LEADERS ARE KEY

Entrepreneurial Communities

Background & Introduction

This paper addresses the all-important role of community leadership in the success of Entrepreneurial Communities. A primary role of our community coaches is to identify and support critical local leaders empowering their ability to help their community succeed with this critical work.

Defining Community

Communities are our focus. Communities in this work can be defined through various lenses including:

Communities of Place or Interest	
Communities of Place	**Communities of Interest**
Communities of place have a defined physical location or an identified area based on shared socio-economic characteristics. New York City is very identifiable as a community of place.	Communities of interest are varied. Examples are those in the Panhandle of Texas interested in assisting children with food in-security and chambers of commerce.
Communities Spatially or Culturally/Economically	
Spatial Communities	**Socio-Economic Communities**
Spatial communities are defined by precise geography such as the boundaries of a municipality or county.	Spatial communities are typically larger when shared socio-economic characteristics are considered.

Three Kinds of Community Residents		
Current Residents	**Former Residents**	**External Interests**
When we think of a community's residents, we typically focus on current residents who are permanent residents with strong identity to their community.	However, even though their permanent residences are elsewhere, former residents can have a strong identity with their hometowns. There is affinity.	Finally, there may be regional or even national groups (think regional bank with a local branch) that care about a community and are willing to become engaged.

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Leaders are the Key to Success

There is extensive research focused on why communities succeed and fail. As one might expect, there are numerous reasons that explain different community outcomes over time, but a common rationale surfaces time and time again in this vast research – the importance of leaders. The right kind of people exercising empowering leadership is central to community success.

Because of this research-based finding, a central focus of our Entrepreneurial Communities work centers on identifying and empowering community leaders. Our success as community coaches is most dependent upon the ability of the community leaders we are working with to help their community understand their entrepreneurial opportunity and act effectively on it.

The following framework can be used by community coaches to better understand both the "players" and "stakeholders" within a community and the likely roles they can play in both success and failure.

Community Players	
Scouts	In every community, there are scouts. These are the folks who go to conferences, follow newsletters and track opportunities that could help their hometowns. Scouts are often the first folks to engage a new program or resource.
Champions	Champions are those kinds of leaders who see real merit in an opportunity and advocate engagement. Champions are very important to us and become our primary partners within a community. Growing an ever larger and effective "champions group" is a primary development activity for our coaching.
Challengers	Most communities have challengers. Challengers are those community members who watch for potential risks and mistakes. They can be well-intentioned or simply negative in their general attitude. Divining between those "constructive" and "just negative" challenges is important.
Rainmakers	Rainmakers become very important over time. Rainmakers may not come to meetings or become directly involved in an initiative. Often, we have to engage them privately and even discretely, but they can make things happen such as raising money, getting the city on board, and the like.
Community Builders	Every community has well-intended citizens who volunteer. Often, they do not see themselves as leaders, but they are willing to give of their time, talent and treasure. A core group of champion leaders and community builders is an optimal setup for success.
Rest of the Community	Reality is that most residents in a community do not become directly engaged. We will explore strategies to create easy and fun ways to increase community member engagement, but most of the time we will be working with a smaller subset of the community's residents.

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Community Stakeholder Groups	
Local Government	Local government typically includes municipalities, counties, and school districts.
Development Groups	Development groups can include chambers of commerce, development corporations, main street program, and tourism/convention groups.
Major Employers	Major employers often include manufacturers, health care, cooperatives, and other ventures with significant employment in the community.
Non-Profit Organizations	Non-profit organizations ranging from youth baseball to social service agencies fall into this stakeholder category.
Civic Groups	Civic groups range from Rotary to Extension Circles. Civic groups often have important community members and leaders among their numbers.
Faith Community	Each community is different. But for many communities inclusion of the faith community members is important.
Others	Other potential community stakeholder groups include farm organizations, area community colleges, regional universities and the like.

Entrepreneurial Community Team Member Checklist			
	Municipal Government		Chamber of Commerce(s)
	County Government		Development Corporation(s)
	Public School System		Tourism/Convention Group(s)
	Major Employers		Civic Group(s)
	Non-Profit Organizations		Faith Community
	Main Street Program(s)		Regional Universities
	Area Community College(s)		Farm Groups
	Others		

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Community Keys for Success

One does not need a PhD to understand why some communities are more successful than others. There are volumes of work which document that the keys for success, when employed by communities, make all the difference. The following are the most important actions a community must take to ensure optimal success. *When you review these KEYS and reflect on your own career and life, you will recognize your own personal formula for success.*

Opportunity Focused	Compelling Goals	Leadership Team
Successful communities take the time to identify genuine opportunties that will improve the community. Successful communities act on these opportunties and make them reality.	Successful communities set compelling, clear, and accountable betterment goals. These goals provide both a roadmap for action and goal posts for celebrating progress and success	Nothing happens without leaders willing to help their community discover opportunities, grow a vision for the future, set goals, and sustain effort over time. ***We need a local point person who coordinates between the community and outside resources.***
Community Engagement	**Smart Action Plan**	**Regular Meetings**
Successful communities involve the entire community bringing the full potential of the community's talents, skills and ideas to bear in support of community agreed to development goals.	Having a vision and setting goals is essential, but without a smart action plan that moves to implementation, such plans are nothing more than words. Successful communities have smart action plans.	Successful communities stay engaged, and one key tactic is regular meetings where the business of community betterment is undertaken. Regular meetings provide important pacing essential for progress.
Strong Execution	**Staff Support**	**Funding**
For community betterment to occur, work has to be undertaken. Strong execution of the action plan ensures that over time goals are met and the community's vision for a better present and future are realized.	Field experience is clear. Consistent supporting staff accelerates progress. Staff does not replace leaders and volunteers. But it can increase effectiveness and efficiency of community engagement.	Little invested and little accomplished- so goes the saying. Community betterment takes dollars and appropriate funding to support staff, action plan implementation and other costs.

Grow the Dream…