in Dallas. I'm a Texas boy. But I guess for me the core of who I am is really a love for creating opportunity. I watched a lot of science fiction growing up. And I loved to watch Star Trek and Babylon 5. And watching all these future worlds that people inhabited and all the incredible things that they'd done to shape a better world than the one we live in, really inspired me to be part of that effort, which led me to research and do development, work in the development space. So I worked in NGO work around the world and did international volunteering work, did foundation work, was at the Council and Foundations briefly as a researcher, head of analytics for a tech company, and now I'm at Global Impact. But through it all, I've just tried to be in a position where I can have a social impact that creates opportunities for others.

Jamie: I love that. And I love that it's derived from watching science fiction. [laughter]

Brandolon: Oh, completely, completely. It's...

Jamie: 'Cause I have those thoughts too, when I see something maybe that's messed up, I'm like, "Well, would they have done this in the year 3250?" [laughter] That's a funny derivation of all this. So yes, Brandolon, you have an impressive background and you are definitely passionate about what you do, which definitely shines through. Why don't you tell us a little bit about your latest initiative now with Growfund.

Brandolon: Yeah. Growfund is kind of a start up, being incubated within the larger Global Impact NGO. Global Impact itself is a 60-year-old organization that throughout its history has done great works, started as an international United Way that helped Doctors Without Borders, Heifer International, Save the Children, and some of the largest NGOs to get into the workplace to raise dollars and to be more effective organizations. About six or seven years ago, started the consulting group, which I am a Director on, it's led by Ann Canela, who's our VP, who's a person that I love and has given me a lot of opportunity.

Brandolon: And then a few years ago... So it's continued to innovate as an organization. And a few years ago we started Growfund, really, to put together a process where we could create a new donor-advised fund, that took this tool that is now so huge, I mean, Fidelity Charitable just last year became the largest charity in the world, the primary service is donor-advised fund. So we wanted to take that and take away those \$10,000 minimum contributions, or \$5,000 minimum contributions, and use the DAF to bring that tool that's been associated with the wealthy and with philanthropy, to everyday people. So our goal is to democratize philanthropy. So Global Impact is... I love the innovation that exists there, starting a consulting group from scratch, that's now working with a lot of clients and get to do really interesting work, but then also having the courage to innovate and really start a technology company, and a platform, and invest in it, and work to build it through partnerships, through the staff, from the ground up. It's been really, really exciting actually.

Jamie: Yeah, that's great. So I love the notion of the democratization of philanthropy and I wonder if you could just talk a little bit more about that.

Brandolon: Yeah. One of the best ways I like to think of that actually is, when I was thinking of coming onboard with Growfund... 'Cause I was on the board before I joined the organization, I was helping as just a board member with the Growfund product, to think about how it might scale and how it might be useful to charities as well as in other settings. And I was at the time working at the Council on Foundations, and I was working with a lot of large institutional philanthropists, and organizations, like everything from the Gates Foundation to Sloan, all the big names. And there's a reason that Bill Gates, for example, didn't just write a check or click a button in on an online donation platform. Philanthropy is something that's more engaging. It's more strategic, and it's more emotionally powerful. So instead of doing that, all of these folks who had means and a desire to help, they put together an entity that was connected to them that existed in perpetuity that could grow through investment. And it was almost like a part of them, it represented their legacy, and everything about how they wanted to make the world a better place. So for me when I first created my Growfund account, to see what is this platform capable of. I named it after my mother who passed away a few years ago, the Gwendolyn Smith Charitable Fund. And I started crying.

Brandolon: For me it was just the biggest representation of what we're trying to do, which is to take that really engaging experience that philanthropy can create, and bring that to a normal person, who might only have a dollar, but they can create this entity. They can nourish it, no matter what, they're able to feed it. If it's a dollar a month, or five dollars a month, it will grow through investment. And then they can think more about their legacy, how they want to give through every facet of their life. Just like philanthropy empowers institutions to really connect to causes in the long term, I love that we can do that for ordinary people. And every time I make a grant out from my donor-advised fund on Growfund, I think about my legacy. I think about my mom and what she left me, and how she made the world better for me. And now through her, in her name, I can continue to do that for others and that's what philanthropy is right? Especially family philanthropy. So we're bringing that to everyone.

Jamie: That's great.

Brandolon: And yeah.

Jamie: Yeah, so it's a really powerful thing to be able to give to, like you're saying, everyday people. So tell us a little bit more about the process there and how you'd set one up and put money into it. And then especially you said you actually distributed a grant through it. And if you could tell us a little bit about that process that would be great.

Brandolon: Yeah. So Growfund's very simple. It's an online platform. You go to mygrowfund.org. If anyone wants to start one, I encourage it. You can just try it out. You could open an account for free or put in one dollar and just test it out. But you put your money in. You see, you have sort of a dashboard. You see how it grows through investment. And then when you're ready it's integrated with GuideStar. And you can make grants out to over 800,000 charities at present. And because Global Impact has a global footprint, we have offices in the UK and we work in Japan and in other locations as well. We have a lot of experience and capability for doing international grants. So we can send the funds anywhere in the world that you want, to whatever cause you care about. And to me this democratization of DAFs, or that type of giving, philanthropy, represents a bigger trend that I think is really exciting. And all around us we see so many things are being democratized. I can't afford a black car but I can get an Uber.

Jamie: Right.

Brandolon: I can't afford all the albums to create a collection with all the albums that are on Spotify. I can't afford to do that but I can afford a Spotify subscription.

Jamie: Right.

Brandolon: And that sort of change, a lot of it spurred by technology, philanthropy's not immune to that. So we're seeing a lot of democratization of a variety of tools; impact assessments getting easier. You all have integrated outcomes. There are other organizations working to create software that helps people see the impact of their grants or of their charitable contributions. That used to be something that you'd have to hire a firm to do or a professor would do in sort of that ivory tower. And so I think that Growfund is just part of this broader trend of democratization of the tools of philanthropy, so that we can all engage with social impact in a more meaningful way. Impact investing is another great example. So for me it connects to that bigger trend. And I just find that really exciting. It's a really exciting time to be, I think, in the social impact space.

Jamie: Yeah. I would agree. I would agree with that. So... We can't talk about DAFs and not touch upon the controversy around them.

Brandolon: Yeah. Sure.

Jamie: So there are two sides of the argument there for DAFs. So I wonder if you could talk about, I guess, those two sides and where you land, and what your side of the argument is.

Brandolon: Yeah. So I can certainly understand a lot of the criticism that has come upon DAFs. The idea that they are taking dollars that would go directly to the charity, and instead causing it to sit in sort of a holding pattern, where it's in an individual's personal foundation, just kind of sitting there and they're using that for tax purposes, not necessarily to directly engage with good. But I think what we actually can bring to that discussion, excites me. And that's the idea that, that behavior that people are contemplating when they're talking about DAFs is really behavior of very wealthy donors. I, for example, or people that I know, aren't gonna put aside \$10,000 or \$5,000 and just have it sit there so we can get a tax benefit. We give and we're gonna continue to give. But if I can put away \$5 a month or \$10 a month, I'm gonna give more over the long term because I have a tool to invest and save strategically. And then once a year, giving Tuesday or whenever I'm gonna continue to do what I do. It's just gonna empower me more.

Jamie: Right.

Brandolon: And so I think where that DAF behavior that gets a lot of the criticism, is something that is worthy of discussion, is the behavior of wealthy donors. And when we democratize this tool, we see entirely different behaviors. Similar to what a 401K might do for an ordinary person's ability to invest. That doesn't mean that they create all kinds of fancy financial instruments to escape taxes. It just means that people have more when they retire for something they know they're gonna do. Same with DAFs. When we make them accessible to ordinary people, we believe and we are starting to see, that they will have more for something they know they're gonna do, which is giving. So yeah. But I certainly understand the criticism. But that's how we approach it. This idea the democratization of this tool changes the nature of the behavior and makes it a positive for the world. And we can grow the entire pie of giving.

Brandolon: For me, I like to imagine going to a kindergarten. And setting up all the students with donor-advised fund. Making it a family thing. These kids weren't gonna give anybody any money. But if all of the sudden their parents are able to put away a dollar a month into their DAF that belongs to the kid. And engage them and educate them in what it means to be a strategic donor. What it means to be a philanthropist. Even if you're a kid like I grew up, in South Dallas with not a lot of means. I could have done this. And then I can see myself in that circumstance as someone who can change the world and not just let it change me. So we can empower so many people. That's what philanthropy does, it's empowering. You're someone who can affect the state of the world.

Jamie: Yeah and I think just even using that word because I think a lot of everyday people do give and I think a lot of children see their parents giving to maybe local causes or they, maybe an old school way get something in the mail, and they send the check and they'll see that. But the idea of like what you're saying; philanthropy.

Brandolon: Yeah.

Jamie: And the idea of growing up into that. Could you talk a little bit about that and maybe the differences there?

Brandolon: Yeah. Especially for millennials and younger generations. They don't just want to do one thing. They don't wanna go to work and have that be separate from their social impact, they don't want that to be separate from their volunteer time, they don't want that to be separate from the products that they buy. They don't just wanna write a check to a cause and walk away. So I think what we are talking about with... DAFs more broadly, I think why they've had such appeal, is that they allow people to engage across multiple dimensions. Especially when you think about including impact investing, which is our vision for the platform. If you care about the environment for example, being able to put away a few dollars a month, while that money is growing, it can be socially impact invested in wind or solar power. Then when you're ready, you can make a grant out to Sierra Club or an environmental charity that you care about. You're engaging there across multiple dimensions. And I think that, that is something that people are already growing up in, but we can provide a tool, a philanthropic tool that's appropriate to that. More appropriate than just... Online giving is great, and it's still an online giving platform in a way. And I don't think those are going away.

Brandolon: But there's a place for a tool that you can grow up into this idea of engaging across all of these dimensions and really being strategic about what you're doing, what impact you wanna have. And being able to reflect. When you have money away in an account, it allows you to reflect and really be strategic about what you're gonna do with it. And I think there's huge potential for us to have a whole generation of more engaged donors. People who, even if they are making a one-time contribution are like, "What is the impact of this gonna be?" And then because they wanna engage across those multiple dimensions, they might be willing to work with the charity that they're supporting to help them figure out what the impact is. Or to accentuate it through volunteer time. It's all part of this effort of engaging across multiple dimensions to me.

Jamie: Right. And you do also talk about the idea of convergence. I like the word you use, that you can reflect. It's also a more proactive way of, rather than reactive, of engaging and donating. And then, when I heard you say, "reflect," I was thinking, "Oh, well you could probably look at your past history and kind of reflect on what you've done, feel proud, and feel like you've contributed." I think there are a lot of things there to grab onto. But getting back to what I was saying earlier is, I've heard you talk in the past about the idea of convergence especially in this industry. And it's happening in many industries but in this industry, you talk about that quite often. I wonder if you could go into that a little bit.

Brandolon: Yeah. For me, I see convergence happening everywhere, and I think you can't talk about the future of philanthropy without thinking about the convergence of what used to be completely separate tools. One example that I like to think of is an organization that we are partnering we call, Charity Charge, startup based in Austin, Texas. And what they have done is created a credit card that's a rewards card, but instead of the reward being some miles through your mileage account with an airline or cash back or anything like that, it instead takes 1% and sends it to the charity of your choice. So 1% of every purchase. What you have there is the convergence of two tools that used to be separate. It used to be finance, your credit card was separate from your giving. Now those two things are converging into one tool that you can use. Impact investing is another huge one. Where there used to be two completely different tools. Social impact, granting out to charities or even supporting social enterprises was completely separate from your investments with a desire to earn a return.

Brandolon: Now we see the convergence of those tools into impact investing. And then we start to think about donor-advised fund for example. Where you could have a user who has a donor-advised fund, which used to be a separate product. Putting money that part of it is coming from a financial instrument like that credit card, that charity charge card. And then when it gets there, it's impact invested. You have suddenly have all these philanthropic tools that converge into one and the impact is amplified. And I think that's incredibly exciting. You see that with even digital platforms that are being created that are integrated across what used to be

completely different platforms. It used to be, you had your volunteer platform over here. You might buy it from one organization. You had your giving platform over here. And now you see a lot of those functions are converging into one.

Brandolon: And it's empowering because it lowers costs for participation and it simplifies the user process. You can engage with all of these at once through one action. You press a button or sign up for a service, and all of a sudden you're doing all these things that make the world a better place. Rather than just one thing here, one thing there. And I think that's the way millennials in particular, but also most likely Gen Z, although they're becoming the next most research generation ever as we speak. But I think that's the way that generation thinks about the world, so it's not a coincidence that the tools that are being created fit that idea that things are interconnected very intimately rather than living in silos.

Jamie: Right. And I think that we're starting to see the effect that, that generation has had on other generations too 'cause as we interact with our customers and stuff, we see it across generations the behavior. But I think that millennials could be credited with bringing in a lot of these notions and ideas. In one area that we see it, would be in corporations, and you touched upon that a little bit. And the idea of going to work, working for a company that does different things in the blending of your work and personal life, and work and volunteering, making money, donating money, all these things, it just seems to blend more. I also heard you talk a little bit about that, so I'm wondering if you can give just a little detail there?

Brandolon: Yeah. The best example I've come up with that is, to sort of describe my thinking of that is, think of the person who had a good, steady job in a coal mine in the '50s or the '60s, might go to work at the coal mine. This person wants to make a difference in their communities, so they leave the coal mine. They save, they buy a home, they volunteer with and donate to the local hospital. And a millennial now, and I think it is filtering throughout our entire culture, but that isn't an attitude that's acceptable now. For a lot of people, you wouldn't want to do that because the coal mine has a negative impact on health in the community. So if you care about the hospital, you might not necessarily want to work at the coal mine.

Brandolon: And all of those factors sort of, again, converge into one set of thinking. And I heard... I was at a presentation the other day, and one of the panelists with me was talking about work-life balance. And I think that was a good description of it, as well. The idea that for millennials and younger generations, there's not this scale which has on one end work and on the other end life, but rather, there's just life, and you try to live a life where it's all in balance all at once. So you love your job, and it contributes to your social impact needs, your desire to have a purpose in your life, which contributes to your family and the way you can communicate and engage with them. And all of these things sort of build on each other, rather than being siloed and having to balance at all times.

Jamie: Right.

Brandolon: And I think that is something that's, when we talk about social impacts, we have to deal with. 'Cause if you're creating a tool or an initiative that's only engaging people one part of their heart or one part of their life, you're creating a tool that will probably be, in my opinion, obsolete in the next 10 or 15 years. You've gotta engage people across multiple dimensions with as much power as you can, whether that means creating partnerships or what have you, that's really essential. And corporate social responsibility is a great outgrowth of that sort of impetus. This idea that you can't just have someone go to work and then it's completely disconnected from everything they do. The company has to have values, communicate those values, and that's how they attract talent, that's how they retain talent.

Brandolon: It has to be then reflected in volunteer opportunities, opportunities to sit on boards. Hey, what's the company investing in 'cause if you're investing in things that I completely disagree with, I'm out the door because there's lots of opportunity in the world. Some of this may change if there's an economic downturn or something like that, but I think a lot of it is just part of the way the thinking that's changed. Not just for millennials. I think that's a particularly poignant example that you can see all around, but I think it's changed for a lot of people.

Jamie: Yeah, I would agree. I think that the line is going to continue to go up, and we may see spikes depending on outside factors and stuff that you can't control that would affect people's behavior and their choices, but if people have the choice, I think this trend is going to continue to happen. What are your thoughts on now some of the obligations that you think companies have, corporations have, or what kind of advice would you give them?

Brandolon: I actually think that space is moving so quickly. A few years ago, we were saying, "You need to have your pillars." Your company or a consultant would go in and do a sort of materiality assessment and say, "Education is what's most important to you as a company, so you should focus on that." And while that's still important, I think the obligation now is to really think about involving employees in this broader matrixed picture. For example, there are a lot of companies that we work with as clients that are incubating different concepts, social impact concepts, social enterprises within the company, or they're inviting their employees to be part of a process where they identify different social enterprises that they want to start and have the potential to get funding from the company, so impact investing dollars or grant dollars. So for me, the burden is on employers now to truly involve employees in the broad spectrum of corporate social responsibility activities, and also to...

Brandolon: My philosophy on life is actually that every job I do, and I stole this from corporate social responsibility, a sort of triple bottom line of the idea that everything a company does should benefit people, profits and the planet. I kind of stole that for my personal life, again, this conversion, and I did it without thinking about how all these things were connected. This was years ago, but I said that everything I do should benefit my career, my community and the company I work with. And companies have a responsibility now to recognize that that's increasingly the way their employees are going to think and to live in that space where you can't just talk about, again, work-life balance and then expect people to sacrifice everything else or create this scale. The same way corporate social responsibility wants to meet these objectives all in one, with one set of activities and one strategic focus and purpose, individual employees within the company want that, too.

Brandolon: And so that's why you need to think about hey, this person is here. We are giving them professional development opportunities, but we are also helping... If they have ideas, we are encouraging them to start a startup or compete an incubation contest, or something within the company. But we're also trying to help them get a board seat if they apply and they're at the right level. So, we're engaging that desire just like we have this corporate social responsibility, this triple bottom line, our employees now have that too. And we have to respond to it and truly engage them.

Jamie: Yeah, agreed. So, getting the back to the DAFs that you provide Growfund, when a person goes in to start to build out their DAF, are there recommendations, or is there anything there for them to, or do they just go through GuideStar and take a look at what's there? So, how does that part work?

Brandolon: So, there is the sort of GuideStar or search-based cause discovery where you just put in whatever... You can search by cause or by keyword, or by charity name, or EIN, or also by the cause area that's working in based on the US NTEE codes, the charity type codes. But what we're really excited about is the opportunity to highlight specific high impact work through what we call 'feature giving opportunities'. So, that's a page within the platform that highlights a women and girls fund that we've curated, that addresses... The money is split between five organizations and addresses issues all along the spectrum of women and girls empowerment. It supports International Center for Research on Women, it supports CARE and other organizations. So, that's something that we're excited about. And then we can white label the platform or skin it, so when we work with... Since we've taken DAF and really democratized it, we are taking it into the workplace, so companies are setting their employees up with it as an employee benefit. They hear about their HSA, their 401k and their DAF.

Brandolon: For me, that's incredible because DAFs are something that wasn't... Two year ago, you needed \$10,000 or \$5,000. Now you just one, and you can get it in the workplace. It can be given to you by your employer, basically. And employers rather, can then do payroll and matching and all that capability. But we can

also take it into universities where we can give... A university can build a culture of philanthropy on its campus and set up all their students with DAFs, encourage them to give, maybe make it an amenity and take a little bit out of tuition. You're setting them up with lifetime accounts, and with this engaging experience, the university can then educate them about what philanthropy is, how to do it effectively, how to think about it as part of your overall financial wellness picture. And then as they grow, they'll be alumni, and the university itself will have direct access to the data on anybody that's signed up and can use that to communicate with them in a more nuanced way. So, cause discovery in that sense, happens through the employer or the university, sharing information on the causes that they care about as an organization with employees. And then one of the things we're really excited about, a lot of the seed funding for Growfund, comes from a grant from the Gates Foundation. So, we are working actively with them to build in a lot of education and cause discovery into the platform itself.

Jamie: That's great.

Brandolon: So you're a user who makes a grant out, there will be a pop-up or some feature that's interactive, that says, "Think about replenishing your fund." Or when you're thinking about how much to put, "Hey, 5%... Family foundations or rather private foundations do 5% of their balance every year. Did you know that? Well maybe think about that as a strategy for you." So there's a lot of different strategies that we can employ to encourage productive reflection and good user behavior that helps them think about where they wanna give. And even with that white label process, those companies or clients that we sign at an institutional level can customize all those feature giving opportunities for their partnerships, for the organizations that they support in the community, or for the work that they're doing themselves, if they themselves are a charity. So, that's how cause discovery happens, and we hope it to be an increasingly dynamic experience over time. We're really providing tools for people to learn about philanthropy, what it is. 'Cause we're democratizing it.

Jamie: Yeah, I think that that's just really important in general. And you and I had also talked about a little bit of the breaking down of the social contract. So, that's why something like this is important. If people feel like, there's something that I've been saying recently that I think we have a little bit more of a culture of, "Hey, look at this. It's messed up, or it's broken. Who's gonna fix it?" And more like, "Hey, this is messed up and broken. I should fix it." Or, "Let's fix this together." So, I think that with that attitude in the mindset and perhaps maybe a trend of a slight erosion of a social contract, this is yet another tool for people to act on their own.

Brandolon: Yeah. In a way, it's sort of taking what community foundations have done for generations and making it possible for ordinary people to do that. And that's why we're really excited to... We're starting to do more and more work with giving circles. Where you can go into a community, and let's say they have a problem in that community and they say, "I wanna fix it." Well, they can band together and create a fund that's invested and basically endowed and can grow over time. And they can create this fund and begin fundraising for it immediately as they as a community think about, "This is our community foundation that we are starting." Even if it's just \$100 to help... We do \$100 a year to help one of our neighbors to fix a flat tire when it happens, or respond to an emergency. We can create this fund and...

Brandolon: Donor advisements can't send money to individuals, so that was probably not the best example, but they can send funds to local charities in their community. And they can create a 501c3; that process is very easy in the US, but we can create the structure for them to be philanthropic institutions rather than just charities, and I think that's incredibly exciting. One of the things for me is also, I love to think about the diversity piece of this. I mentor in Southeast DC, and my mentee has a similar background to me, single mom, not a lot of resources financially, and there's this mentor program run out of Thurgood Marshall Academy that's actually amazing. From the sophomore year to the end of high school, these students get a mentor, students who signed up.

Brandolon: And when I was talking to my mentor about what I do, I was talking to him and his friends, they have no idea what philanthropy is. But at the same time, a grant from a local foundation is actually paying for that mentorship program. And so for me it's this idea that I could now go to him and say "This is what philanthropy is; here, you do it, you can do it too." And when we can say that, we can change what it means to

be a philanthropist, we can change who is a philanthropist; anyone can become one. It means helping the world in a more thoughtful way, in a more consistent way that's connected to the core of your values, not just "I gave to this 'cause I heard there was a disaster," but like "This is who I am, this is the change I want to see," and it's always there, it always lives.

Brandolon: And I love that idea where we can just... We're democratizing philanthropy so anybody can be a philanthropist. Anybody can... And we found in market testing that that word 'philanthropist' is not popular, which I think is really interesting. So we don't use it in a lot of our marketing, [chuckle] but I do think that... For me, I'm proud that I work in the philanthropic and social impact space, so I'm increasingly fascinated by impact investing, particularly a lot of the work coming out of a couple of working groups that I'm on, around impact investing, and also conversations, hearing about what cities are even starting to do for what they're calling the 'impact economy', really fascinating stuff. But I'm proud to have knowledge of this sort of philanthropy space. And I want a kindergartener, African-American two-year-old or three-year-old or four-year-old to say "I'm a philanthropist," or anyone anywhere in the United States and eventually around the world being able to say that. To me, I love that. So for me even though it's not popular in market testing now, maybe it will be when we're done if we do our job right.

[chuckle]

Jamie: Yeah, that's great. Well what term is popular then? What do they call the person...

Brandolon: So we use the term 'strategic donor' or 'strategic giving', which is, that's basically a definition, so we're using a definition. And I can completely... There's an association of the word 'philanthropy'; it's connected to race. And so when I was at the Council I did a lot of... I led research there, I was the Senior Research Manager. And I did a lot of work around diversity, equity, inclusion, and it's easy to see when you look at the data on who works, for example, in foundations, demographically, why there are all these sort of implicit understandings of what that word means. So we don't use it, but I think it is what we're trying to do.

Jamie: Yeah.

Brandolon: Yeah.

Jamie: Maybe there's a chance to change the definition a little bit because yeah, I think it's stuck in time, and as you said, it has other connotations to it.

Brandolon: Yeah. We're disrupting. And I know that's a popular word, you go to all these conferences now. What's really interesting is we talked about convergence, what's really interesting to me is... I was doing a session at South by Southwest, and we were talking about democratization and convergence, and all the non-profits, the NGOs in the room, were using terms like 'agile' and "We have to pivot". And I'm like "Oh." I've worked in tech for a few years now, I was before at a previous company and now with Growfund, and I'm like "These are actually tech words, but you're at Oxfam." It's super interesting.

Jamie: Yeah it is interesting.

Brandolon: That these worlds even are converging. And it's a disruption, it's a disruption of the whole space. And I know that's a cliché word, that's one of the words... 'Agile', 'pivot', 'disruption', that comes up every conference or every meet-up group in San Francisco. But it's true. When we change the definition of who is, we're disrupting the entire field, but I think for the better. I think it wants to be disrupted, too. 'Cause we at Global Impact talk a lot about the Sustainable Development Goals, and I do some work there helping clients to map what they're doing to the SDGs. We need a disruption if we are going to meet those goals; it can't all be government. Private sector has to be involved, employee giving has to be involved, employee volunteering has to be involved, individual charities have to be involved in tracking what they're doing and how it's contributing. Every part of our world needs to be involved in solving that, and so we need to disrupt, we need to grow this

whole sector. Create more resources, but also more strategic thinking, and hopefully we're contributing to that. I think we are.

Jamie: Yeah, I think the idea that you guys have and what you're doing, I think it does. And just even you mentioned these Sustainable Development Goals, or the Global Goals, and I think the UN itself is understanding that a different approach is necessary. And going from the Millennial Goals to the Global Goals, and the fact that they're out there saying everything that you were just saying right now with partnerships and harnessing volunteers and using the private sector, and we all must do this and it all has to be this sort of matrix kind of thing, those are all messages coming out of the UN as well. And so, as you said earlier, it's a great exciting and fascinating time in this industry.

Brandolon: It really is. One of the things that I've been thinking about a lot lately is, because of this convergence of attitudes, and democratization of tools, it's not hard to imagine now what we would call a donor today, but a donor who wants to support, I'll use this example again, but of, an environmental cause. They care about the environment. And they have two choices. One is to donate to an environmental charity, that's always been a choice for generations now. The other is to support a sustainable social enterprise that may be a private sector entity in their community. What you then have is two kinds of organizations that once lived in completely different spaces, competing for the same dollars from that "donor".

Jamie: Right.

Brandolon: That is an entirely different world. And it requires different structures. I think really innovative things are gonna start to happen. One of the organizations we work with has clients at Global Impact, an NGO, just sold itself, or it got bought out by a large company, and is now going to be the CSR arm for that larger company.

Jamie: Wow. That's interesting.

Brandolon: So, it's really convergence, right?

Jamie: Yeah.

Brandolon: Some really interesting stuff happening that is really exciting because... I think back to sci-fi, we're creating this kind of world that has completely different rules. And it's happening right before our eyes and it's happening really, really, really rapidly. And when you start to think about how... We can't pretend like philanthropy won't be affected by artificial intelligence, for example, and we don't know how. But that is going to change a lot of the way we do a lot of things. And so, it's all up in the air in a way, but if you go back to that sci-fi thing, that's what I find really exciting about it. Actually, one of my ridiculous dreams would be to work with the people at Elon Musk's Space X, or something like that, and say, "If we're going to Mars..." Corporate social responsibility, you're a company that's going to Mars, let's start from the beginning. What if we started a whole planet with these principles of CSR, impact investing, converged tools philanthropy as something that's part of everyday life for everybody, if we started a whole planet that way, what would it look like? It might look like Star Trek or something.

Jamie: Yeah. [chuckle]

Brandolon: Yeah.

Jamie: I know, it's funny. I had the same thought, and then the negative side of that thought would be like, "Then no one's gonna want to live on earth."

[laughter]

Jamie: It's like, we messed up that planet, let's go over here. [chuckle]

Brandolon: Air is a pretty good incentive. Open air is a pretty good incentive.

Jamie: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[chuckle]

Jamie: No, it's...

Brandolon: Oceans.

Jamie: Yeah, I'm just joking with that. But I had the same thought of, "Wow, we are going to Mars and how can we start from scratch in the right way?"

Brandolon: Yeah, yeah.

Jamie: If you want to think sci-fi.

Brandolon: Yeah.

Jamie: So, great. Come around full circle. So, I wanna thank you so much for your time.

Brandolon: No, thank you.

Jamie: And for speaking with me.

Brandolon: It's a pleasure.

Jamie: Yeah. So, for our listeners, I hope that you enjoyed this episode of Champions for Social Good. If you'd like to learn more about global impact and Grow Fund, you can visit them at mygrowfund.org, you can follow them on Twitter @growfund. You can follow Brandolon at @brandolonB. And of course I'll remind you just to subscribe to this podcast so you don't miss an episode. And you can keep up with the conversation between episodes by following us on Twitter at @JamieSerino @MicroEdgeLLC and @Blackbaud. Thank you for listening.