



## To Change the World, Think Small

*In his thought-provoking new book, Peter Sims explains why making little bets may be the fastest way to big payoffs.*

It's a brand new year, and even if your organization is facing the same old problems, what better time to try tackling them in an entirely new way? Instead of looking for that bulletproof big idea that will forever solve the problem, perhaps something simple, small, and easy-to-do right now would be your best next step. Or so says Peter Sims in his new book, [Little Bets: How Breakthrough Ideas Emerge from Small Discoveries](#).



Peter Sims

The Wall Street Journal called *Little Bets* "one of the six best entrepreneurial advice books." After hearing Sims speak at a conference in December, I called him to find out how his advice might work in the public interest sector. Here are the highlights of that conversation:

**Goodman: What are "little bets" and why do they matter?**

Sims: Little bets are small, affordable actions that anyone can take to discover and develop new ideas. They matter because we're often taught to have a brilliant idea up front when, in fact, these ideas usually come from a series of smaller breakthroughs.

**What got you interested in little bets in the first place?**

I was a venture capital investor, and I saw entrepreneurs use little bets to build their companies. In business school, we were taught that you had to have a great idea to start a company, and having seen what was actually happening, I felt compelled to share this with other people.

January 2012

**To Change the World, Think Small**

How little bets can lead to big payoffs

**Beth Drews Scholarship Winners**

Meet the class of 2012

**Resolve to Communicate Better**

Four classes at The Goodman Center can help



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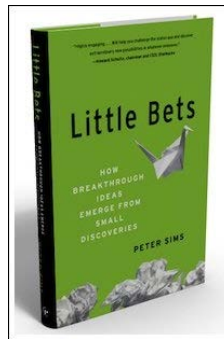
*free-range thinking* is written by Andy Goodman and edited

## Are little bets an alternative to long-term strategic planning?

No, the two go hand-in-hand. If you're trying to get into new areas, it's almost impossible to develop a strategic plan - you don't even know what problems you're trying to solve. If you want to evolve and discover as you go, it's better to try a lot of small bets.

## What's the best example of a little bet you've come across so far?

Pixar. They started out as a hardware company, but the co-founders dreamed of making a digital film company, and it was a series of little bets that put them in a position to partner with Disney. Today they are a living, breathing little-bet machine.



## For someone trying to change the world, can little bets really pay off on a large scale?

The only way you're going to change the world is by solving big problems in new and interesting ways. And the whole idea of little bets is to learn small and then scale up from there. Wendy Kopp started by writing a senior thesis. Her next little bet was to arrange a conference, and from there she went on to start Teach for America.

## Is there *anything* different about the little bets approach for nonprofits?

Nonprofits are often very resource-constrained and don't get rewarded by markets in the way commercial companies are, so the payoffs for little bets may not be the same. But keep pursuing the small wins - you need those victories to refuel you spiritually - and it's good to have an entrepreneurial mindset.

*Peter Sims received an M.B.A. from Stanford Business School, worked in venture capital with Summit Partners, and is a member of General Electric's Innovation Advisory Panel. He is a co-founder and director of the nonprofit [Fuse Corps](#), which matches entrepreneurial leaders with mayors and governors to tackle some of America's most pressing problems. You can read a [free excerpt](#) from Little Bets on [his website](#).*

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## Beth Drews Scholarship Winners

### *Meet the class of 2012.*

To honor the memory of Goodman Center co-founder Elizabeth Fair Drews, we established the Beth Drews Scholarships in 2010. Under this program, twenty outstanding individuals from the nonprofit community are awarded full tuition to the classes of their choice in our online school. We are proud to announce the recipients comprising the Class of 2012:

- Sonja Barisic, St. Mary's Home for Disabled Children
- Nanci Champlin, Funders' Committee for Civic Participation
- Kim Day, International Assn. of Forensic Nurses

- Jennifer Dickson, The Wilderness Society
- Eric Frank, Catholic Charities of Salina
- Walter Jayawardene, Irish Council for Civil Liberties
- Farhana Khera, Muslim Advocates
- Karen Kolberg, IMPACT, Inc.
- Tonia Kovtunovich, Portland Youthbuilders
- Marta Lindsey, TransForm
- Laura Longhine, Youth Communication
- Stephanie Mayer, High Jump
- Katherine Moos, Hunger Free Colorado
- Rachael Murphy, Foroige
- Amanda Ormand, Western Grid Group
- Jee Pae, Urban Alliance
- Alice Rolls, George Organics
- Thomas Saenz, MALDEF
- Nancy Wiebe, Youthville
- Katharine Zimmerman, Seniors First, Inc.

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## Resolve to Communicate Better

***Four online classes this month at The Goodman Center can help.***

To help you start the New Year right, we're offering a full slate of classes at The Goodman Center throughout January. Before you dive headlong into your next big battle, why not take a few hours to hone your communication skills (in the comfort of your own home or office):

**Tell better stories.** "[Storytelling: Tapping the Power of Narrative](#)" is a four-hour webinar (conducted over four weeks) designed for anyone in the public interest sector who wants to tell more compelling stories about their work. Classes will be held on January 11, 18, 25 and February 1 from 9-10a Pacific (12n-1p Eastern) each day.



**Give better presentations.** "[Why Bad Presentations Happen to Good Causes](#)" is a two-hour webinar (conducted on consecutive days) that can help presenters at all levels improve the design and delivery of their talks. Classes will be held on January 11 and 12 from 11a-12n Pacific (2-3p Eastern) each day.

**Take your storytelling to the next level.** The "[Master Storytellers Workshop](#)" is a three-hour course exclusively for individuals who have completed our introductory storytelling webinar (above) or have participated in one of Andy Goodman's in-person workshops. Classes will be held on January 20, February 3 and February 17 from 11a-12n Pacific (2-3p Eastern) each day.

**Run better webinars.** "[The Webinar on Webinars](#)" is a one-hour class designed to help you re-think your entire approach to webinars, whether you conduct them for meetings, trainings, or larger gatherings. This class will be held on January 27 from 11a-12n Pacific (2-3p Eastern).

For more details on all of these classes, visit [The Goodman Center](#) today and register online.

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