



## Creating Room to Read

*John Wood*

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**Creating Room to Read** John Wood

**The inspirational story of a former Microsoft executive's quest to build libraries around the world and share the love of books**

What's happened since John Wood left Microsoft to change the world? Just ask six million kids in the poorest regions of Asia and Africa. In 1999, at the age of thirty-five, Wood quit a lucrative career to found the nonprofit Room to Read. Described by the San Francisco Chronicle as "the Andrew Carnegie of the developing world," he strived to bring the lessons of the corporate world to the nonprofit sector—and succeeded spectacularly.

In his acclaimed first book, *Leaving Microsoft to Change the World*, Wood explained his vision and the story of his start-up. Now, he tackles the organization's next steps and its latest challenges—from managing expansion to raising money in a collapsing economy to publishing books for children who literally have no books in their native language. At its heart, *Creating Room to Read* shares moving stories of the people Room to Read works to help: impoverished children whose schools and villages have been swept away by war or natural disaster and girls whose educations would otherwise be ignored.

People at the highest levels of finance, government, and philanthropy will embrace the opportunity to learn Wood's inspiring business model and blueprint for doing good. And general readers will love *Creating Room to Read* for its spellbinding story of one man's mission to put books within every child's reach.

## Creating Room to Read Details

Date : Published February 7th 2013 by Viking

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Author : John Wood

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## **From Reader Review Creating Room to Read for online ebook**

### **Veronica says**

A very good book. Reading it made me feel like anything is achievable if I just put my mind to it. His story and the stories he tells of the students and the volunteers touched by his organization, Room to Read, are truly inspiring.

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### **Mendocino County Library says**

take one retired Microsoft (probable) millionaire and set him loose to trek around in Nepal. Finding a school with no books and no library, he returns half a year later with thousands of books for the school's library. His mission evolved into an NGO, Room to Read, and he became the CEO of "one of the most successful international literacy organizations."

Kudos to a man with a grand and bold vision and the drive to make his dream come true.

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### **Naomi says**

Read my full review @ <http://bit.ly/VVZHny>

My opinion: I normally try to keep my blog for reviewing fictional work. Periodically, Non-fiction books will pop up that I want to read/review for personal reasons. Creating Room to Read is one of those books. I first became familiar with Room to Read and its' spectacular mission in the PBS series Half the Sky . Being an strong advocate not only for the mission of literacy and libraries, but for the empowerment and enrichment of young women as a way to improve their standards of living which is obtained through education, I am a firm believer in EVERYTHING that Room to Read stands for. Although services provided by Room to Read aren't limited to young females in the services it provides, this is what I had wanted to learn more about and I did.

In 2013, I made the decision to do a Blog to Give for both of my blogs. Room to Read was one of the organizations I had been considering to place "on the roster" for my food blog, so I was shocked when I saw this book show up on Edelweiss. I immediately requested it to know more about Mr. Wood's selfless work. This book delivered that information and more in a very down to earth, heart-warming and approachable manner. I read this book very quickly because I was entranced by this man utilizing his extensive business background to bring literacy to those who are in most need of it.

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### **Kellie Reynolds says**

I give this book 5 stars even though I agree with the comments from others regarding the disorganized style of writing and the unnecessary length of the book. The story and the achievements of the organization "Room to Read" are powerful enough for me to look past stylistic shortcomings.

I starting reading this book because it is about getting books to kids and I love to read. However, the book is about much more than filling libraries.

For me, the greatest value of this book is the message about personal vision, mission, and strategy. It is a business book, but the business is altruistic. John Wood saw a need - kids without books. He filled the need-created an organization, along with partners, that builds libraries and stocks them with books. He does not stop with the books, because books alone do not fill the true needs of the communities. The organization gets communities involved, builds libraries and schools, makes sure teachers are trained, books are available in appropriate languages, and helps provide scholarships for advanced education.

The book provides valuable business lessons because of Wood's habit of asking for frank feedback and then acting on it. When he heard that the lack of books in native languages was a problem, he commissioned writers and authors and started to publish books.

The examples of individuals, families, and communities transformed by the organization are powerful.

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### **Chuck says**

John Wood has a philosophy. "The way out of poverty is through education." He takes this idea and is proving its validity in some of the poorest places on earth.

John Wood had a lucrative career in the tech giant, Microsoft, but he left it to found the nonprofit, *Room to Read*. Its purpose is to build libraries and provide education to students around the world. He has done this with amazing success. As Andrew Carnegie built libraries all across America, John Wood is making Carnegie's quest global.

I'm sure our political views are quite different, but I commend his work. He runs an efficient, honest charity (although, he doesn't care for that word) that is changing lives. If you are looking for an inspiring true story, *Creating Room to Read* won't disappoint.

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### **Earl says**

Two of my favorite books are by John Wood- Leaving Microsoft to Change the World and Creating Room to Read.

jw1

The first, published in 2006, tells his story of how he left his high-paying job to start providing educational opportunities in developing countries. What I liked about this more than Three Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson was I got a more behind-the-scenes look of starting a non-profit- in his case, Room to Read. Some concepts from Leaving Microsoft to Change the World that stuck with me were:

-Help people help themselves (instead of doing everything for them and solving their problems.)

-Invest in yourself.

The second, published in 2013, continues his journey to promote global literacy. While reading the book, there were some quotes that resonated with me, and I want to share them. All are attributed to John Wood unless otherwise indicated.

-I am one small part of a very large crowd, one small light in a bright and populated constellation.

-“No matter what you are reading, it should not matter. Don’t let anyone tell you what to read or what not to read. The important thing is to simply be in the habit.” (His Grandmother)

-You never know how many talented people are out there until you invite and inspire them to be creative.

-“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” (Nelson Mandela)

-Sometimes if you state your intentions and goals to enough people, eventually enough seeds will be planted so that some bear fruit.

-“Figure out what you want to say at your deathbed, Then work backwards from there.” (Jeff Balin)

If you love books and are a strong advocate for literacy (As I suspect you are) and/or part of the non-profit world, these books are must-reads.

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### **Pamela says**

#TheBookFairies #RoomToRead

This book just easily became one of my top 3 favorite books. I want to read his first book: Leaving Microsoft to Change the World.

I could quote so much of this book. The list of people praising the book on the back cover and the level of people involved on the board speaks volumes.

I agree with so much of this book, the focus is on the developing world but my focus is right here locally and through The Book Fairies I am helping make sure every kid has access to books. This book fell into my lap during a book sort for The Book Fairies and I knew from the title and cover picture it was a must read. I was surprised it took me this long to come across this book but it was meant to be. I went straight to my library to check it out!

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1. John's (the author/founder) mother at the opening of the 10,000th library in Kavresthali, Nepal, "Every mother wants this for her children. The kids may not realize the significance, but the mothers do. We really do." ... as to watching the mothers lined up with faces "lit with radiant bliss" as they watch their children participate in reading games.

2. "If your son or daughter is a reader, the odds are pretty strong he or she is going to be more successful in life. That belief seems to be hard coded in our DNA. What is true in the developed world is also true across the developing world. It is independent of geography, of race, and of income level. Could a child possibly ask for more than those simultaneous embraces: the love of his parents and the love of books?"

I love the idea of Room to Read's Challenge Grant Model - helping others help themselves. "We can't want this more than you want it. We can't help you unless you want to help yourselves."(Chapter 5)  
<http://www.roomtoread.org/AboutUs>

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### **Iskandar Syah Ismail says**

Alhamdulillah, selesai membaca buku ini yang akan dihadam lagi berkali-kali.

Sebelum membaca buku ini, saya melihat juga reviu oleh pembaca goodreads yang mengatakan penulis buku ini, John Wood banyak mengulangi kisah di dalam buku Leaving Microsoft to Change The World. Oleh kerana itu, saya memulakan pembacaan dengan rasa hati yang sedikit 'sceptic'.

Namun apabila membaca dari halaman ke halaman, saya tidak begitu bersetuju dengan pendapat mereka. Benar pada peringkat awal, ada kisah yang diulang oleh penulis, namun penulis menulis peristiwa-peristiwa itu dalam konteks yang lebih mendalam. Malah beliau juga 'apologetic' dengan memberitahu pada penghujung bab yang beliau menulis berdasarkan memori silam beliau.

Buku kedua John Wood ini memberi banyak technical lessons bagi usahawan sosial (social entrepreneurs) yang bercita-cita bagi mengubah dunia tidak kira apa bidang yang mereka ceburi.

John Wood juga berkongsi kekecewaan dan kesedihan beliau terhadap sesetengah 'pelabur' (bukan penderma ya!) yang menjanjikan segunung intan kepada usaha beliau, namun akhirnya memungkiri janji mereka.

Namun lesson penting daripada pengalaman itulah yang mengujakan saya. Apakah lesson itu? Apabila kita jatuh, bangkitlah sepanas mungkin!

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### **Necholas says**

Bukunya bagus sekali. Kisah John Wood mengembangkan organisasi nirlaba bernama Room to Read ini sangat menarik. Membaca runtutan kisahnya membuat saya belajar beberapa hal:

1. Antusiasme dan determinasi sangat penting dalam segala sesuatu yang kita kerjakan. Saya melihat salah satu kesuksesan organisasi ini karena John Wood memiliki kedua karakter tersebut.
2. Tim yang terbaik sangat penting. Pada masa awal berdirinya Room to Read, John Wood membagi orang-orang terbaik yang dia bisa dapatkan. Mereka harus punya hati bagi pekerjaan ini.
3. Laporan yang rapi dan akuntabilitas akan membuat orang semakin memercayai sebuah lembaga. Room to Read adalah salah satu dari 3% dari seluruh organisasi amal yang mendapat peringkat tinggi untuk efisiensi dana.
4. Kerja dengan sense of detail. Saya perhatikan orang seperti John Wood, juga Dahlan Iskan, sangat suka

memerhatikan sesuatu hingga detail. Misalnya ketika John Wood diundang untuk melihat perayaan di sekolah dengan atraksi naga, John Wood bahkan menghitung jumlah kaki di naga.

5. Kerja dengan hitungan dan tahu berapa kondisi keseluruhan. Misalnya John Wood bilang saat ini 800 juta anak tidak punya kesempatan belajar, dan 2/3-nya adalah perempuan. Dengan mengenali betapa kondisi keseluruhan, John Wood punya target yang sangat jelas. Dia bangun 10.000 perpustakaan yang akan melayani 5 juta anak. Dia tahu soal anak perlu dana 250 usd untuk 1 tahun. Jadi donatur juga mudah mengerti berapa mereka harus memberi.

-- bintangnya dikurangi 1 karena bukunya terlalu tebal, 400 halaman lebih. Harusnya bisa lebih pendek. Tapi John Wood memang tipe pekerja keras. Di tengah kesibukannya pun dia bisa menulis buku setebal itu.

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### **Nilda Pacheco says**

What an inspiration, I would love to meet this guy and congratulate him for what he has accomplished. John Wood, let me take you out for a coffee. I will happily donate lots of books.

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### **Kristin says**

I have not read Mr. Wood's first book but very much enjoyed this follow-up. There is no doubt that he has created an efficient and effective organization, and I applaud his bringing reading and libraries to the world. I also like some of his learnings: get the local people involved, no Range Rovers, etc. I only wish that he would spend less time self-congratulating, and well, less time over all. I think the book could have been half the size and basically a "Learnings from Room To Read" which would help other NGOs move forward.

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### **Ramu Vairavan says**

This is the inspiring story of how a nonprofit with an ambitious mission is facing up to its challenges and is making waves in the developing world. Run almost like a business, Room to Read has been very effective over the years. There are now numerous RTR volunteer chapters around the world, including in Hong Kong and Singapore.

John Wood, the founder, shares many moving anecdotes in this book. That he left a top job in a wealthy country to do this doesn't come across as him running away from something. He appears to have gone into this with a clear vision and a purposeful mission. Makes me wonder if we are the escapists, choosing to look the other way, afraid to leave our own bubbles.

Some of Wood's words that struck a chord:

"If you have a good book in your hands, you will never be lonely."

"...providing a hand up, not a handout to communities in need."

"Until the day I die I will believe that we are all born with the same gray matter, and that talent is evenly distributed around the world. Every kid deserves a chance to unleash his or hers."

"The world has managed to find ways to get soft drinks, beer, and chocolate bars to thousands of rural villages but not books."

"A young boy in East Africa can pick up an AK-47 - or he can pick up a book. A teenager can walk into a crowded market in Colombo or Dhaka or Delhi with a bomb strapped to his body. Or that large lump being hoisted over his shoulders could be a backpack filled with books. If we dare to dream big and execute flawlessly, we have the ability to influence the choices and opportunities these children have. Or we can just decide it's someone else's problem and let the status quo perpetuate itself."

"If we wait until we have big fortunes to initiate change, we may be waiting for Godot. Why not just start now."

"The time is now: In fact, it was yesterday."

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### **Rebecca says**

This is my first rave for the year. It's a book that I would not normally have picked up, but I had a chance to read an advance copy and I was blown away. I have been talking about this book everywhere I go, encouraging anyone with even a tiny interest in children, education or reading to put it on their reading lists. The book (shown to the left) is called *Creating a Room To Read* by John Wood, and it's due for release on February 28th.

Nelson Mandela said,  
'Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.'

These words and variations of these words have been heard over and over again, some might say to the point that nobody really hears it anymore. Let me tell you, after reading this book, I just wanted to shout it from rooftops and tell everyone I knew about the amazing work of the Room to Read organization.

The first thing I thought when I started reading this book, is 'Why have I never heard of this man before?' This is his second book and the Room to Read organisation was established in 2000, I should really know about this man! The brief rundown is this, John Wood used to work for Microsoft, and after a trip to Nepal in 1999, he decided to leave Microsoft and do his bit to change the world (his first book is in fact called *Leaving Microsoft to Change the World*). In ten years Room to Read has helped to establish 10,000 libraries, this book looks at how he made this happen.

I believe this book technically falls into the business and management genre, but as a person with no real passion for the business world, I still found this book hard to put down. With that in mind there is a lot of detail about how the business side of this organisation works, but I found that fascinating, because it shows how this organisation has managed to do what it has and how it has become a \$50million per year organisation.

I will try not to give you a blow by blow description of the book, as I hope you'll go out and read it for yourself, but I will outline some of the points that really stood out to me.

Room to Read may technically be a charity, but it runs as a business, and its business is to provide the most

disadvantaged children on the planet an education. The organisation is made up of people with big business backgrounds, and they make it a priority that they hire the right people to make it all work. It seems so simple, but their plan is vastly different from so many other charitable organisations, and I think that's why their plan is working. While they may have their headquarters in San Francisco, each Room to Read program is run within the individual communities by local people.

They work with communities by meeting them halfway financially. Local people work with Room to Read to encourage their communities to support the program in whatever way they can. If they have cash, then they contribute financially, but if they don't, they can make that work too. They have found that many communities don't use cash and they barter instead, so these communities contribute what they can, be it in the form of labour or they will supply grain / livestock to sell.

It wasn't always smooth sailing however, after a few years, they asked the children to tell them how their libraries were working. The one thing that the children requested above everything else was the desire to have books written in their native tongue. It's understandable that publishers weren't publishing books for children in these languages as it wasn't financially viable, so the Room to Read team decided to publish their own. These books were not translations of existing titles, but original work, written and illustrated by people in the communities. Click on this link to see some examples of the books they have published:

<http://www.roomtoread.org/page.aspx?p...>

Room to Read also makes a concerted effort to keep their overheads as low as possible. They have businesses that donate their Frequent Flyer miles so they can fly for free, and hotels around the world have offered them rooms whenever they need them. Cathay Pacific even offered an empty Boeing 777 for a one way trip, and Scholastic donated 400,000 books to fill up the cargo hold. They also have a No Land Rover Policy, because they can't justify the cost, compared to what they could do with that money. See below for some examples:

\$75,000 = 1 Land Rover

OR

\$75,000 = putting 300 girls on a scholarship

OR

\$75,000 = publishing 75,000 copies of local language picture books

OR

\$75,000 = 15 bilingual libraries in rural Asia serving 7000 children.

Room to Read donates approx 82% of donated funds to programs rather than spending it on overheads.

\*That being said there is an author's note at the back of the book where John tells us (with full disclosure as is the Room to Read way) that in Africa they have had to buy a few vehicles, due to the danger and difficulty in travelling on a motor scooter. The cars used have either been donated or are used cars.

As well as examples of how their business is run, there are numerous stories of individual children they have helped. I also suggest having a look at the Room To Read Blog (which can be accessed via their website), as it reports regularly on the work they're doing, and supports that with personal stories. There have even been a series of documentaries made called Six Short Weeks that can be viewed at the link below. Here's the intro from the website:

Over a twelve month span, documentary filmmakers James Connolly and Rachelle Escaravage travelled to

Room to Read projects across Asia to tell the stories of some of the children who are benefitting from our programs. This fall, Room to Read is taking you inside our work promoting literacy and gender equality in education through six mini-documentaries the pair shot in India, Laos, Vietnam and Sri Lanka.

<http://www.roomtoread.org/SixShortWeeks>

John Wood has used his business background and his big business connections along with his passion for books and education to change the lives of million of children around the world. I have included a link to their website, so even if you don't think you will read the book please visit it and see for yourself the work they are doing.

<http://www.roomtoread.org/>

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### **Ganesh Muthupalani says**

Started on this wonderful book thanks to Ramu! John Wood's journey started when he stumbled upon a school in Nepal with an empty library 10 years ago. Today, they have impacted 12.4 million children by providing literacy programs and building libraries.

Room to Read has hit a global scale largely because it is run just like a corporate with goals, cost cutting and performance review. Staff whom he hires must have had corporate experience. The organization is certain that any initiative must be a community effort and involves the local stakeholders through sweat equity or small contributions.

Sometimes we become oblivious to the gifts we have around us. The little anecdotes peppered throughout the book brings to life the joy in kids when they get books to read. John Wood also shares his dilemmas and lessons learnt as a leader of a non-profit intricately.

This book is a must read for everyone. If you are someone who has an interest in businesses with a purpose, or social entrepreneurship this book is definitely for you!

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### **Lindsay says**

I feel like I have to explain giving this book such a low rating, because how could a future teacher dislike a book about global education? First of all, I need to make the distinction that this rating is for the actual book itself, not for its subject material. Room to Read seems like an amazing organization and I'm very awed and inspired by the vision of John Wood and Co. and what they have accomplished. However, I feel like I could have gotten just as much out of visiting the Room to Read website as I did reading this book. Very simply, I just don't like John Wood's writing style, and I feel like this book was about 100 pages longer than it needed to be.

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