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Podcast Transcript: Extraordinary BENEFITS for Empowering Religious Communities

(0:00 - 0:12)
Welcome to the Deep Dive. Today, we're looking at something pretty significant, Khachkar Studios. Yes, a new initiative aimed at, well, really empowering religious communities in a novel way.

(0:12 - 0:21)
Exactly. We're going to unpack how they're applying, you know, serious financial discipline, world-class benchmarking. To achieve, frankly, extraordinary benefits.

(0:21 - 0:30)
It's about tangible results. And it's designed really for you, the senior leaders listening. It offers a look at a framework for potentially profound impact.

(0:31 - 0:36)
A really strategic model. Let's talk scale first. Khachkar Studios is making a huge commitment here.

(0:36 - 0:40)
Oh, absolutely. We're talking about $100 million investment. 100 million.

(0:41 - 0:46)
Yeah. Plus 5,000 senior management hours. Right, but it's more than just the numbers.

(0:46 - 0:56)
Big as they are, the context is fascinating. Tell us about that. Well, it's being described as one of the largest philanthropic investments in modern history to advance Judeo-Christian faith.

(0:56 - 1:09)
One of the largest ever. In modern history, yes. And get this, it apparently surpasses by 623% the total religious spending of the four largest Armenian-founded foundations over the past 23 years.

(1:09 - 1:13)
Wow. 623%. That's quite a statement.

(1:13 - 1:19)
It really is. It signals a very different approach. What's the core mission behind that investment? Their aim is ambitious.

(1:20 - 1:31)
To transform what they call the bottom-decile-performing U.S. Armenian Christian Ecosystem 12 Body Parts. Okay, let's break that down. Bottom-decile, so lowest 10 percent performers compared to peers.

(1:31 - 1:41)
Precisely. And the “12 body parts” refers to various aspects of the community ecosystem, from engagement to admin. And they want to shift this to a top-decile-performing culture.

(1:41 - 1:49)
That's a huge leap. It is, especially given the starting point. They note that currently only 1% to 3% of Armenian Americans are regular Sunday faithful.

(1:49 - 2:01)
Which they classify as a bottom-decile outcome. Right, and they also point to pervasive negative SROI yielding traits and deeply rooted barriers to change. SROI, social return on investment.

(2:01 - 2:12)
So evaluating the actual social, spiritual impact of resources used. Exactly, measuring that impact rigorously. It seems there are significant challenges there currently.

(2:12 - 2:21)
So how are they planning to tackle this? What's the strategy? The core is something called the BENEFITS framework. BENEFITS, okay. And this isn't theoretical, right? It's been used before.

(2:21 - 2:32)
That's right. It has a notable track record, specifically in transforming the Greek government's financial trajectory. From national finance to religious communities, applying that same level of rigor.

(2:32 - 2:41)
That seems to be the idea, bringing that kind of strategic financial discipline. Okay, let's walk through BENEFITS. It's an acronym, right? B-E-N-E-F-I-T-S.

(2:41 - 2:51)
Correct. So B is for? B, biblical wisdoms. It's about managing and measuring, guided by eight biblical financial wisdoms.

(2:51 - 3:00)
Okay, grounding it in faith principles. Yes, but critically, combining that with world-class benchmarking and management excellence. It's both spiritual and strategic.

(3:00 - 3:07)
Got it. Next is the first E. E, educating. This focuses on education-training-retention, or ETR.

(3:07 - 3:15)
ETR. Right. Addressing what they see as an ecosystem devoid of and starving for the financial discipline this framework offers.

(3:15 - 3:20)
It's about building capacity. Equipping people with the right skills and mindset. Makes sense.

(3:21 - 3:29)
Then N. N, new faithful. This is about attracting a significant number of new, high value-add faithful. High value-add faithful.

(3:29 - 3:36)
So focused on quality of engagement. Seems so. It's explicitly linked to content and communications based on this financial discipline.

(3:36 - 3:52)
They actually call this Khachkar Studios' KPI #1. Interesting, KPI #1. Okay, after N comes the second E. E, environment. This one's about the organizational climate. How so? Strengthening it by increasing trust and confidence while reducing distrust and counterproductive behavior.

(3:52 - 3:58)
Ah, the cultural aspect. Yeah. You need a healthy environment for any strategy to work, right? Absolutely crucial.

(3:58 - 4:04)
Fostering trust and positive engagement. Moving on to F. F, financial strength. Pretty central, this one.

(4:05 - 4:12)
I'd imagine so. Yeah, it covers increasing overall financial resources, improving the financial profile, reducing financial trauma. Financial trauma.

(4:12 - 4:21)

That's the term they use. And importantly, increasing SROI-based better decision-making. Again, that focus on measurable impact.

(4:21 - 4:28)
Right, tying resources to quantifiable outcomes. Next is I. I, identity. This is about the message it sends.

(4:28 - 4:44)
What kind of message? That Armenian Christian identity with intense intellectual integrity, not a puppet's lazy mind, can be strengthened through this kind of financial discipline. Strong words there. Intense intellectual integrity challenging a puppet's lazy mind.

(4:44 - 4:52)
It's positioning this as intellectually rigorous. Very much so. It's about strengthening identity through disciplined thinking and action.

(4:52 - 4:57)
Okay, almost done. T, track record. This highlights how demonstrating success is key.

(4:57 - 4:59)
Makes sense. People want to back winners. Exactly.

(5:00 - 5:10)
A compelling track record is called a key determinant in merit-based decision-making, especially when allocating precious time and resources. So success breeds success, essentially. Building that positive momentum.

(5:11 - 5:16)
Precisely. And how that track record can be actively improved. And finally, S. S, stewards.

(5:16 - 5:20)
This brings it back to leadership. The leaders themselves. Yes.

(5:20 - 5:28)
Emphasizing that the church and its leaders are stewards of their community. Right. And that this should be one of the community's highest value-add role models.

(5:29 - 5:34)
It underlines the massive responsibility they have. To lead with this kind of financial discipline. To embody it.

(5:34 - 5:49)
Exactly. They need to be the role models for this disciplined approach. So wrapping this up, Khachkar Studios, with its huge investment and this BENEFITS framework, it really presents a potentially transformative model, doesn't it? It does.

(5:49 - 6:07)
It's a serious, structured approach, merging financial discipline with faith-based goals for potentially unprecedented impact. A model for religious communities to really embrace world-class management principles. And connecting this back to you, our listeners, the leaders, it really does raise a critical question, I think.

(6:07 - 6:36)
Which is? How might applying these kinds of principles, world-class benchmarking, rigorous SROI-based thinking, like Khachkar Studios, is demonstrating how might that transform your community? Transforming it into perhaps a beacon of high-value leadership and truly sustained influence. That's the question. How could that level of focused examination and discipline change things for you? Something definitely worth considering if you think about the potential for transformation within your own sphere.