

A CASE STUDY

A couple did extensive volunteer work in their middle years. Their ability to devote so much of their time and other resources came on the heels of a commercial success. The cause that captured their interest above all others was peace. They dreamed of starting a foundation that would bring together hundreds of different peace organizations. Gradually they came to realize that community making was more fundamental than peace--that, in fact, community making must precede peace.

There is a yearning in the heart for peace. Because of the wounds--rejections--we have received in past relationships, we are frightened by the risks. In our fear, we discount the dream of authentic community as merely visionary. But there are rules by which people can come back together., by which the old wounds are healed. It is the mission of the community to teach these rules.--to make hope real again--to make the vision actually manifest in a world which has almost forgotten the glory of what it means to be human.

Community building helps remove barriers to communication. When these barriers come down through the learning of emptiness, we experience a temporary state of consciousness in which the mind is utterly open and receptive and therefore totally alert. Through this process we also allow room for healing, even miracles of a sort--to occur. Community building expands the consciousness of self and ultimately consciousness of others.

Our 'example couple' had no idea how to run a business. They had to learn, not only about strategic planning, but all about marketing, conference coordinating, fund-raising and development, computer systems and mailing lists, mission and vision statements, accounting procedures and so on.

They also had to learn even more important things, such as bigger isn't necessarily better, how to coordinate, and how to clarify roles and power issues. It was like begging--for knowledge, that was the downside. The couple new that begging was honored in many religions and that the humiliation of it all could be looked upon as spiritual discipline.

It can be either very easy or very difficult to give away money. One famous entrepreneurial genius said 'It is almost easier to make a million dollars honestly than to dispose of it wisely. Small donors and a few larger ones simply say 'Here's my cheque, it seems like you're doing good work and we'd like to help you out, but that's as far as we'd like to get involved. Others who donate large sums sometimes feel it is incumbent upon them to see that it is managed well.

Those who depend on volunteers to help their organization succeed often find that the central problem is getting a commitment from them. Survival and success seems to be thanks to hard work by committed volunteers and because of its integrity as an organization. Mistakes may be made, but they are made with integrity and mistakes can be saved from being total disasters. To act with integrity also means integrating good business principles with good principles of community.

Our 'example couple' discovered for themselves both the profound limitations and equally profound virtues of community in the workplace. Narcissistic people who have a talent for something don't necessarily have a vocation for it. The best occupations for people are those in which their aptitude and interests coincide.

But God is generous and bestows on them many gifts--interests as well as talents. The pattern of such gifts however is always unique to the individual. You have gifts that I do not have. And that is why we need each other.

Our common narcissistic failure to appreciate the separateness, the differentness, of others bedevils business life every bit as much as it does our family and personal lives. The same sick dynamic-- the failure to appreciate diversity among us--creating a hateful and destructive schism can lead to conflict. Once hooked on conflict many organizations, like individuals, would rather fight than switch.

Educational technology can heal such in necessary organizational conflicts. Community-building technology is a system of group learning techniques that cut through people's everyday narcissism, allowing then not only to see another's differences but also to accept them. It is not painless learning, but it is effective. Through it people actually experience their mutual interdependence on one another's gifts.

The Apostle Paul describing the 'mystical body' said: As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body... the body is not one member but many. But God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

Our 'example couple' enters old age and retires from professional and other activities that were once part of their routine. But the learning continues--including that of learning how to retire gracefully. There is nothing wrong with doing things differently. The decision to retire is a personal choice and we each must follow our own path. Learning to say no and encourage others to assume the responsibilities one no longer feels able to accept. The adventure of retirement is another blessing.

COMING NEXT: THE OTHER SIDE OF COMPLEXITY

THE SCIENCE OF GOD

In the end, all things point to God... This study-work evolved from a single sentence, a quote attributed to Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.: 'I don't give a fig for the simplicity this side of complexity, but I would die for the simplicity on the other side'. -- To journey to the other side of complexity, we are challenged to make a radical shift in thought...

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