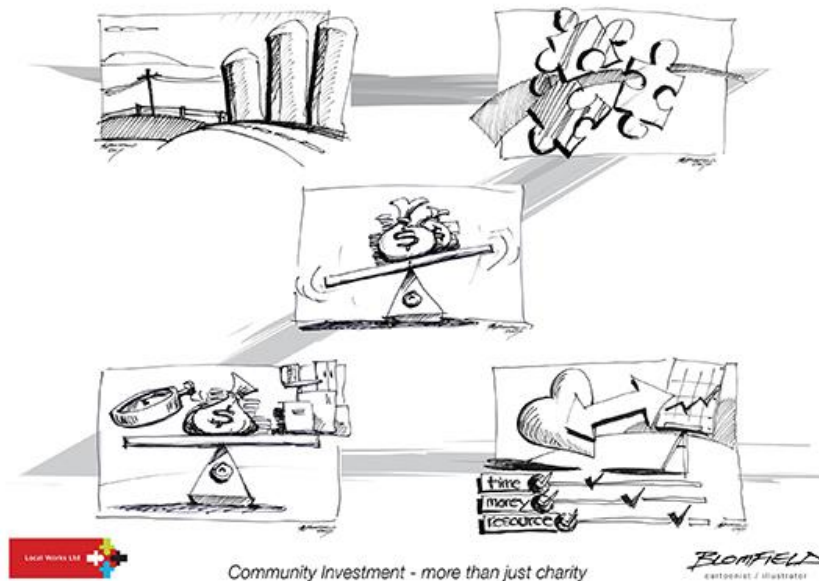


COMMUNITY INVESTMENT – MOVING AWAY FROM SILOS

Ian Leader, Local Works, April 2017



Thinking about society as a jigsaw of interconnected players, rather than a series of silos, changes the frame and focus for relationships between business and community.

In silo mode, interactions could be described as benefactor/beneficiary charity with a focus on money and doing things to, for or at each other. The usually reactive rationale for engagement is 'we'll do it if we can afford it' for a business, and 'we'll do it if we're going to get paid' for community. So not a lot of reciprocity or benefit for the wider community, environment or economy. Silos are, after all, designed to keep things in.

Jigsaws, by design, only work if all the pieces are present and fit together neatly. Jigsaws are also all about the bigger picture, which from a sustainability point of view, is a balanced triple or quadruple bottom line. In this frame of thinking, 'participation', 'reciprocity' and 'with' become central to relationships. The focus is about engagement as a means for building successful businesses and thriving communities. Accordingly, communities and community organisations have as much responsibility for the health and wellbeing of their businesses as businesses do of their communities.

Thinking about being an interdependent part of the bigger picture moves the primary basis for relationships from reactive, cash-based charity to proactive community investment. Engaging with an organisation based upon its profit motive also tends to take

a back seat. IE Working together on a shared issue or opportunity become the primary focus for the relationship rather than benevolence.

Community Investment can be defined as follows.

- Community investment is a considered deployment of time, money and resource across a continuum where motivations for engagement range from purely altruistic to a deliberate 'enlightened' self-interest.
- Community investment encompasses a variety of tactics and tools across the continuum to achieve participants' desired outcomes, individually and collectively.
- Community investment usually seeks to pool and leverage existing resource for mutual benefit.

A quick example to finish...

Porcini's was small restaurant in northwest Auckland which for no apparent reason became the target for vandalism and petty theft by a bunch of local youths. Owners, Pete and Karen, spoke with their landlord about improving the building's security. The landlord responded with a \$10k+ solution involving bars on the rear windows and metal roller doors to cover the building frontage. Neither price nor solution were attractive to the community-minded restaurateurs.

A conversation with Heidi, a local youth-worker, however, provided the solution. Heidi had a pretty good idea she knew the young people involved, as they attended her martial arts training. An award for most improved trainee, she suggested, presented by the restaurant owners at the end of each school term would go a long way towards stopping the attacks. And it worked. The young people met Pete and Karen, and got to hear their story including the woes of running a restaurant. Pete and Karen, met the young people involved, and heard their sadly real story as to why they're on the streets at 1.00 in the morning. Heidi got another tool for some positive youth development and reason for the young people to keep coming back.

And so, for the cost of a trophy, four gift vouchers and some time, the vandalism ceased, presumably on the understanding that "this is Pete and Karen's place, and they're good people".

Local Works

Local Works helps clients to move from an oft-times reactive and ad hoc charity paradigm to a considered and intentional community investment. Using a continuum from pure philanthropy to pure strategy, assets (time, money and resource) are mapped and prioritised to form a clear link to the client's strategic objectives and definable rationale for engagement. The result... smarter connections, better business, better bottom line, better place to live, learn, play and earn.

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