



This private newsletter is for my clients who lead change. All content is based on my real-world experience working with world-class leaders. I stand ready to make a contribution to your efforts. Email Seth@SethKahan.com or call my office, 301/229-2221

## THREE INGREDIENTS FOR HEALTHY BUSINESS COMMUNITIES

For a business community to generate good returns, three forces must be optimized: business benefits, community concerns, and participant payoffs.

**1. Business Benefits** – Why does a beekeeper build beehives? For honey. Why does a business invest in a community? For returns. Examples of business benefits include:

- ~ Improved operational performance
- ~ Better product and services development
- ~ Increased skill for staff members
- ~ Increases in membership for associations
- ~ Improved communications

**2. Community Concerns** - These are the common causes that unite the members of the community. This is what turns a group of bees into a hive. Community concerns are the shared motivations that drive people to collaborate and make contributions. These concerns must complement the business drivers.

Examples:

- ~ Championing a change initiative
- ~ Executing a complex task in a difficult environment
- ~ Contributing to a field of expertise
- ~ Receiving group recognition or advancement
- ~ Achieving political objectives

**3. Participant Payoffs** – This is what motivates each person to show up and give their best. Since communities are volunteer in nature, the payoff must be clear and inspiring.

Examples:

- ~ Professional advancement
- ~ Recognition
- ~ Proximity to power
- ~ Skill building
- ~ Access to peers for problem-solving

### **World Bank case study**

In 2002 at the World Bank I worked with President James Wolfensohn. My task was to build internal communities that would help him accomplish strategic objectives and improve communications.

The World Bank's mission is to alleviate poverty. Wolfensohn spoke forcefully about the need to create partnerships with the poor to accomplish this. However, I observed that this initiative seemed to lack the traction it deserved inside the organization.

I began to assemble a group to help him address the issue. I didn't have far to look. In the front window of the World Bank bookstore was, *Voices of the Poor* (Deepa Narayan, Oxford University Press, 2000). I contacted Deepa and within a few weeks we had arranged a coffee between Wolfensohn and about twenty staff members who had been studying the complex topic of working in partnership with the poor. Our community was beginning to form.

The first get together was abuzz with conversation and ideas. There were a series of further coffees followed by papers and soon Wolfensohn was incorporating ideas from this group in his conversations with heads of state around the world. At the same time, news of the collaboration was spreading among those staff concerned with the issue, pulling more in to help.

This business community only lasted a few short months, but the work it did was significant. Here are the business benefits, community concerns, and participant payoffs that made this group a success.

#### **Business Benefits:**

- Strategy development on core objective: Empowering the Poor
- Improved internal communications

#### **Community Concerns:**

- Championing the cause of Empowering the Poor
- Group recognition for those working on this topic

#### **Personal Payoffs:**

- Recognition for professional contribution
- Proximity to power, audience with the president
- Using professional expertise to make a difference in the world

#### *Change Leadership clients include:*

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Ontario Public Housing Association, Canada • Peace Corps • Project Management Institute • Royal Dutch Shell • Trillium Health Centre, Canada • USAID  
US Department of Education • US Department of Transportation • US Environmental Protection Agency • US Geological Survey • US Government Council on Excellence  
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