

Purpose: To emphasize Purpose as an essential component of leadership for both individuals and communities.

Intended Outcome: To heighten your appreciation for Purpose in personal and professional leadership.

Purpose comes down to answering the question: “Why?” Sometimes we use other words like aim, goal, intention, or mission but fundamentally we are talking about Purpose. Purpose lies beneath the surface. Rarely does it jump out from the background and announce itself. In order to deepen the capacity of Purpose, it is important to understand that it is not so much something one creates as something one discerns. Purpose does not require you to learn a foreign set of skills but instead to practice seeing more deeply into what is already before you. It is a subtle shift; a new lens to glimpse the why behind what you experience every day. Purpose must constantly be front and center, which often requires repeating it multiple times. If a leader loses sight of the Purpose, so does the rest of the community. The work of leaders is to keep the Purpose of the community in the foreground; alive in everything that they do.

Purpose through Three Vantage Points

1. Original Purpose - Original Purpose is the most foundational and basic form of Purpose for individuals and communities. At the heart of every individual and group is the primary motive to survive. Only when survival is ensured can leaders begin to envision what their community would be like while thriving. To determine Original Purpose ask, “What must happen in order for the community to survive and thrive?”

2. Personal Purpose – Personal Purpose is the most individualistic form of Purpose and provides a sense of direction in your life. Having a clear idea of personal Purpose provides a guide in making decisions about where to invest time and talents. To determine Personal Purpose ask, “How am I uniquely designed to contribute to the community’s surviving and thriving?”

3. Situational Purpose – Situational Purpose is the most practical and frequent expression of Purpose. It differs from one moment to the next, depending on the needs of the community. Positive leaders add a simple step in between the call for action and their response by first pausing to discern the Purpose. To determine Situational Purpose ask, “What is the Purpose of the issue at hand?”

Four Key Features of Purpose

1. Purpose ensures the maximum use of resources and effort – A clear Purpose provides insights as to how best apply your resources. It gives direction when you feel lost and sustains you through obstacles. Purpose ensures that the effort you

put in does not go to waste. Rather than merely going through the motions, Purpose guides you to perform a set of deliberate actions to produce desired outcomes.

2. Purpose keeps us focused – Purpose is more powerful than circumstances or excuses. Keeping our Purpose in mind helps us decide which demands to say “yes” or “no” to. A clear Purpose helps us discern which activities divert our attention and are unrelated to our key purposes and which ones are worthwhile of our time and energy.

3. Purpose has generative power – Purpose, by its nature, refers to something larger than an individual’s self-centered, immediate wants. Actions stemming from a worthy Purpose generate meaningful results. Positive leaders create value by infusing Purpose into their communities and helping refocus people on what really is important.

4. Purpose is a source of unique competitive advantage – People with a compelling Purpose are willing to go to lengths that those with a less compelling purpose are not. To find an edge, identify and share a bigger Purpose.

Purpose Principles

1. Purpose has three requirements: Discern (recognize the purpose), Articulate (reveal the purpose to others), and Fulfill (satisfy the purpose).

2. Purpose, Outcomes, and Methods: Leaders must first discern the purpose and then determine the desired outcome before discussing methods. Too often, methods “How?” are discussed before answering “Why?”

3. Alignment of Purpose: Leaders must be clear about their individual and community’s Purpose and ensure that all community members are on board.

Purpose Inhibitors

1. Overwhelm – Effective leaders make time for Purpose, even during crisis.

2. Conflicting Purposes – Sometimes there are multiple purposes. Prioritizing them can lead to better discussions and resolve conflicts.

3. Shallow Purpose - Sometimes we are driven by purposes that are inappropriate. Remember not to sacrifice what you want most for what you want right now.

4. Self-Doubt – Not everyone will always recognize the value of Purpose. In those moments, remember the importance of voicing the Purpose when no one else will.

5. Diluted Purpose – The purposeful leader frequently revisits and remembers Purpose when others lose sight of it over time.