

Foreword by Brian Tracy, author, *Full Engagement*

The
POWER
of
COMMUNITY



How Phenomenal Leaders
Inspire Their Teams,
Wow Their Customers,
and Make Bigger Profits

HOWARD PARTRIDGE

Founder of Phenomenal Products

More Praise for *The Power of Community*

“One thing business leaders don’t need is another book filled with management theories that have never seen the light of day in the real world. *The Power of Community* doesn’t have that problem. Howard Partridge offers practical wisdom built on decades of business experience. You can trust what he says.”

—Dave Ramsey, bestselling author and nationally
syndicated radio show host

“I have seen it with my own eyes. People from all different backgrounds coming together for the purpose of learning how to make more money in the businesses that they own. Most come because they are stuck, frustrated, scared, and slaves to their business. Howard Partridge gives them the skills and knowledge they need to turn their businesses around. But skills and knowledge are not the game changer. *The Power of Community* is the game changer. People sharing the wins and losses, the tears and the triumphs, praying and crying together about everything great and difficult about business and life. At the end of the day we need to be surrounded by people who tell us that we have what it takes and that what we do matters. We have a choice. We can go through life doing the best we can with what we have. Or we can grow through life side by side with our family, friends, and team members. Yes, *The Power of Community* is a choice. Choose to read and apply this book and it will change your life.”

—Tom Ziglar, CEO, Ziglar, Inc.

1 “Today’s most effective business leaders understand that when those
2 they lead feel (and are!) truly valued, they are happier, more loyal,
3 and more productive. And few things will inspire this more than the
4 feeling of belonging to something special; in others words, an envi-
5 ronment of community. In this book, the author, Howard Partridge,
6 who has built a sustainably successful company based on these very
7 principles, does an excellent job of teaching us how we can do the
8 same.”

9 —Bob Burg, coauthor of *The Go-Giver*

10
11 “*The Power of Community* is a masterful, comprehensive, and system-
12 atic resource for how to lead and craft authentic, prosperous, and
13 dynamic communities both inside and outside your company! How-
14 ard Partridge’s breadth of business acumen and thought leadership
15 shine through in an engaging, thoughtful, and approachable set of
16 ideas, tools, and principles for achieving interpersonal success and
17 leadership significance! If you only have time to read one book this
18 year—make it *The Power of Community*! Better yet, buy a copy for
19 your entire team and your business colleagues so that together you
20 can build communities of excellence that will sustain transforma-
21 tional success.”

22 —Joseph Michelli, Ph.D., CCXP, New York Times #1 bestselling
23 author of books such as *The Starbucks Experience*, *Driven to*
24 *Delight*, *The Zappos Experience*, and *The New Gold Standard*.

25
26 “In this book, Howard Partridge shows us that the most important as-
27 pect of life is discovered by having correct insights into how life actu-
28 ally works. Much of it is found in understanding ourselves and other
29 people who make up our own community. Every reader will experi-
30 ence personal growth and development from the excellent informa-
31 tion contained in this personal book.”

32 —Robert A. Rohm, Ph.D., President, Personality Insights, Inc.

“Howard Partridge is a game changer for businesspeople wanting to maximize growth. His new book, *The Power of Community*, provides essential steps to create a greater and more engaging team member experience that strengthens culture, accelerates performance, and elevates the customer experience. His insight is especially relevant for managing today’s workforce.”

—Dave Anderson, President, LearnToLead,
author, *Unstoppable*

“This wonderful book shows you how to encourage and inspire your people to put their whole hearts into your success.”

—Brian Tracy, author, *Full Engagement*

“Howard Partridge is a coach, mentor, and leader worth following. His contribution to empowering leaders to build community in their organizations has transformed many lives (my own included!) and has led to a community movement of its own through Howard’s Inner Circle. The ideas shared in this book, when practiced, are transformative to the point that Ziglar, Inc., handpicked Howard to join the leadership team to help steer Mr. Zig Ziglar’s legacy into the future.”

—Evan Desjardins, President, Ziglar, Inc.

“The power of community brings forth a simple but important idea . . . that community is vitally important in business. This book follows the principle of Givers Gain®, and I highly recommend it.”

—Ivan Misner, Ph.D., Founder, BNI

“What’s missing in America today? We are all going our separate ways and we’ve lost touch with the power we possess together! In Howard’s book, he does a masterful job of encouraging us to return to COMMUNITY. You will want to share this book with friends, family

members, and coworkers. Thank you, Howard, for putting together a book that has the potential to bring us back to where we find our power—back to COMMUNITY!”

—Cheri Perry, President & Cofounder,
Total Merchant Concepts

“The Power of Community an absolute must-read for anyone who leads a team—whether it’s two or two hundred employees. Howard Partridge candidly describes, from personal experience, the incredible and dramatic difference that fostering a true sense of community among employees will make to a company’s overall success. Get your highlighter ready—this book will become your reference manual for years to come!”

—Mark Timm, Executive Vice President, Ziglar, Inc., and
CEO, Ziglar Family

“Howard’s new book, *The Power of Community*, addresses one of the most important but often neglected areas in the business world. The principles and concepts he writes about are applicable to anyone interested in having better relationships and experiencing genuine community and true success not only in business but in every area of life.

“In addition to being a master communicator, team builder, business coach, and consultant, Howard has a proven track record of using these lessons to build several companies. He shares from a wealth of personal experience but is also a diligent learner from many other successful leaders. I highly recommend his book to anyone who wants to grow and improve in these areas.”

—Jerry Wiles, D.D., North America Regional Director,
International Orality Network, and President Emeritus,
Living Water International

“We wander around our city streets, airports, coffeehouses, schools, and businesses with our heads down, transfixed by our phones. We are substituting ‘likes’ for genuine human connection. Instead of conversing, debating, and persuading, we post wordy, ineffective rants on social media. We are virtually connected to more people than ever, and though the Internet has had a positive, world-flattening effect, it feels like we are becoming more and more isolated. And, for so many, less hopeful. So, thank you, Howard Partridge, for your inspiring and elegantly practical book. Howard suggests that our ‘longing for belonging’ can be satisfied by creating healthy communities. That resonates, right? Even better, Howard shares exactly HOW to do that, with simple systems, the right questions, and a whole lotta love. Looking for better relationships with your family, friends, team members, and customers? Read on! BONUS: Turns out a flourishing community is very, very good for your business’s bottom line, too.”

—Ellen Rohr, President, ZOOM DRAIN Franchising, LLC

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The
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of
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How Phenomenal Leaders
Inspire Their Teams,
Wow Their Customers,
and Make Bigger Profits

HOWARD PARTRIDGE



NEW YORK CHICAGO SAN FRANCISCO ATHENS
LONDON MADRID MEXICO CITY MILAN
NEW DELHI SINGAPORE SYDNEY TORONTO

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To Denise and Christian Partridge.
Thank you for your phenomenal love for me.
You are my community and have been with me
through all the ups and downs of life.
I love you both with all my heart, all my soul,
all my might; and I always will.

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CONTENTS

		1
		2
		3
		4
		5
FOREWORD	ix	6
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xi	7
INTRODUCTION: A LONGING FOR BELONGING	1	8
		9
Chapter 1 Why We Need Community	7	10
Chapter 2 How We Lost Our Sense of Community	19	11
Chapter 3 Three Keys That Unlock True Community	33	12
		13
Chapter 4 Step 1: Value True Community	57	14
Chapter 5 Step 2: Pursue Champion Connections	71	15
Chapter 6 Step 3: Inspire Emotional Trust	85	16
Chapter 7 Step 4: Practice Gift Exchange	97	17
Chapter 8 Step 5: Invite Openhearted Encounters	121	18
Chapter 9 Step 6: Build Growth PODS	139	19
Chapter 10 Develop Your Community Systems	163	20
Chapter 11 Create Your Community Brand Experience	173	21
Chapter 12 Conclusion: Gift from the SEA	189	22
		23
		24
		25
		26
		27
INDEX	191	28



- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
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FOREWORD

BY BRIAN TRACY, author of *Full Engagement! Inspire, Motivate, and Bring Out the Best in Your People*

“Why are some companies more successful and profitable than others?”

Having studied thousands of companies around the globe for decades, I’ve found that the answer is simple: the best companies have the *best managers*. As a result, the best companies have the best people, and that means people who consistently outthink, outcompete, and outperform their competitors.

In your workplace today, the people around you do their jobs because they want to, not because they have to. They do their jobs well because they feel *internally* challenged and *externally* appreciated. People respect their jobs and treat their companies well because you respect them and you treat them well.

Your job is to create a work environment where the negative factors that detract from performance are taken away, the neutral factors that are the minimum essentials of a job are satisfied, and the motivators are maximized. In this environment, people will be internally motivated and stimulated to make the most valuable contribution to your company that they possibly can.

Here’s a valuable lesson I learned many years ago: the way you treat people, what you say and do that affects them emotionally,

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FOREWORD

is more important in bringing out the best in people than all the education, intelligence, or experience you might have at doing your job.

The best news of all is that because you are motivated and influenced by the same things other people are, you already know everything you need to know to become an outstanding manager. You already know how to unlock the potential of the people around you, how to build a peak performance team that delivers consistently high levels of results for your company. You just need to apply it.

The Power of Community will help you have a very successful organization.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A person's community is a result of everything that has been planted in him or her since birth, so thank you to everyone who has supported me, encouraged me, and helped me stay accountable with who I am becoming.

This is my seventh published book, and I've written hundreds of articles and thousands of training documents over the years, but this is the first book of this stature. It was no easy feat. Therefore, I would like to acknowledge those who made this particular work possible.

The mission of creating community inside organizations has been resonating in my soul for many years. This message has been longing to be released since I first drew the dream with multicolored Sharpies on an artist's pad at Michael Gerber's *Dreaming Room* experience. The vision of people across the world engaging in small groups supporting one another, encouraging one another, and helping one another be accountable never left my imagination. The vision has become a reality in my world, and thanks to the following people, the message is now in your hands.

My phenomenal wife, Denise Partridge, who has shown me what true community is. Our phenomenal son, Christian Partridge, who helped me become a better father.

My phenomenal team that lives true community inside my companies.

Tom Ziglar for being a phenomenal champion connection for this work. You, your family, and those you have brought into my life have forever marked my heart.

Dr. Ralph Neighbor Jr. for your tireless work helping churches live out community around the world.

Bill Beckham for being my faithful mentor and showing me how to love others authentically.

Juanell Teague and Karyn Brownlee for the painstaking work you did to pull this message out of me.

Jodi Carroll for sharing your brilliant mind and beautiful heart. The countless conversations about community and life overwhelm me with gratitude.

Dr. Joseph A. Michelli for believing in me and introducing me to McGraw-Hill.

Donya Dickerson at McGraw-Hill for believing in the message before knowing the man.

Mark Ehrlich for being my tor-mentor in black.

Ellen Rohr for being a faithful and “funomenal” colleague.

Cheri Perry for becoming the champion of PODS.

Brenda Sell for sharing your community story for this book and your faithfulness in praying for me and the community.

The entire Howard Partridge Inner Circle Coaching Community for supporting me, encouraging me, and your love for one another. Your commitment is amazing.

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INTRODUCTION: A LONGING FOR BELONGING

Every human being has a longing for belonging. We all want to feel loved, accepted, and validated. We want to feel that our lives matter. Deep down, we want to *belong* to something bigger than ourselves. We want to make a positive difference. Today, we are more connected digitally than ever before, yet we often feel more isolated and disconnected personally than ever.

This sense of isolation not only affects our personal lives but dramatically affects our work life as well. The ongoing Gallup Employee Engagement Poll* reveals that 70 percent of American workers are disengaged from their work. Perhaps even more disturbing, 18 percent of those workers are *actively* disengaged, meaning they are actually working *against* the success of the company. Not surprisingly, this lack of positive purpose bleeds over from employees to customers and has a serious negative impact on our organizations.

* <http://news.gallup.com/poll/180404/gallup-daily-employee-engagement.aspx>.

There is, however, one simple concept by which leaders can reengage their team members and transform their businesses to be phenomenally successful. That concept is *community*, and that's what *The Power of Community* is all about. This book will show you how to build a sense of community in your organization that not only will help you engage your team but will create more loyal and devoted clients in the process, which in turn will create higher returns for your organization.

Community has many meanings for many people. We often use it to refer to a neighborhood or local area, and we sometimes refer to an ethnic group as a community, but the kind of community we are talking about goes much deeper than just a neighborhood or a group of people. It's about the sense of belonging that all humans hunger for—the need to be connected to one another, the deep desire to be a part of something meaningful, something that makes a difference. This longing for belonging can have either positive or negative consequences. It is the reason people join clubs and do volunteer work, and it is also the reason people join gangs.

Our own families are the first communities we belong to, but the family community that existed (for some) in the premodern world seems to be much rarer now. Some may never have had the benefit of a loving community around them, and the idea of being deeply involved in our family members' lives, enjoying one another's successes, and enduring one another's failures seems to have largely disappeared.

Some argue whether this sense of community ever really existed. After all, every family has endured some kind of trouble. Divorce, scandal, addictions, and a variety of issues have plagued many families in the past. And of course, the entirety of human history is littered with injustices, whether it be slavery, war, or corruption.

However, many people felt a sense of community as they grew up. At one time, a child could walk the streets of New York City in relative safety. However, today, you wouldn't allow a 10-year-old to

walk a block in most cities. Ironically, at the same time, our children are heavily influenced by a media of strangers lurking behind the screen they hold in their hand. Unfortunately, losing the sense of community in our culture has spilled over into virtually every other aspect of our lives, including our business lives. As a result, our organizations today mirror the detachment many feel.

Yet as we pursue our individual agendas, deep down we all long to experience community. And not only those of us who remember feeling a sense of community in the past yearn for it. Many of our younger people, today's new workforce, may never have felt this sense of belonging, but they long for it like everyone else. The need for community and connectedness is built into all humans.

A genuine community is a group of people who belong to one another. True community is a group of people who are committed to one another in every way possible. They share the same vision and values in life. They care for one another deeply. Someone you're in community with would get up in the middle of the night for you for any reason.

Social media gives us a sense of connectedness, but a "virtual community" is an oxymoron. True community requires the human touch. In the digital age, many young people have never felt true community or the love and encouragement that true community can bring. But they long for it. Everyone does. They may not know what to call it or even how to explain it, but the feeling is there. Like everyone else, they crave appreciation and recognition—even the number of likes and retweets on social media are important to them. Deep down, whether they know it or not, every human being wants to make a positive difference. We want our lives to matter. We all have a longing for belonging.

Business owners and managers who understand and implement the principles of building community within their organizations can help their team members experience a feeling of being truly

connected and valued. A sense of being part of something bigger than themselves. In return, those employees will love being part of the company and will be more likely to treat others with respect and appreciation. That in turn will create loyal customers and, ultimately, bigger profits for the organization.

In order to help leaders achieve this goal, *The Power of Community* takes you through the process of building a sense of community in your organization both internally and externally.

You'll learn what phenomenal leaders do and how to create a rich environment of support, encouragement, and accountability that will inspire your team, "WOW" your customers, and make your organization bigger profits (Figure I.1).

THE THREE KEYS TO COMMUNITY

1. Support

2. Encouragement

3. Accountability

Figure I.1 The Three Keys to Community

You'll then learn the Six Steps to Building Community (Figure I.2) and what phenomenal leaders do to create community in their organizations:

1. **Value true community.** Phenomenal leaders *value* others.
2. **Pursue champion connections.** Phenomenal leaders *serve* others.
3. **Inspire emotional trust.** Phenomenal leaders *care for* others.

4. **Practice gift exchange.** Phenomenal leaders *develop* others.
5. **Invite openhearted encounters.** Phenomenal leaders *love* others.
6. **Build Growth PODS™.** Phenomenal leaders *coach* others.

THE SIX STEPS TO BUILDING A COMMUNITY

1. Value True Community
2. Pursue Champion Connections
3. Inspire Emotional Trust
4. Practice Gift Exchange
5. Invite Openhearted Encounters
6. Build Growth PODS

Figure I.2 The Six Steps to Building Community

Next, we will look at the building blocks for systematizing your community. Every tribe and every community has its “way” of doing things that must be identified and communicated by the leaders of the organization.

In this section, you’ll learn the Five P’s of Building Your Community System:

1. **Purpose.** Why your community exists.
2. **Positions.** The roles of the team members.
3. **PRD (Performance Results Descriptions).** What each team member is responsible for.

1 **4. Policies.** The rules of the game.

2 **5. Procedures.** The team playbook.

3
4 Finally, you'll discover how to create a meaningful community
5 brand experience for your customer, client, patient, member, or
6 guest that generates tremendous loyalty and an increased number of
7 referrals.

8 As a business owner for over 33 years I've practiced these steps,
9 and for over two decades I have helped small business owners around
10 the world in hundreds of industries implement the principles out-
11 lined in this book with phenomenal success. This book offers prac-
12 tical, real-life examples that will enable you as a business owner or
13 manager to understand what community really is and how it can be
14 applied in your business or organization. But most important, it will
15 show you how to reap the three big rewards of building community:
16 inspired, engaged team members; happy, loyal clients; and increased,
17 healthier profits.

WHY WE NEED COMMUNITY

CHAPTER

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Have you ever been in the same room with someone who is plugged into his or her phone and not paying attention to you? Have you ever been that person?

I have.

Today, more than ever before, strangers on a screen influence people's minds, molding their beliefs, instilling fear rather than hope. Communication has been reduced to e-mails, instant messages, sound bites, and tweets.

Today, more than ever before, strangers on a screen
influence people's minds, molding their beliefs,
instilling fear rather than hope.

A couple of years ago, I was on the balcony of my hotel room in Clearwater Beach sipping a cup of coffee. Looking down from the tenth floor, I could see an employee of the hotel who was supposed to

1 be washing off the boardwalk with a garden hose. The reason I knew
2 she was supposed to be doing that is there was a garden hose in her left
3 hand with water coming out of it. But in her right hand was her phone,
4 which she was much more interested in. Each time she looked at her
5 phone to scroll, the garden hose strayed off course into the bushes
6 rather than washing the sand off the walkway.

7 The challenge for leaders today is to make our work more com-
8 pelling than whatever is happening in the media or what's happen-
9 ing on a team member's screen. That's a tall order and a big part of
10 the reason we need a sense of community in our workplaces. Not that
11 we can compete with a person's social connections or the seductive
12 power of the media, but we can make our work so meaningful to our
13 team members that they will engage at an unprecedented level. Build-
14 ing a sense of belonging—a sense of community—in our companies
15 is the answer.

16 In the Introduction I mentioned the staggering employee engage-
17 ment statistics. A study by psychologist Michelle McQuaid showed
18 that many employees would pass on a 20 percent raise in order to get
19 their boss *fired!** That means that an employee making \$30,000 per
20 year is willing to give up \$6,000 *every year* just to get rid of his or her
21 manager.

22 Recently a Yelp employee's blog post went viral when she com-
23 plained about not being able to pay her bills while the CEO made
24 millions of dollars per year. Even though she got some deserved feed-
25 back about being more responsible, the fact is that she didn't *feel*
26 cared for and felt the only way to vent her frustration was to post on
27 her blog.

28
29 * Cited in Meghan Casserly, "Majority of Americans Would Rather Fire Their
30 Boss Than Get a Raise," *Forbes*, October 17, 2012, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/meghancasserly/2012/10/17/majority-of-americans-would-rather-fire-their-boss-than-get-a-raise/#1b1446c46610>.
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A few years ago, ABCs *20/20* did a special on how disgruntled employees quit their jobs in flamboyant ways. One hired a marching band to follow him into the manager's office and filmed the occasion. Another guy stood on a table in a crowded lunchroom and tugged his shirt open to reveal "I QUIT" marked on his chest with a big black marker.

Everyone cheered.

Although achieving true community in a company may seem unrealistic and maybe even unnecessary to you, the benefits of intentionally creating a *culture of community* that can lead to true community are worth pursuing. Having a team that is truly engaged and inspired can do wonders for any organization. An involved team will have less stress and conflict, and they will take great care of your clients, which in turn creates bigger profits for your organization.

Author Jim Collins observed that meaningful work equals a meaningful life. The reason we need community is to reengage our team members. It's the only weapon powerful enough to disrupt the digital disconnect that happens in every company today.

Meaningful work equals a meaningful life.

All leadership experts agree that culture is the most important thing in any business. This book is about defining your culture and creating a sense of belonging by creating a culture of community.

I've seen the benefits of this level of belonging in my own companies as well as my clients' companies around the world. It *can* be done, but it doesn't happen naturally. The only way to get there is to intentionally create it. It will be challenging, but it will be worth the effort, as you'll have something very few companies have.

The challenge when bringing people together in the world today is that each of us has different values, a different personality, and different ways of dealing with conflict. Each one of us has a different vision of the way work and life should be.

We have all learned different ways of communicating as we've grown up. For example, my wife is of Italian heritage from New Jersey. I'm a laid-back Southern boy originally from Alabama who moved to Texas at age 18. It was shocking for me to learn that family members could scream and shout at one another (as my wife's family might occasionally do) and still love each other.

Based on the way I was raised, I assumed that people who loved one another didn't have conflict. Everyone in my family did his or her "own thing," and if we disagreed with someone, we just stayed quiet about it. In that world, we never crossed one another.

Psychologists call this "fight or flight." My wife, Denise, is a *fighter*, and I grew up being a *flighter*. We had to learn how to communicate. Fortunately for us, our core values are the same and we have been happily married for 33 years.

Much like our marriage, your team members may come from different cultures and have different values. However, as the leader of the organization, you're responsible for creating the right environment for a sense of community to prosper.

Leadership Is Essential for Building Community

In order to transform your organization, you'll have to build a foundation on leadership. As leadership expert John Maxwell reminds us, "Everything rises and falls on leadership." Before leaders are able to change their culture to create community in their organization, they must first learn to be better leaders. Leadership is effectively

communicating your vision. *Phenomenal* leadership is creating a community *experience* that inspires the team to implement. In order to accomplish that, leaders need two things: we must have a meaningful, compelling vision, and we must learn to communicate well.

Leadership is effectively communicating your vision.

In their phenomenal book *Beyond Entrepreneurship—Turning Your Business into an Enduring Great Company*, Jim Collins and the late William C. Lazier underscore the need for communication. They point out an unfortunate fact: many company leaders don't communicate. Not that they can't—they just don't. Collins and Lazier have a lot to say about vision, too (emphasis mine):

1. Vision forms the basis of extraordinary human effort.
2. Vision provides a context for strategic and tactical decisions.
3. Shared vision creates cohesion, teamwork, and *community*.
4. Vision lays the groundwork for the company to evolve past dependence on a few key individuals.

Finally, they say that “to become great, . . . a company must progress past excessive dependence on one or a few key individuals. The vision must become *shared as a community*.”

Every team needs a compelling vision. Too many organizations have a vision statement that was cooked up in an off-site leadership retreat but has no real meaning to the team. Some companies even frame their vision statement and proudly hang it on the wall in the lobby. The problem is that not even the receptionist, who sits 10 feet

away from it every day, could tell you what it says, much less what it means. Or more important, what it has to do with him or her personally. There is no connection with how it affects the individual lives of the team.

Even when leaders have a clear vision, the more difficult part is *communicating* that vision to the team. We seem to have difficulty communicating effectively today. For one thing, technology continues to change how we communicate with one another. Or better said, how we *attempt* to communicate. The digital age has created a false sense of connection that has fostered the separateness many feel—even though there is something wonderful about a soldier across the world being able to see his baby being born via Skype.

Along with rapid changes in technology, there are also differences in how millennials and baby boomers communicate. Older people may prefer to talk over the phone, whereas younger people prefer to text.

Personality styles come into play as well. We are all wired a little differently and therefore communicate differently. Many different religious and family values exist in today's workplace and also play a part in the communication gap. All of us hear with a different set of ears, and we see with different-colored glasses.

Community is the answer to bringing together all these diverse types of people, as it is the ultimate form of communication. Leadership can communicate most effectively in the context of community. When a group of people feel like they belong to one another, they feel cared for, and they believe that the vision is worth sacrificing for, they will go the extra mile for the company. There's no stopping a group of people who not only have the same vision and values but feel like they belong to one another—and know their team has their back.

If you think about the word *community* for a moment, it really means “communicating in unity.” John Maxwell wrote a book titled *Everyone Communicates, Few Connect*. Communicating is just one

part of the equation. Unity is the other part. It's only when we are truly connecting that we're really unified. Or better put—when we're unified, we connect better.

A few years ago, as a participant in John Maxwell's highest-level leadership group, Exchange, I sat with the group in a Delta Airlines hangar as John interviewed Ed Bastian, CEO of Delta Airlines. Little did we know that the "surprise experience" that is always a part of Exchange would have us boarding a chartered jet to fly us from Atlanta to the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville to hear radio celebrity Dave Ramsey speak.

Dave Ramsey is a business owner and leader who has built a phenomenal culture of community among his 500+ person company. One reason his team members have unity is that they communicate regularly. Every Monday morning the entire group has a huddle for an hour. Many of them are paid by the hour, so you can imagine what the weekly investment is for that meeting. You'll find, I stress throughout this book, that there is no escaping meeting on a regular basis when you're building a team or a community. You cannot communicate effectively if you avoid meetings.

In Nashville that night, Dave shared what he called the Five Enemies of Unity:

1. Poor communication
2. Gossip
3. Unresolved disagreements
4. Lack of shared purpose
5. Sanctioning incompetence

When team members feel a sense of community, everyone has shared goals and shared values. When that happens, everyone is pulling in the same direction, getting more done. When the team is free

from the friction that comes from hidden agendas, backstabbing, and outright lies that often exist in the corporate world, team members will tend to be more open, honest, and engaged, and therefore more productive.

That doesn't mean there won't be conflict. Just like in any loving family, there will be disagreements and even healthy arguments. When you get any group of human beings together, there will be conflict. As Dave Ramsey also likes to say, "Leadership is easy—until people get involved." In any group of people, false assumptions can be made about intentions, but when we know we can trust one another and that we are all after the same goal, we can engage in *healthy* conflict. Without regular communication we won't have unity.

Author Patrick Lencioni, a highly respected and sought after leadership expert with immense experience in organizational development, declares in his book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, "Not finance. Not strategy. Not technology. It is teamwork that remains the ultimate competitive advantage, both because it is so powerful and so rare."

The five dysfunctions of a team that Lencioni describes in his book are:

1. Absence of trust
2. Fear of conflict
3. Lack of commitment
4. Avoidance of accountability
5. Inattention to results.

And in his book *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business*, Patrick takes it a step further by proclaiming that "organizational health" is the ultimate competitive advantage.

He writes that an organization that is healthy has minimal politics, minimal confusion, high morale, high productivity, and low turnover and says, “Once organizational health is properly understood and placed into the right context, it will surpass all other disciplines in business as the greatest opportunity for improvement and competitive advantage.” He even maintains that organizational health is, “far bigger and more important than mere culture.”

Organizational health, Patrick says, “is about making a company function effectively by building a cohesive leadership team, establishing real clarity among those leaders, communicating that clarity to everyone within the organization and putting in place just enough structure to reinforce that clarity going forward” (<https://www.tablegroup.com/organizational-health>).

Again, leadership is *effectively communicating* your vision. Bill Beckham, one of my early mentors, taught me that “vision + vision = division.” When two people on a team have different visions, agendas soon develop, and if those visions are not reconciled, the team becomes divided on issues.

My contention is that building community is the next step beyond organizational health. Healthy communication is the first level, belonging is the second, and true community is the ultimate level. This book will help you establish a vision for your organization, and more important, it will help you communicate that vision more effectively. Hopefully to the point that you and your team can enjoy a culture of genuine community.

As you move toward that end, you can reap the associated benefits:

- A happy, engaged, inspired team
- Happy, devoted, loyal customers
- Bigger, healthier profits

How Community Changed My Life

Several years ago, I would go to church every Sunday, and although the sermon was nice—and sometimes even really meaningful—something was missing. There didn't seem to be any real life change. It was *stale* religion.

This book isn't about church or religion but what happened to me that became instructive to me in business: On Tuesday nights we had home group in which a small band of church members met at someone's home, and we sat in a circle. Kenny played the guitar. Jim was collecting money to help someone fix her car. Elise was baby-sitting my son in the other room.

Real ministry was happening. One had a prayer, one had a song, and one had a message. This group *belonged* to one another. This was true community. It was "rare air." Unfortunately, many businesses have gone stale and don't enjoy this feeling of belonging. We go through the motions, but the joy and fulfillment of interacting with one another seems to be missing. Work has become meaningless, and when that happens, team members become disengaged.

We talk a lot from the front of the room, send a plethora of e-mails, write memos, and have lots of meetings, but it's mostly a one-way conversation. Many leaders do a poor job of communicating.

Don't get me wrong—large group meetings are important to inspire and to teach, and of course memos and messages are important, too, but if leaders want their employees to implement their ideas, they need to go deeper. If we want meaningful engagement that turns into massive implementation, we need a sense of belonging—a sense of community. And that happens most effectively in *small groups*.

Someone once quipped, "We learn in rows, but we grow in circles." Small groups are the key building blocks in establishing community. In this book, I will introduce you to a simple process I call Growth PODS. Growth PODS are small groups that typically include seven to

nine individuals and are designed to support, encourage, and hold participants accountable to do the things they need to do and to help people become the persons they need to be. PODS stands for Power of Discovery Systems. Participants “discover” what they need to do (or how they need to act) rather than being taught—or worse, *told*. Essentially, Growth PODS are a way of organizing team members that allows them to open up about issues in a nonthreatening way.

PODS can be used to address both personal and professional issues, including reaching personal goals, changing habits, or developing one’s skills, as well as reaching company goals, keeping a project moving forward, or creating new ideas. Establishing these groups throughout an organization contributes to creating a community-oriented atmosphere that, in turn, makes it possible to develop true community over time.

I’ve observed over the last three decades that something amazing happens when people come together in person, face-to-face, in small groups that are properly facilitated. Personal interaction without hiding behind a screen can facilitate real connection, which over time can grow into a sense of community. Community happens most effectively in a small group setting, so if you have a large company, you’ll want to start a POD with your core leadership team first. Then, by multiplying your groups, you can create a sense of community companywide regardless of how large your organization is. I’ll show you how later in this book.

The question for now is, How did we lose the sense of community many once felt in our society? And why is that important? Understanding what can take away the sense of community is vital to reestablishing it. In order to change the future, many times you need to know what happened in the past. History tends to repeat itself unless we are diligent to change it.

In the next chapter, we will review the events of history that led to the lack of community many seem to feel today.