



---

A Leadership Field Guide

By Adam Seaman

[www.positiveleadership.com](http://www.positiveleadership.com)

# Community Building

A thin, dark vertical line is positioned to the right of the title 'Community Building', extending from the top of the text down towards the bottom of the slide.

## Community timeline

In the chapter, it was mentioned that a great way to know someone is to hear about the communities that shaped them over their life time. In the space below, write out the significant communities to which you belonged since childhood. For each one, identify the way(s) the community shaped the person you are today. Pick one or two people and share this information, in turn asking them about their meaningful communities.

## Community case study

In the chapter, you were asked to identify a community of yours to serve as a case study for the concepts discussed. Using the stages of community model, where is your community (dissolve, decline, stabilize, growth, thriving)?

What, in your opinion, does your community need most right now?

In what ways could you help your community meet that need?

What specific action steps would you need to take?

## Gibb's supportive and defensive communication

This is a helpful tool for assessing and guiding the type of communication that works well and doesn't in communities. You can use these descriptions in a couple of ways. First, you can use it to evaluate the type of communication that happens in your community. Does it more closely resemble the Supportive column or the Defensive column. Second, I like to use this to set the ground rules for important meetings or problem solving sessions.

<b>SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION (WORKABLE)</b>	<b>DEFENSIVE COMMUNICATION (UNWORKABLE)</b>
DESCRIPTIVE: Talk is focused on the facts or substance that make up the basis of the problem without blame.	EVALUATION: Talk focuses on labeling and negative judgments of other's behaviors.
PROBLEM-ORIENTATION: Intent of talk is to cooperate with each other toward a solution to the problem. Assumes cooperation.	CONTROL: Intent of talk is to control other's behavior in an attempt to achieve one's desired outcomes. Assumes competition.
SPONTANEOUS: Talk appears to be open, natural and free of deception.	STRATEGY: Talk appears to be working toward a pre-determined position through hidden agendas and subtle manipulations.
EMPATHY: Presence of warmth and supportiveness. Genuine attempt to identify with concerns, circumstances and needs of other. (regards others as "thou")	NEUTRALITY: Lack of empathy and involvement. Demeanor suggests little or no concern for the other person's circumstances wants and desires. (regards others as "it")
EQUALITY: Communication does not dwell on social status or position, but assumes a personally equal relationship. Grants the other person automatic legitimacy and dignity.	SUPERIORITY: Communication emphasizes one's social status or position over another. Automatically asserts oneself as more important than the other.
PROVISIONAL: Talk is flexible, and open to consideration of alternative points-of-view. Provides for the possibility that there is more to the situation than first appears.	CERTAINTY: Talk is dogmatic, and unyielding to alternate points-of-view. Assumes to have a strangle hold on the absolute truth.

# The 5 Functions

One of my favorite models for effective communities is described in the book *The 5 Dysfunctions of a Team* by Patrick Lencioni. Below is each dysfunction and an explanation of why its important to have them be functional. Each builds on the preceding one (i.e. #2—fear of conflict is a result of #1—absence of trust).

**DYSFUNCTION #1—ABSENCE OF TRUST:** Members of great teams trust one another on a fundamental, emotional level and they are comfortable being vulnerable with each other about their weaknesses, mistakes, fears, and behaviors. They get to a point where they can be completely open with one another, without filters. This is essential because...

**DYSFUNCTION #2—FEAR OF CONFLICT:** ...teams that trust one another are not afraid to engage in passionate dialogue around issues and decisions that are key to the organization's success. They do not hesitate to disagree with, challenge, and question one another, all in the spirit of finding the best answers, discovering the truth, and making great decisions. This is important because...

**DYSFUNCTION #3—LACK OF COMMITMENT:** ...teams that engage in constructive conflict are able to achieve genuine buy-in around important decisions, even when various members of the team initially disagree. That's because they ensure that all opinions and ideas are put on the table and considered, giving confidence to team members that no stone has been left unturned. This is critical because...

**DYSFUNCTION #4—AVOIDANCE OF ACCOUNTABILITY:** ...teams that commit to their decisions and standards of performance do not hesitate to hold one another accountable for adhering to those decisions and standards. What is more, they don't rely on the team leader as the primary source of accountability, they go directly to their peers. This matters because...

**DYSFUNCTION #5—INATTENTION TO TEAM RESULTS:** ...teams that trust one another, engage in constructive conflict, commit to decisions, and hold one another accountable are very likely to set aside their individual needs and agendas and focus almost exclusively on what is best for the team. They do not give in to the temptation to place their personal agendas ahead of the collective results that define team success. They realize that a rising tide floats all boats.

# How do people evaluate the worthiness of their community?

1. Numbers: People might look at how many people belong to a community to assess the worthiness of it. The thinking might go something like this “If all those people are part of the community then it must be good.” The problem is, as everyone who’s attended high school knows, popularity does not equal quality.
2. Visibility: If numbers is about popularity, visibility is about fame. Visibility is how many people know about the community instead of how many people belong to it. Greater visibility might be allow a community to attract more members, but it does not necessarily equate to worthiness.
3. Elitism: Some communities are very selective. This can help ensure the quality of membership, but it can also limit the diversity of members. Just because a community is elite does not mean that it is worthy.
4. Significance: To what degree do the outputs generated by a community matter? Communities can be large or small, visible or unknown, elite or accepting. What makes a community significant is if members feel that what they are doing is important.

We suggest that the most worthy communities are the most significant (#4). Assess your community in terms of its significance and brainstorm possible ways to make it even more meaningful to both you and others.

## Lows and highs

Effective communities balance tasks and people. Both are important. Instead of starting a meeting by jumping right into business, there are many ways of using this time to build community. Here is one example:

**Highs and Lows:** After getting agreement from members if this should relate to any aspect of life, or stay centered around work projects, start a meeting by letting each person share a low and a high of their day or week. This process allows for strengthened community connections and helping community members feel listened to- a key component of a community.

Another example is starting the meeting with a brain teaser- a creative question for members to answer.



# Community leadership

How effectively do the formal leaders in your group foster a sense of community?

In your organization, how clearly are the values articulated and shared?

To what degree do members of your organization actively embrace and embody the values?

Interview a few of the members of your community to discover their perceptions of what values your organization holds as most important based on their perceptions of how leaders actually behave.

Consider the ways your leadership creates a sense of community and inhibits it.

# Communication

How are differences of opinion handled in your organization? Do people feel comfortable in openly exchanging different opinions?

How actively do you attempt to understand and appreciate a differing perspective?

Are there important people in your organization with whom you find it difficult to share an opposing point of view?

In your next meeting, actively seek different ways of seeing things. Begin by stating that you authentically would like to hear points of view that may run contrary to the way the group is leaning. If nobody comes forth, try to offer your own differing points of view and observe how others respond.

# Comfort

In your organization, who, if anyone, seems to thrive on belittling others?

What kind of people do you feel most comfortable around? Identify 2 things they do to make you feel at ease.

What do you do to make those around you more comfortable? What might you do that makes people feel uncomfortable?

Consider someone around whom you may not feel comfortable. Try to identify the quality that prompts your discomfort and look for ways to reduce it.

# Safety

On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your confidence in those who report to you to address your needs?

On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your confidence in those to whom you report to address your needs?

What have you done in the last week to demonstrate concern for someone else's needs?

Are there behaviors that you have witnessed that may make members of your community feel diminished or excluded?

Identify someone in your community who has a need that is currently unmet and take an action to do something to meet the need. For example, I have a friend who is a talented marketing consultant but could use more business. I recently took pro-active steps to connect him with a potential client.

# Authenticity

How accepting is your environment of people's authenticity? Does your community foster accurate self knowledge of its members or do they whisper behind each other's backs?

What circumstances prompt you to "manage your image" instead of being authentic?

Identify someone in your community with whom you may not particularly get along. Next, make a conscious effort to list one or two key traits that you can authentically appreciate and focus on those in your future interactions.

# Purpose

Do you have a sense that a majority of those in your organization are committed to the survival and thriving of your organization? Why or why not?

Who is someone in your organization that serves as a role model for commitment to the community? What do they do specifically that leads to your assessment?

How free do you feel to exercise your authentic purpose at work?

Create a list of five or so behaviors that are consistent with your community's purpose.

# Advocacy

Do you currently have a mentor? Do you feel “sponsored” by others regardless of where they are in the hierarchy?

Who, if anyone, are you currently mentoring? If nobody, who would you identify as a good candidate for mentoring?

Describe an event where you felt that someone was advocating for your development and the affect it had on you.

# Resilience

In challenging times does your organization behave more like a community or a PoA?

Do those in authority seem more concerned about self-preservation or taking care of the community?

Consider a realistic crisis that your organization might face. Put together a preventative maintenance plan that could be activated in advance of such a crisis.



# Diversity

What do you believe to be your unique area of excellence and to what degree do you get to exercise it?

What have you learned to be a personal area of weakness?

Who do you know that is excellent where you are weak?

For the people in your work group, describe what you believe to be an area where each person is uniquely talented.  
Feel free to share your findings with the individuals.

## Further Reading

*Bowling Alone* by Robert Putnam

*Community: The Structure of Belonging* by Peter Block

*Productive Workplaces* by Marvin Weisbord

*Tribes: Why We Need You to Lead Us* by Seth Godin