

The Nonprofiteer

http://nonprofiteer.typepad.com/the_nonprofiteer/2008/02/intuition-or-pr.html

Nonprofits without the Nonsense

Intuition, or prejudice?

Foundation honcho [Bill Somerville](#) shares his kicking-ass-and-taking-names approach to grantmaking in a new book [Grassroots Philanthropy](#). Somerville's impatience with formality and paperwork, and his determination to tell the truth to applicants about the process and its likely outcome, struck a pleasantly familiar chord with the Nonprofiteer. Her own experience as a university admissions officer persuaded her that the single most useful modification to the admissions process would be the elimination of ball-hiding--the pretense that the system worked some way other than the way it actually did. So she has a soft spot in her heart for truth-tellers of Somerville's ilk.

She wonders, though, to what extent his recommendation of grantmaking by intuition--he calls it "based on trust," but it's the same thing--magnifies the risk inherent in the whole philanthropic system, namely, that of providing money to people who look and sound and think like the money-provider, who may or may not actually have the inside track on how best to approach a particular problem. There must--must!--be a way to create safeguards against this sort of unconsciously discriminatory behavior that are distinguishable from the mere paper clutter against which Mr. Somerville so ably, and properly, rails.

February 12, 2008 in [Foundation Hall of Shame/Stupid Foundation Tricks](#), [Private Philanthropy](#), [Relations with funders](#) | [Permalink](#)

[Technorati Tags](#): [foundations](#), [grantmaking](#), [nonprofit](#), [not for profit](#)