

Community Building

Multiplying Social Force
Through Others



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1 Purpose & Outcomes

PURPOSE: Enhance understanding of the leader's role as principal community architect

INTENDED OUTCOME:
Gain direction to help your community thrive

"Community doesn't just happen. People make community. Every community experience that has ever been or ever will be begins when one or more individuals decide to focus their time and energy on calling others together with a clear intention." Claude Whitmyer, *In the Company of Others: Making Community in the Modern World*

2 Self Assessment

Please rate yourself for each of the following items on the 1-7scale (1=no, 7=yes) **before** reading the chapter.

1. I consider my area of responsibility (i.e. department, organization, etc.) to be a true community.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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2. I am clear about the kind of community I most want to create.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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3. I am attuned to the concerns, aspirations, strengths, etc. of those I lead.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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4. I have a clear plan for creating my ideal community.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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5. I deliberately seek to create positive connections among the people in my organization.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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6. I am aware of disruptions to my community and am effective at resolving them.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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7. I enable others to positively shape our community.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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3 Community Building Defined

Community building expands social force

We arrive at the capacity that is the essence of the program you are in now. Community leadership organizations were founded on the reality that communities thrive to the degree that members from diverse populations engage in the challenges of their communities. These programs have spread across the U.S. to serve as pipelines that infuse local civic and non-profit organizations with new voices. *Positive Leadership* helps equip these voices with tools to make a meaningful difference. Here, in my town, we experience the benefits of over 2000 Leadership Tulsa graduates. They serve on non-profit boards, encourage volunteerism from within their workplace, run for public office, serve on city task forces, mentor young people, and advocate for important causes. These are just some of the ways they contribute to a better city.

With each class of graduates, the threads that make our community successful grow stronger. They improve our quality of life, touching many lives in overt and subtle ways. The same is true for your community. Your leadership program provides you with knowledge about your community and connects you with other leaders from inside your class, alumni, and established movers and shakers. The goal is to help you find ways to use your gifts in areas that matter to you. You are in the program because of your desire to connect to the community and, quite possibly, because you were sponsored by someone who believes in your potential to make a difference.

Our communities do not belong to us. We belong to them. George Bernard Shaw may have said it best: "I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community, and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. Life is no 'brief candle' to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to the future generations."

Communities to which we belong that give us sustenance and meaning. Community Building is about providing people with a platform to be their best selves. The more meaningfully connected we are to our communities, the better versions of ourselves we become. We are more generous, understanding, patient, informed, and trusting.

Community Building, like the previous capacities, is one that we can expand within ourselves and in others. We tend not to think of it as a skill. Rather, we go through our day-to-day and either we experience community or we don't. The goal of this chapter is to spark reflection on the importance of your communities—their importance to you and your importance to them. Recall the *Positive Leadership* diagram, in the Introduction of three circles representing Self, Leadership, and Community. Central to the discussion of community is the nature of leadership itself. Social force is dependent on a social venue. Without community, there is no leadership. In order to increase one's social force, we covered four capacities: **Authenticity** (the unique qualities of an individual), **Purpose** (the reason that compels a person or community), **Advocacy** (the act of holding up something as important), and **Resilience** (the quality of leaders to return to their true form in the face of challenges). **Community Building is the capacity of leaders to strengthen those around them.** Community exists when individuals are genuinely concerned about others, have a sense that their fortunes are intertwined, and act in the best interest of one another. Effective leaders understand the nature of community and see it as their job to build it, but many fail in both areas. It is not that leaders reject the notion of community so much as they never really give it much thought.

So what makes a group of people a community? As a story goes, one day a man was visited by an angel to show him the difference between heaven and hell. The angel first brought the man to a place where there were people walking about. In their hands, they carried long wooden spoons. Curiously, their arms were unable to bend at the elbows. All around them was food but, despite its abundance, the people were emaciated as if the food mocked their straight-armed condition. Pointing to the extra-long spoons and arms that would not bend, the angel said, "This is hell because the people are unable to feed themselves; yet the food they need is plentiful and so close at hand." With that the angel whisked the man off to another place. There, many people walked about with arms that also were unable to bend, and in their hands, they held similar spoons with long handles. Around them was also an abundance of food, but these people looked well nourished. The man looked questioningly at the angel. "This is heaven," the angel said in response. "But how could this be? By all appearances, this place looks very much like the vision of hell that you showed me," the man remarked with puzzlement. The angel responded, "Yes, with one key difference. Here, the people feed each other."

In a community, people willingly take actions to address each other's concerns. Perhaps people do not literally spoon feed each other, but in a very real sense, the community is comprised of actions people take (or avoid taking) for the benefit of others. People are fully capable of behaving in ways to create a sort of "hell" or "heaven" in any type of organization be it business, volunteer, civic, and so forth. When asked, people can articulate experiences that fit both descriptions and they universally prefer the "heaven" scenario. Does merely preferring a positive community make it so? In other words, is community a random occurrence beyond our control or is it the result of specific actions we can take that evoke reactions from others?

When individuals come together such that their fortunes are linked, they have the potential for community. I say “potential” because forming a collective of people does not guarantee a sense of true community. Let’s clarify what we mean by community. We make a distinction between a community and a place of association. A place of association is a group of people working together, but the qualities and behaviors in the group don’t necessarily make it a community.

As you read about the seven capacities of *Positive Leadership*, you may find that some come more naturally to you than others. For example, Community Building is the one that I wrestle with the most. I believe in it as strongly as all the others and recognize it as an absolutely essential capacity for *Positive Leadership*. Yet, if I were to take an honest look at where my social force is weakest, it may be in the arena of building community. We all benefit from enhancing our capacity in all seven. If, for some reason, you find yourself further removed from a sense of community than you would like, my hope is that this chapter encourages you to actively, passionately seek community.

For our purposes, we will define community in the following way: A group of people connected through identity attributes that work together over time to meet common needs and solve common problems. Identity attributes could mean residing in close physical proximity (i.e. household or neighborhood), having common interests (i.e. cycling, dance, or books) or working toward a common cause (i.e. cure for a disease). The common need may have a social focus, such as a group of retired women in town who meet monthly at a different restaurant and all wear red hats. Or, the need could be more focused, such as working in the same company or department to secure income.

If two strangers met for the first time, they would come to know each other intimately if they merely described the communities to which they belonged over the course of their lives. Each of us have been shaped by our communities. Right now, there are communities in your life that are in their early stages, communities that began long ago and continue today, and communities to which you belonged but no longer exist.

For this capacity, I recommend that you reflect on your communities and use those experiences as case studies as you read through the chapter. Think about a group that matters to you and the experiences within that group that involve others. This could be a social group, an entrepreneurial venture, volunteer effort, or educational experience. Think about a time when you were a member of a supportive community. Also, keep in mind a time when you were part of a group that was dysfunctional in some way. Having these examples in mind will increase the relevance as we proceed.

4 Community Building and Leadership

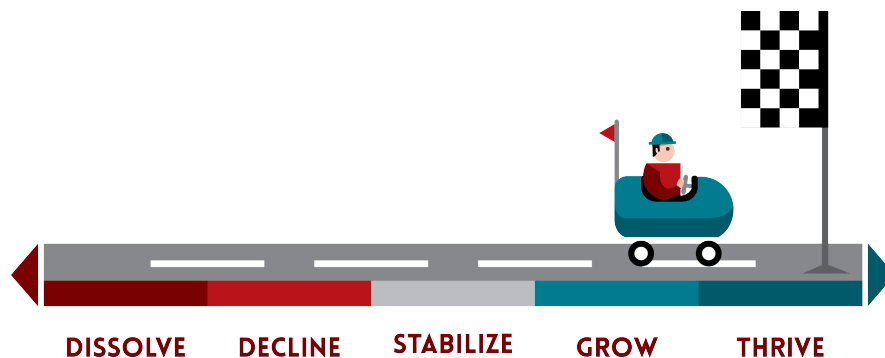
Rarely, do we stop to think “Who is responsible for the creation and maintenance of our communities?” or “How come a particular community has persisted so long (or ended so abruptly)?” Or, “Are communities an act of deliberate creation or a spontaneous result of circumstances?” These questions matter if we are to be more mindful of our communities.

The capacity for Community Building consists of the following elements:

- Increased human capital: each member must be positioned and enabled to contribute his or her unique gifts.
- Cultivation of constructive relationships: the macro quality of a community is the cumulative effect of the micro-interactions that occur among members.
- Sustained member engagement: each person must feel a connection to the larger whole and be involved in the decisions and activities.
- Member identification with a common purpose: each person striving toward shared outcomes while employing agreed upon methods. Here, I refer to the POM model introduced in the Purpose chapter. Each of the 3 pieces is essential to alignment among community members and to ensuring resources are best utilized.
- Increased capacity of the community to produce desired results: if the community is not getting stronger, then it's getting weaker. Continual improvement of members and upgrade of resources allows the community to reach its goals.

Stages of a community

Every community goes through stages, even the most stable ones. The diagram below illustrates several key phases in the life of a community. This simple guide assesses the case study you have in mind for community. Look at the scale below to determine where your community is currently and where you'd like it to be. Descriptions of each stage are provided on the following page.



The leadership capacity of Community Building requires identifying where the community is along the scale and progressing the community toward thriving. To the left of the scale, a community may dissolve. In the state of **dissolution**, people are no longer willing or able to belong to the collective because it ceases to be relevant or is too toxic. Rarely do communities instantly collapse. Prior to dissolving is a downward slide of **decline**. Classic signs of decline within a community include: reduced membership, poor financial performance, unclear POM (purpose, outcomes, or methods), or infighting.

Prior to decline is a period called **stabilization**. Stabilization signifies revitalization (or healing) from chaos. Stabilization is a precursor to moving forward and is, in itself, a mark of progress from a previous time of destabilization or decline. Identify when your community is in this stage as it can indicate a forward or backward next step for the community. In stabilization, the community is neither growing nor declining. This stage can be a critical strategic point to regroup before moving forward, or it can be a protracted period of stagnation that leads to decline.

Growth is the stage of Community Building where forward progress is evident. A challenge has been overcome, positive changes in players have taken place, or a resurgence of leadership has spurred the community forward. Finally, **thriving** is a state of high energy and productivity in the life of a community. When a community thrives, the members experience satisfaction of their needs (social, financial, esteem, etc.). It is difficult for any leader to claim long-term success when his or her community is not thriving.

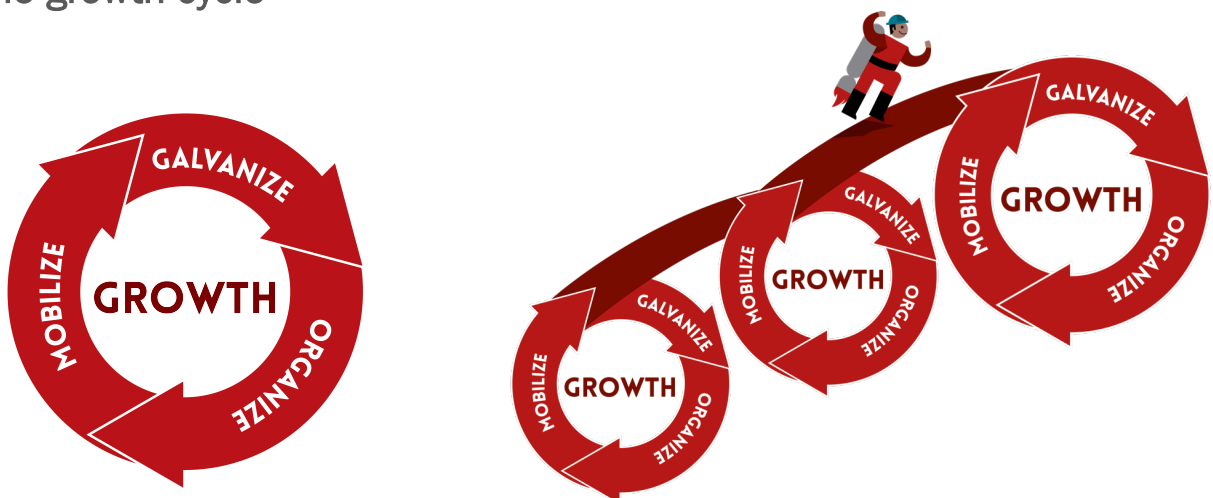
How does a leader build community?

Each stage requires a different leadership mode. For example, a previous client of mine was the leader of a large faith community in a time of decline mostly due to demographic changes and shifting preferences of some members for more modern approaches to worship. His amiable and calm leadership style suited the community's time of thriving. However, as the community declined, this style made it difficult for him to confront the tough issues for fear of upsetting certain groups within the congregation. Our work together focused on emboldening him to make the necessary adjustments to unblock the community and move it back toward a state of thriving.

Because times had been good previously, there was a large contingent of people who did not want change, displaying that all too familiar “we’ve always done it this way” mentality. The problem was that the old way was not moving the community forward, and this contingent was the one who hired him. He felt it was disloyal to spark changes. This is an example of the real challenge a leader faces in building community. Operator mentality was insufficient to turn things around. It required technician-level capacity to positively shape the community.

How does a leader help build a community? You can use the stages of community model to help identify and understand the health of your community. Once you have identified where you would like your community to go, there are three ways you can employ social force to build stronger community. We can call these tools **the growth cycle**. Conversely, there is the reverse process that we will call **the decline cycle**, which you can use to assess decline. *Positive Leadership* is about accessing the growth cycle and the absence of leadership results in the decline cycle.

The growth cycle



Galvanize

1. **Galvanize:** In this stage, you bring together the loose confederacy of individuals who potentially share a common interest by clarifying and articulating your Purpose. You can directly apply the **POM model** from the Purpose chapter to clarify your common Purpose. In the galvanize stage, a leader must *listen to the needs of the community* and each member must *feel his or her needs are heard*.

Here is where you tap into community members' intrinsic (instead of extrinsic) motivation. Tapping into intrinsic motivation is a key to social force. Authority relies on extrinsic motivation, but true leaders access intrinsic motivation to build a strong community. The following three needs must be met in order to spark intrinsic motivation:

- Autonomy - People are more motivated to participate when you feel you have a choice.
- Competence - When people feel capable to succeed, they are more motivated to engage in something. They need to feel that they can succeed.
- Relatedness - People are more motivated (to take action, go above and beyond on another's behalf) when they care about the people involved.

Checklist: What is it that the people in your community care about? Have they had a chance to express their interest or concern (listening takes place here)? Are the right people in the room? What do they need to know to come together? Do they have a clear and common Purpose? Can they visualize the outcomes? Are they clear on the methods to achieve the outcomes?

Organize

2. **Organize:** In this stage you provide tools that allow people to act on the stated purpose. Without these tools the community will not remain galvanized. Here you create "rule sets" for your community. These rule sets must serve the purpose of (and facilitate the needs of) the members in the community. Rule sets give your community members *guidelines and clarity to stay focused* on the community's collective purpose. Rule sets can be formal, informal, or a combination.

Without clear rule sets, people do not have the tools they need to achieve the stated Purpose. They don't have clear roles and this leads to a breakdown in communication and effectiveness. A community needs clear rule sets to thrive. Examples of rule sets are everywhere-- religion, the military, board games, and in effective protest movements that elicit change to authority. A lack of organization creates confusion. Too much organization can be confining. Effective leadership determines and facilitates the optimal degree of organization.

Checklist: Is there an efficient and effective communication system in place? Is there a clear chain of command? (Do community members know who to take requests and issues to?) What do they need to know about the communication channels and the "rule sets" to stay organized? Is there a proper way to handle disputes? Do all the systems/processes serve the stated purpose? Are the systems optimized?

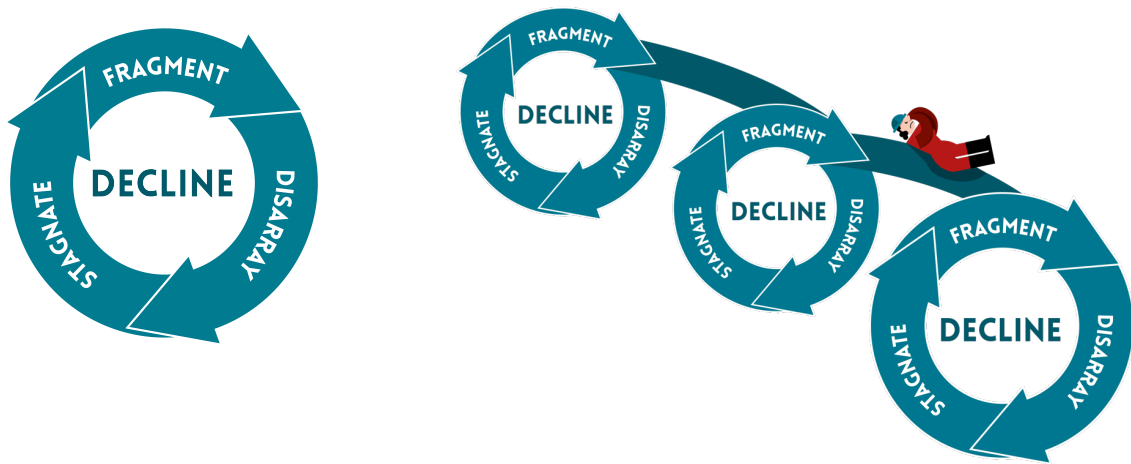
Mobilize

3. **Mobilize:** In this stage, you point members in a direction that allows them to take action on the stated Purpose. It is not enough to organize a community as there has to be a way for the community to act on their Purpose. A community that doesn't move toward their stated Purpose will ultimately slide in the direction of dissolution. We see this all the time-- a community disbands because the need or passion that made us join in the first place isn't actualized. The need to be part of the community fades until members drop away. Communities need to move or they will stagnate.

Checklist: Are there clear benchmarks for success? Is there a plan in place should the organized systems breakdown? Are the timelines clear and agreed upon? Do members have a way to keep the purpose in sight? Do members feel empowered to advocate for each other and for the community as a whole? Is there accountability for who is supposed to do what?

This three step process (galvanize, organize, mobilize) is an actualization of social force as it helps you get people on board, become an organized group, and make positive changes. Remember, communities can be many things in your life (family, work, volunteer organizations, causes you are interested in supporting). The ability to **galvanize, organize, and mobilize** is where you can form or reinforce the community and help others increase their social force for positive action. This is also a great framework for assessing the health and needs of a community. These three steps, in this order, are important. A community can't mobilize if it's not organized. Nor, can it organize if it is not galvanized. Think back to your case study to see how these three steps helped you feel part of your community, or if they were not present, what kinds of breakdowns did they lead to? This specific order is very important and can help you pinpoint what is needed for your community.

The decline cycle



The decline cycle illustrates how a community can **fragment**, fall into **disarray**, and **stagnate**. Essentially, this is the default mode of communities if leadership is not infused into the community.

Communities in the decline cycle exhibit a natural by-product of communities left to their own devices or run solely on authority (vs. leadership). Without propelling forces of the growth cycle, entropy causes a community to fragment (de-galvanize). Fragmenting occurs when the connection among members becomes rocky and/or less frequent. The fabric of the community begins to loosen. We all know the experience of how even close friendships can end because of sheer neglect.

Fragmenting leads to disarray. As a community fragments, it may lose members. Roles that were once filled are left open. Or, if someone new is brought in, they may lack the institutional knowledge to properly play that role. Communication among members becomes unclear or infrequent. The result is that the community becomes less organized and enters a state of disarray.

Disarray leads to stagnation, making a community less effective as a whole. The mechanisms that allowed a community to meet or exceed its goals have dissipated and progress slows, comes to a halt, or even becomes counter-productive.

Disarray fuels further fragmentation as the cycle continues to spiral downward.

Leaders set the tone of the community

Having had the opportunity to work within the senior ranks of many organizations, I was startled to learn the number of ways people on the same team actually work against each other, maneuver for status, stonewall, and gossip. No organization is immune. I've seen it in big corporations, small businesses, hospitals, schools, and religious institutions. At the same time, I've seen the opposite— positive communities. What accounts for the difference?

Positive leaders create positive communities. They can proactively build the spirit of community through their actions. On the other hand, a community can erode merely by passive neglect. This is a real danger when leaders have an operator mentality. Just by being unaware of the Community Building capacity and the forces that shape a sense of true community, a leader can jeopardize the community's survival.

5 Community Building Principles

Place of association vs. community

A technician of *Positive Leadership* understands the distinction between a community and a place of association. Let's say there are two groups of people that are equal in all ways, except one. Group A is a community and Group B is a pseudo community— or what I call a “**Place of Association (POA)**.” A POA is a term that describes collectives that may *appear* to be communities, but are not. On the surface, both the community and the POA look similar. For example, the people in both groups are in close physical proximity and are coordinated in performing tasks. There is a series of interactions that occur among members of both groups on a regular basis. Ostensibly, they may have clearly stated purpose, outcomes, and methods.

At a closer look, however, we see a qualitatively different connection among the people in groups A and B. Different attitudes. Different behaviors. There are many advantages to belonging to a community over a POA. Just to be clear, POA's are not necessarily “bad” places. In fact, most of the groups to which we belong are POA's. We are merely establishing that not all collectives are communities. For the personal case study you selected, is it more of a community or a place of association? The next page shows a chart that points out some of the distinctions between a community and a POA.

Characteristics of a community vs. POA

	COMMUNITY	PLACE OF ASSOCIATION
LEADERSHIP	Moments of accountability- anyone has the opportunity to take positive actions that evoke positive reactions from others.	Positions of authority- people wait for prompts from those in authority in order to take action. Until then "it's not my problem."
COMMUNICATION	Open interaction among members. Members build relationships regardless of status.	Interaction is full of politically charged "do's" and "taboos."
COMFORT	Members have a sense of ease around each other and assume that others will be fair and understanding.	Members feel ill at ease around each other and worry about potential threat, misunderstanding and retribution.
SAFETY	Members are concerned for each other's well being and want each other to do well.	People are out for themselves and view another's success as a threat.
AUTHENTICITY	Emphasis placed on people being themselves.	Emphasis placed on projecting the "right" image.
PURPOSE	People manage themselves around a common purpose.	People manage themselves around their individual aims.
ADVOCACY	People feel developed because the organization wants them to grow.	People feel stifled and unsupported. They have to fight to get ahead.
RESILIENCE	When times are tough, people pitch in to help each other.	When times are tough, people save themselves.
DIVERSITY	Value is placed on differences and variety.	Value is placed on likeness and conformity.

Leadership

In the Introduction chapter, we discussed a key difference between how leadership functions in a community vs. a Place of Association. In a PoA, leadership is reserved for people in authority. There are often clear lines between those who have authority and those who do not. It is entirely possible for a person to hold a position of authority and be an effective leader. We all have had a manager, for example, that we had to follow and wanted to follow. The opposite is also true. There are managers that we would not follow if we did not have to. In either case, leadership in a PoA often rests with people in positions of authority. If someone wants to have more influence, they must understand the particular politics in that organization and do the necessary things to secure such positions.

With community, leadership works differently. For example, if you wanted to advocate for change, you may not have positional authority over those in charge of the change. Instead, leadership is a matter of social force. It begins with someone who feels passionately about a cause. This person cannot simply impose the desired change. Instead, the person must first recognize a moment of accountability— if something is to change, he or she must possess a sense of commitment and passion for it. Likely, that passion stems from some important aspect of that person's authentic self. That aspect crystalizes into a purpose. Then, the person advocates for that purpose. This may require hard work and overcoming resistance. Both can take a toll on one's resilience. By building a community around the cause, the person creates momentum for the change. Once community is built, leadership is not so much based on formal roles as on different individuals experiencing moments of accountability at different times.

Communication

Another difference between a community and a POA is how members regard points of view that differ from their own. Martin Buber, the German philosopher, articulated this difference in a concept he referred to as the “narrow ridge.” On one side of the ridge people are concerned solely about their own perspective. The other side of the ridge is focused on the other person's perspective without concern for one's own. The narrow ridge is the place in between the two where each member equally considers his or her perspective as well as the others'. Both people communicating in such a fashion will find that they do not have to fight to be heard; they are actively trying to decipher each other's points of view without abandoning their own.

Contrast this with situations you may have experienced when someone else is pushing his or her agenda without any regard for yours and the only way for you to avoid being overrun is to dig your heels in. In communities, validity and concern are granted to the other people's perspective. In POA's, other people's points of view are reduced to obstacles to your point of view. In POA's, people present their views as if they were facts beyond dispute. In communities, people candidly express their perspectives, acknowledging they may not have all the information and remaining open to discovering other pieces of the truth. In the Field Guide for Community Building, there's an insightful chart that describes effective communication known as Gibb's Supportive and Defensive Communication.

Comfort

In a community, people feel at ease in other people's presence because they sense that they are part of something together. You know you are part of a community when you are glad to be in the presence of others and take comfort in knowing that you will not be minimized or marginalized. Mary Anne Evans (more famously known under her pen name, George Elliot) appreciated this quality when she wrote, "Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person; having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but to pour them all out, just as they are, chaff and grain together, knowing that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and then, with a breath of kindness, blow the rest away."

In a POA, people feel as if they have to look over their shoulders. For example, I've been a part of groups where the moment one person would walk away from a conversation he or she would be criticized in some way— either overtly or subtly.

Take a moment to list three behaviors others have taken that increased your sense of comfort in a community and three that decreased your comfort.

Safety

Safety is closely related to comfort; a community is characterized by its members acting in the best interest of other members who may be present or absent. You may have worked for someone in whom you had complete confidence— someone who would deal with you fairly. Conversely, have you worked for someone that made you feel like you had to constantly defend yourself? In POA's, there is a felt need to leave a "paper trail" for fear that your concerns would be misrepresented in your absence. In a community, one feels confident that an individual's concerns, interests, and well-being are cared for by other community members.

Authenticity

In a community, you are appreciated for being yourself and encouraged to further reach your potential. I remember interviewing a married couple who lived in a Kibbutz— a particular kind of community commonly found in Israel— and they described how people treated each other. This couple described one individual who was somewhat quirky and difficult to get along with. I asked them why they didn't just avoid him or ask him to leave when he came around. They both looked at me as if that would be unforgivable. In a Kibbutz, even people who had qualities you may not particularly appreciate are still part of the community. They went on to explain that it is not important whether we approve of others' peculiarities. As long as they were not violating anyone else or harming the community, then they were a legitimate member.

In POA's, people are shunned for petty differences even if they are contributing members of a community. Perhaps all of us can recall a time growing up when we were not part of a "cool group" and were clearly unwelcome. We may have received subtle and overt messages that we were not "good enough" and that in order to be accepted we'd have to look, dress, or act in ways that the group found acceptable. The default mode of a true community is to enhance the value of its members, not diminish it.

Purpose

As we discussed previously, we can look at purposefulness from three levels: original, personal, and situational. Original purpose is the drive for survival, and even beyond that, to a state of thriving. In a community, survival of the group is of concern to everyone and the members can be trusted to weigh their personal wants against the overall needs of the community. Cesar Chavez once said, "We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community... Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own."

I remember once asking a former boss if he could make an exception to a particular policy for me. He responded by asking, "Could our team afford it if everyone were to do what you are asking?" In this particular situation, the answer to me was clearly no. He challenged me to weigh my personal preferences against the needs of the organization. Perhaps that question would not be fair in all circumstances; after all, sometimes exceptions are appropriate, but I have found it to be a good guide. In a POA, people place their personal concerns above those of the greater community, and they fail to see that their individual success depends on the good health of the community.

Advocacy

We talked about different things that could be advocated for: ideas, direction, and products/services. For this discussion of community, I'll focus on the advocacy of people. In a community, individuals have a sense that others are interested in their development. Leaders in the community would consider the future beyond their own tenure and consider giving attention to many who could contribute to the community's ongoing success. This is one reason why training and coaching are hallmarks of a community. People want to advocate for others to attain higher levels of development.

In POA, there is a lack of proactive advocacy for other people's growth. People may find themselves in positions without the appropriate preparation to be successful, or see others brought into the organization taking key positions that block their own advancement. In a community, formal and informal mentoring is common. People consider it to be in their own best interest to make others in the community stronger. In a POA, perhaps people are not deliberately holding back advocating for others, but they may also not give much thought to the development of those around them.

Resilience

Chaos can strike communities and POA's equally, but how does each entity respond? When challenges occur in a community people pull together to survive and eventually return to a state of health.

In POA's, there is an emphasis on self preservation. Accounts of events after the sinking of the Titanic contrasted the different behaviors in a time of crisis. There were those who embodied the spirit of community by making sure that women and children were escorted to the life boats. There were even reports of the band playing music as a way of bringing some humanity and comfort to the horrible events. By contrast, there were individuals who took advantage of their positions of seniority or affluence to secure their own escape. In a more practical and everyday sense, how do people respond when a business is in trouble? The term "golden parachute" has worked its way into our vernacular to characterize those with privilege who secure their escape at the expense of those without the power or influence to do the same. When a community is threatened, the response is one of mutual protection.

Diversity

The term “diversity” has been given greater importance since the Civil Rights Movement and is truly one of the great advances in civilization of the last century. It has also become a politically-loaded term. For our purposes, I would like to introduce the phrase “complementarity of excellences” to more specifically communicate what I mean by diversity. This implies that I do the things I am good at and you do the things you are good at. As we interrelate, I strengthen you where you are weak and you strengthen me where I am weak. In the larger tapestry of a community, this makes for a stronger weave. In order for complementarity of excellences to work, everyone needs to be honest about their individual assets and liabilities. In a community, this lattice-like intermeshing of talents can bolster survival and resilience. People thrive in an environment where they are appreciated for their unique excellence.

In a POA, diversity takes a back seat to uniformity. There is a pressure to conform to the norms. In POA's, this poses a problem because people feel like they must hide their weaknesses and exaggerate their strengths. Also, complementarity of excellences requires an exchange of talents. How can one be sure that if he or she makes a contribution that there will be reciprocation from others?

6 Community Building Inhibitors

Community decline and renewal

In terms of community, I have come across two ideas from the field of sociology that shed greater light. One explains the process of community decline and the other of community renewal. The “Broken Window” theory explains how a once thriving community can become a run-down neighborhood. It all begins with the broken window that was never repaired. When people see the broken glass go unaddressed, over time it signals that there is nobody who cares enough about the building to fix it. To some vandals, it serves as an invitation to further deface the building, perhaps with spray paint or littering. As those blights remain, tenants of the building may think that they could live in a nicer place for the same rent and they begin to leave. In attempts to recapture lost income, landlords seek to fill the vacancies, yet the only people who are interested are people who care little for the way the building looks or cannot afford better maintained places. As a different socio-economic group of tenants moves in, other tenants decide to move out. Over time, a once thriving neighborhood becomes run down and it all started with the broken window that never got fixed. What are the broken windows in your community that need fixing?

Collective efficacy: A few years after learning about the “Broken Window” theory, I read an article that described research on the issue of crime. The researchers were interested in learning what factors led to higher crime rates in a neighborhood. They chose the city of Chicago for their research because it was a large single metropolitan area that was comprised of many distinct neighborhoods of various groups of people. When they matched crime rates with the different characteristics of the community, they found that race, age, education, and religion were not the determining factors of crime. Looking a little deeper, they found that what accounted for different crime rates was the degree to which the adults monitored each other’s children in the neighborhood. If someone saw a child that was not their own causing mischief, he or she would intervene. Or if they saw someone’s child in trouble, they would offer assistance. The term the researcher gave to this quality was “collective efficacy,” and it explains the basis for community renewal. When people are watching out for each other, it fosters a sense of belonging. When someone is corrected for misbehavior, it says that “this” is not the place for such antics.

An example of collective efficacy happened to me shortly after I read about the theory. I was leaving the parking lot of a bank in a neighborhood close to my home. Although I was about to turn right out of the parking lot, I saw to my left two young men had just picked up a big rock and smashed it into pieces in the middle of the street and began walking away. Impulsively, I turned left, rolled down my windows and said, “excuse me” as I came close to them. “I drive down this street and I’m sure your parents do as well. I don’t think they would appreciate what those rocks would do to their car.” After a moment of silence, one of the young men began walking toward the rocks and then began running. The other followed and they began clearing the debris. I made a point to thank them. Does this little episode guarantee that my city streets are purged of any wrongdoing because of my actions? No, but I do have some hope that these two young men have a sense that the community is important enough for some people to go out of their way to speak up when they see misbehavior and even to express appreciation when they see proper behavior. Imagine the alternative if I saw them, and they saw me see them and I chose to drive away. What message might have been imparted then?

These two theories, broken window and collective efficacy, serve as guides for how to proactively avoid the inhibitors that lead to community decline and instead finds ways to instigate community renewal. Few people actually see it as their responsibility to build community. There is little mistaking, however, that community is a thing that grows or declines as a **result of the actions of the members**. As with most other behaviors, people take their cues for how to behave from the leaders. If the leader abdicates responsibility for caring for the quality of the community, there is little hope that others will pick up the pieces. As such, it is the role of the leader to envision the desired community, assess its current state and take positive actions to move it in the desired direction.

Bad apple theory

We've all heard the expression "one bad apple spoils the whole bunch," but is it true? Actually, yes. As fruits ripen they produce a gaseous hormone called ethylene, which is a ripening agent that works on other fruits stored nearby. One of the things that researchers believe inhibits communities are bad apples. In other words, bad apples in a community can spoil the community for others. An important act of leadership is to eliminate bad apple behavior. Below are descriptions of three common bad apple behaviors. Determine if you see them exhibited in your community and think of actions you could take that would evoke good apple responses or eliminate bad apple behaviors:

1. **Withholding of effort:** In groups we often see that the work is not distributed evenly. Some bad apples are happy to get a free ride off of the effort of others. Over time, this behavior will burn out the hard workers and may teach others that regardless of whether one exerts effort or not, it does not have an impact on one's status in the community.
2. **Being negative:** Some bad apples are characterized by more frequently expressing pessimism, anxiety, insecurity, and irritation. Of course, not everyone can be happy all the time. What makes it bad apple behavior is when it is pervasive and impedes the community's ability to thrive.
3. **Showing disrespect to others:** Researchers identified seven behaviors that fit into this category of a bad apple: making fun of someone, saying something hurtful, making slurs against a class of people (i.e. ethnic or religious), cursing at someone, playing mean-spirited pranks, acting rudely, and publicly embarrassing someone. Just one person routinely getting away with behaviors like these can erode a sense of community.

These behaviors routinely lead to a sense of unfairness, negative emotions, and damaged trust if left unchecked.

Over-reliance on authority

A primary concept in *Positive Leadership* is the distinction between leadership and authority. It is important to note that this is not saying leadership is good and authority is bad. The point is not to conflate the two. Often, authority is necessary and useful to communities— especially in the area of organizing.

The danger is when a community is dependent on a single individual or select few. I see this on non-profit boards. Sometimes, the executive director is the “authority.” For other non-profits, the board is the “authority” to which staff defer. In the first instance, what should happen when the director retires or takes another job? Or, in the second, when key board members should leave? The resulting vacuum often leads to a cycle of decline.

My philosophy for communities is that the “leaders” create the culture and then the culture becomes the “leader.” In other words, when social force is the exclusive domain of a select few, the community is vulnerable. I’ve seen individuals take such a sense of ownership in groups that the community was an extension of their ego. They felt threatened should anyone else exhibit a sense of ownership. We have all witnessed, or been participants in, power struggles that lead to fracture and fragmentation. Such displays are often unnecessary and costly.

Consider the degree to which access to leadership is concentrated or dispersed. In your community, does anyone have the ability to take positive actions that lead to positive reactions or do community members defer to authority figures?

7 Expanding Community Building

This is where you develop your personal capacity for Community Building. As with all seven capacities, you have already developed your Community Building to some degree. The activities listed in the Field Guide are resources for expanding your level of community building. Take time to go to the Field Guide now and do a couple of the activities.

Over the next month you can focus on community building by completing some of the activities in the Field Guide:

We suggest completing 3-5 of the Community Building Field Guide exercises.

Observe your capacity for community building by journaling or sharing (with at least one other person).

Developing community building in others

An effective leader not only develops the capacity in himself or herself, but in others as well. Consider ways you can do the following:

Share the concepts you found valuable from this chapter with your staff, co-workers, etc.

Have your team members or family complete one, or more, of the exercises in the Field Guide and discuss with others.



8 Connecting Points

Authenticity: A measure of true community is the degree to which each member can be authentic. Communities enhance one's self awareness, self acceptance, and self development.

Purpose: Communities are united around a common Purpose. Members are committed to survival and thriving. More specifically, they are all clear on the community's purposes. They make sure new members are aligned with it as well.

Advocacy: Advocacy shapes communities. Often, the key aspects of galvanize, organize, and mobilize are achieved through successful advocacy.

Resilience: Communities, like people, have a measure of Resilience. The quality of a community is perhaps the single greatest factor of its Resilience. People who are committed to each other's well-being band together to steer through challenges.

Reason: A true community seeks a clear perception of reality and responds to it. Members speak candidly because obscuring the truth in order to preserve false harmony poses too great of a risk. Reason prevails over emotions, stereotypes, and power struggles.

Gratitude: Communities celebrate accomplishments and recognize positive behaviors. Members appreciate each other's contributions because they lead to a greater common good.