

Building Consensus

Great ideas and programs...



...Doesn't always equal success.

Building Consensus



Always keep in mind you are not actually working with ideas and concepts, you are working with people.

People can feel threatened or empowered, ignored or acknowledged, confused or knowledgeable, alienated or included.

Building Consensus



Always keep in mind you are not actually working with ideas and concepts, you are working with people.

Programs and initiatives don't rise and fall solely on their value and appropriateness. The perception of the involved "publics" can make or break them.

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Always keep in mind you are not actually working with ideas and concepts, you are working with people.

When you keep this rule in mind, you'll be more likely to achieve consensus in the community and your program will have a better chance of success.

Building Consensus

Identify...Inform...Involve...Include...Unify

To achieve consensus across different publics and increase the likelihood of your program's success you will:

Identify the power brokers

Inform them on the goals

Include them in developing strategies

Involve them in the process

Unify them as a strategic alliance



Building Consensus

Identify the groups and organizations in the community with influence, and the power brokers within those groups and organizations.



Identify the strengths, resources, and areas of influence each group brings to the table.

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Identify the groups and organizations in the community with influence, and the power brokers within those groups and organizations.



Key is to have a broad-based representation of the community, not just business.

Have to include the public. They will ultimately determine the long-term success or failure.

Building Consensus

Identify the groups and organizations in the community with influence, and the power brokers within those groups and organizations.

Don't just want the majority demographics represented either.

Vocal minorities who feel they have been left out of the equation can derail a program.



Building Consensus

Identify well-respected members of each organization.

Not always the president, chairman, etc. Needs to be a leader (whether elected or through respect of members).

This person will be able to influence others in the organization. Members trust the person, so if you can bring them onboard, many in the organization will follow by association.

Building Consensus

Identify well-respected members of each organization.

Sometimes official leaders have more territorial boundaries drawn than other members, and consequently have a harder time relinquishing territorial agendas in the interest of achieving the higher good.

You can't exclude them, but you probably don't want them to be the only representative from that organization.

Building Consensus

Identify well-respected members of each organization.

Sometimes official leaders have more territorial boundaries drawn than other members, and consequently have a harder time relinquishing territorial agendas in the interest of achieving the higher good.

For that reason, it may be advisable to have at least two to three representatives from each group/organization.

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Identify the common areas where you should be able to achieve unanimous agreement.

Break the goals down to the lowest common denominator until can find a level where universal agreement would most likely exist, and then start adding them together.



Building Consensus

Identify the common areas where you should be able to achieve unanimous agreement.

In math, can't add fractions together to make a whole until you get the lowest common denominator.



Building Consensus

Identify the common areas where you should be able to achieve unanimous agreement.

For example, with downtown revitalization, the lowest common denominator might be “a downtown where businesses can remain viable and real estate investments are sound.” This becomes your basic vision.



Building Consensus

Identify potential questions and objections, list and answer all of them.

- Who will it help & how?
- Is there anyway to expand the benefits to other publics?
- Who will it harm/offend & how?
- Is there anyway to mitigate the harm/offense?



Building Consensus

Inform the leaders you identified of your basic vision and personally invite them to presentational meetings.



You will probably need to have multiple meetings, and take your “show” on the road. Be prepared to go to them; don’t expect everyone to come to you.

Building Consensus

Inform the leaders you identified of your basic vision and personally invite them to presentational meetings.



Tell them the reason they are being asked is because you recognize the import role they play in the community.

Building Consensus

Inform the leaders you identified of your basic vision and personally invite them to presentational meetings.



Be sure you share the “vision” with them and not just tell them what you are going to do.

Once you’ve shared the vision, you can ask their help with achieving it.

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Include the community leaders by asking them to help describe “what” the vision looks like.

For example, downtown is filled with viable businesses with few vacancies, property values are stable, area residents & tourists regularly visit for business, shopping and entertainment, there is a sense of community pride in the downtown, and it is recognized by both people in and outside of the area as a business and activity center for the city.

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Include the community leaders by asking them to help describe “what” the vision looks like.

Identify the “what” before you talk about the “how”.

The strategies for how will follow later once more cohesiveness of the group has been achieved.

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Involve as many of this group of community leaders as possible at some level.

Can't expect everyone to participate at same level of involvement, but don't want to completely lose the interest or involvement of people who can't or won't dedicate significant amounts of time.

Building Consensus



Involve as many of this group of community leaders as possible at some level.

Make sure there are different levels of participation available. Some may want to be actively a part of achieving the vision, but others might just want to be kept informed.

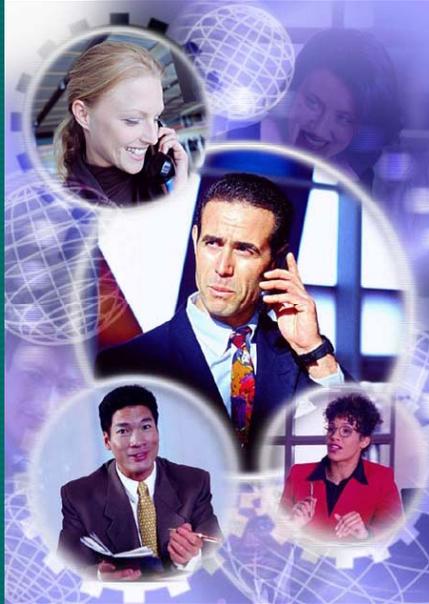
Building Consensus



Involve as many of this group of community leaders as possible at some level.

Even if their only role is to stay informed, because of their position in the community they can help with buy-in from other community members. Their role is to serve as liaisons between the advisory group and the organizations they belong to.

Building Consensus



Unify the members through identification and communication

Help members understand the job is bigger than any one part of the community can handle. This group will form a strategic community alliance. Representatives from every group are part of the alliance.

Develop an “us” attitude across the different groups.

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Unify the members through identification and communication

Identifying and forging alliances across these different groups will help build relationships, forge connections, and enhance understanding and trust between different sectors of the community.

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Unify the members through identification and communication

A regular newsletter sent to the group reaffirms their identification with the group, keeps them up to date and ensures they can share accurate and timely information with the organizations they represent.

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Unify the members through identification and communication

A newsletter also increases the likelihood members will sound an alarm if the program starts down a path likely to meet opposition by the group they represent.

Better to identify these things early when compromises are possible than risk derailing the whole project because of a group's opposition to a portion of it.

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Final thoughts

- Communicate to large groups, but work in smaller committees.



Building Consensus

Final thoughts

- Expect to lose some control and autonomy. No one wins everything and no one loses everything.
- If you go into the process with lines drawn and focus on what you won't give up and where the conflicts can exist, you will inevitably become mired in these conflicts.
- A lot of the energy will be wasted on the negative.



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Final thoughts

- It is like skiing, if you look at where you don't want to go, you will invariably go there. You focus on where you do want to go.



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Final thoughts

- Respect, appreciation, and empathy for the ideas and efforts of others, even when you don't understand them, goes a long way.



Building Consensus

Final thoughts

- You can reach the stars when you don't ask for the moon.
- You can't always attain agreement. Sometimes you have to be content with cooperation and collaboration.
- Sometimes you have to just be happy with minimal resistance.

