



“Trying to lead a journey of change in a community with the same assumptions that hold in organizations is usually an unhappy experience.”

I'M A COMMUNITY LEADER

I'm a Community Leader - How Does This Approach Apply to Me - It Seems More Corporate?

Although the heroic journey applies as well to community change as it does to organizational change, there are some very significant natural differences in how the leadership roles are likely to play out.

However, the three sections for those leading organizational journeys – whether their position is that of CEO, Senior Manager or Middle Manager – will also be relevant for community journeys. Their relevance for you will depend on the nature of your role and the extent of the leadership structure for your community change. If you are the senior leader and the structure is extensive and well defined, the CEO guidelines will be most appropriate. Otherwise, the sections for Senior Managers or Middle Managers will be most relevant. There will be some adaptation to a community change, but the fundamentals will apply.

Although the basic foundation of the heroic journey will hold, it is important to reflect on the differences and determine, in general, the implications for the crafting of the leadership roles and strategies.

This perspective is particularly important for leaders of organizations who are also in leadership roles in communities. The roles and strategies may be the same, but they may look very different. Trying to lead a journey of change in a community with the same assumptions that hold in organizations is usually an unhappy experience. Many factors are the same, but the ones that are not make all the difference if ignored.

How Can Community Change Be More Difficult?

There are many reasons why community change is often much more difficult than organizational change and some are listed below:

- 1. More People and More Diversity.** In most cases more people are involved in community change and there is more diversity among them. This is not always the case for the numbers of people or their diversity, but it frequently is. Trying to align large numbers of people who may differ significantly in everything from socio-economic status and religion to race and degree of community involvement will put an added strain on most of the leadership roles and strategies.
- 3. Ripple Effects.** Because communities are so complex and their systems, institutions, and neighborhoods are so interdependent, the ripple effects of change and the need for coordinated/integrated efforts is extraordinary.
- 3. Beliefs and Interests.** Various groups' interests and beliefs will naturally be in conflict in many areas, thus increasing tension, challenging trust levels, inhibiting cooperation, lengthening the change process, and making it more difficult to achieve a critical mass of support.
- 4. Competing Commitments and Priorities.** Most people are involved in one or



more organizations or corporations, which demand time and attention and usually offer change opportunities that are more contained and of shorter duration than community change (they are not as overwhelming).

5. Overlapping Structures and Systems. Community change will very often involve multiple communities. That means that there are often overlapping structures, authority, roles, systems, processes, technology and equipment as well as cultures. Not only is this a challenge in agreeing on a desired state and aligning efforts, it can often mean that the ripple effects of a particular change can have a surprisingly wide impact.

6. Confidence – Perceived Capabilities vs. the Challenge. Directly confronting the need for community change also brings up questions about the individual, group, and community capabilities required to achieve needed change. The perceived characteristics and capabilities of the community often do not appear to match the power of the challenges. This can inhibit people's willingness to engage and can undermine the efforts when the inevitable surprises and setbacks are encountered

7. Leadership Turnover. There is often so much movement in and out of communities or in and out of key positions and roles, that continuity of development and the ability to "hold the course" is crippled, often through the loss of painstakingly developed relationships.

What Are The Potential Advantages in Leading Community Change?

Along with the factors that complicate community change there are some elements on the other side of the balance that can add to the power in service of community change. These elements are not missing in organizational change, but they are usually not present in the same degree.

- 1. Perceived Value.** For many people the value of community transcends the value of specific organizations or companies. When engaged their commitment is often deeper, more resilient, and more enduring.
- 2. Endurance and Resilience.** Communities can usually endure a lack of effective change longer than organizations, although a high price may be paid. That provides more time for people to step forward and more opportunities for new efforts following unsuccessful or partially successful efforts. Most successful community change is, in fact, built on a history that included unsuccessful or partially successful efforts.
- 3. Aligned Diversity.** The variety of community changes provides more opportunities for people of diverse capabilities, styles, and interests to become involved. The effective involvement of people with such diversity can provide an extraordinary sense of possibility, capability, confidence, and excitement.

How to Get a Good Idea of Possible Benefits – Fast

There are several ways to quickly determine how the site can provide the foundation for leading a community journey. The site is designed to provide very clear and intuitive common ground around which people at all levels of a community change leadership structure can align their efforts.

“There are some elements on the other side of the balance that can add to the power in service of community change”



1. Review the guiding questions in the QuickStart packet on the power of clear leadership roles and strategies (click the download tab). These questions are designed to walk people through the process of determining the highest leverage tactics for each of the core leadership strategies for leading a journey of change. There are also templates for organizing the work.

You can imagine aligning the leadership structure around this foundation. This QuickStart can be used to prepare for a journey or assess performance and next steps if in the midst of a journey.

2. Watch the first three minutes of the introductory video. This will give you a good overview of how the site is laid out around the four sources of leadership power, including the implementation guides for each (QuickStarts).

3. Skim the summaries for each of the four core chapters (leadership commitment, knowledge, strategies and webs). These are three to five pages long and designed for easy skimming (they are not heavy on text).

4. Just poke around in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section. The questions can be seen at a glance, so just see if any match the questions you have.

