

PASSION, COURAGE AND SAYING YES WHEN OTHERS SAY NO: AUDETTE EXEL ON LEADERSHIP



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<http://www.generositymag.com.au/passion-courage-and-saying-yes-when-others-say-no-audette-exel-on-leadership/>

The Adara Group CEO maintains social change and successful business are not mutually exclusively concepts.



Are there leaders who inspire you and your work? What does good leadership in philanthropy look like?

My life has been full of the most amazing people from all walks of life. Throughout this journey, I have been inspired, in particular, by many great leaders from the communities where we work. Leaders like Sr. Christine Otai, who is the head of the neonatal intensive care unit in the small bush hospital that we partner with in rural Uganda. Christine has demonstrated fierce courage throughout her life, and has always worked hard to make her community a better, safer, and stronger place. Over the past 17 years she has led an incredible team of clinicians to save literally thousands of newborn lives. She has been recognised as a global leader in neonatal health. She is brave, determined, and inspiring.

Or Kunga Tsiring – a great man from the remote mountains of Nepal and our first partner in Nepal. By sheer grit and vision, he has built a model school that is now one of the best performing schools in the region. Through his leadership the school has increased attendance of girls in the district, and girls now make up 65% of all enrolments – an impressive feat when 2/3 of women in the district are illiterate.

For me, good leadership in the non-profit space is very closely linked to both passion and courage. It's about feeling the fear and doing it anyway. It's about taking risks. And it's about saying yes when others say no.

What can be done to better promote leadership in philanthropy in Australia?

There are so many different ways to be philanthropic – many more than the traditional concept that a philanthropist is someone who works until they become wealthy and then gives back.

I have always very much wanted to prove that anyone can be a philanthropist: no matter how young or how wealthy. That was a driving motivation behind setting up Adara (formerly ISIS) some 17 years ago. My dream was to establish a “business for purpose” – a corporate finance and advisory business that would allow me and others, who would join me, to use our skills in law and banking to generate funding for people living in poverty in the developing world.

My way of promoting leadership in philanthropy in Australia is not lecturing others about what they should or should not do. Everyone is on their own journey. It's simply to be a model, and to speak honestly about Adara and inspire others. I hope that what I have done – the mistakes as well as the successes- will give others the courage to think outside of the box, and to build a life that is about social change as well as great business. All of the team at Adara are hoping that others will take what we've done and make it bigger, better and more impactful in their own unique ways.

Read more about how Audette Exel is bridging worlds in our feature story *Rebel With a Cause*, or visit the [Adara Group](#).