

## P R E F A C E

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It's a July morning of biblical perfection in the Oregon Cascades. Having rescued my 1970s-era Kelty backpack from a series of garage sales, I have gotten on the trail with it and my oldest son, Andy. It's the day after we scaled South Sister Mountain from our campsite above Moraine Lake, a technically undemanding but steep and lengthy trudge. We've got a free morning before hiking out to civilization, enough time to trek over to Green Lakes and back before breaking camp. We are in great spirits, surrounded by beauty and bearing the lightest of loads—just the bare essentials for the few hours that we'll be away.

As we walk above Fall Creek, we witness magic: Clouds forming overhead. One after another, feathery wisps appear literally out of thin air just above us. Bounding along the air current, each evolves into a stringy cotton ball of mist before rising and growing into a recognizable cloud. As it turns out, we're lucky. Just the right atmospheric conditions predicate cloud formation, including a threshold level of moisture in the air.

The companies I write about in this book have much in common with these cloudlets. Starting from imperceptible origins, this group of small and medium-size companies has cohered into something genuine and noteworthy—a movement. A threshold level of social, environmental, and economic conditions has opened up a space in the marketplace

for entrepreneurs who blend together exciting new products and services with cutting-edge social and environmental practices. And even through a difficult economy, the movement is holding its own.

As clouds gather and their collective potential materializes, they can influence weather across a landscape. Will the collective impact of mission-driven companies change the landscape of enterprise? It's still early, but like those clouds we saw, it is captivating to study them and try to peer into their future. In this book, we'll study a variety of these companies, piecing together theories about the strategies they use and analyzing what separates success from failure. We'll learn that the mission-driven companies that have emerged as leaders exhibit common traits, distinct from those that struggle and distinct from mainstream businesses too. And we'll breathe life into academic theories by developing ideas through extensive contacts with entrepreneurs who are captivated by more than money—pathfinders who offer up stories of inspiration, perseverance, and (often) high achievement.

This book is intended to speak to a number of audiences. If you are interested in how entrepreneurs can escape the ethical drought that sometimes characterizes mainstream business, read on. If you are considering starting a mission-driven business, there's plenty of advice for you. And if you are looking to take stock of the mission-driven movement, this is the book for you. In any case, my own mission in crafting this book is to conduct a careful analysis of the topics but also to use a style that is accessible and engaging. I do hope that you will enjoy reading this book as much as I did writing it.

Let's get started. The weather is about to change.