



AN INTERACTIVE EXERCISE TO LEAD OTHERS TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHY BEING NEIGHBORLY EXISTS

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WHAT THIS IS

This exercise is interactive so the participants can better internalize their understanding of Being Neighborly.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

If you don't fully understand something, you can't build it.

The conversation must begin with the vision. As the conversation continues, the reasons for the mission and the values become obvious and won't need much additional explanation. The vision clarifies the ultimate destination of all that we do. It answers the question **WHY** we exist in terms of **WHERE** we are going. We exist to get somewhere. The where is the bottom line. The mission explains **HOW** we get to that destination. In theory, a variety of different missions could potentially take you to the same destination but we have chosen this particular mission as our means of transport. If you don't have time to present both the vision and the mission, always choose to focus on the vision since that is the most important conceptual aspect needed to clarify our reason for existence.

To better understand the relationship between the vision and the mission, you can apply some simple examples. A mission statement could take you somewhere by means of train, on foot, or by air. But without first committing to the destination, the vision, one might arrive at places unknown or even undesired. A rudderless journey could bring you to a mountain top, a desert or to the bottom of a septic tank! Consistently keeping leadership's collective eye on the desired destination is a critical factor in determining organization's overall success or

failure.

Organizations led by people who have a shared understanding of and passion for the vision and who remember to consider it with every strategic and every operational move will ultimately arrive at their destination. Organizations that are led by people entrenched in the means of transportation rather than the destination may be ultimately disappointed.

For reference, the Being Neighborly vision, mission and value statements are at the bottom of this paper.

HOW THE EXERCISE WORKS

- 1) Display a large sheet of paper that shows the VISION statement.
- 2) Explain the steps in the exercise. Note that the mission and the values fall out naturally while discussing the all-important vision.
- 3) Considering the destination described in the vision, brainstorm all the words and concepts that accurately describe that destination. As participants call out those words, record them on a large sheet of paper or a whiteboard. Discourage too much distracting conversation about each word except in the case where a word is offered that does correctly apply.

These are some potential words that would apply. Make sure that most of these key words are included on the list you generate: sharing, peaceful coexistence, inclusiveness, happiness, shared ownership, acceptance, helpfulness, kindness, familiarity, awareness of the concept that “we are each the ocean and not just the wave”, familiarity, desire to embrace a simple life, commitment to repurposing / recusing, recycling, shared responsibility for our village (i.e. the people and the place), problem solvers, energized, supportive, curiosity for new ways to live in community, confidence in neighbors, working together to preserve our environment, outlets for creativity, willingness to ask, empowerment (non-hierarchical relationships), integrity, generosity, pooling of material resources and skills, creating new options for learning and activities, fun, supportive of other key community groups and resources.

- 4) Again considering the destination described in the vision, brainstorm all the words and concepts that do NOT describe that destination.

These are the words that apply. Again, make sure that most of these key words are included on the list you generate: commitment to status quo, competition, selfishness, comparisons, desire to “keep up” with others, judgmental, bullying, materialistic, instigator of problems, gossiping, blaming, isolated, clingy, stagnant, stranger, cluttered, focused on “those people”, status seeking, glory seeking, wastefulness, polluting the earth and the air, stark, stale, ugly.

- 5) Next explain the importance of taking the leap from ideas and concepts to the tangible and specific, easily identifiable actions.

6) Since you want to end on an uplifting and inspiring note, start the next step asking for ideas about actions that tie with the words and concepts that are NOT the BeNe vision. That way, the end of the session will be on the hope inducing ideas and the negativity can be identified but deliberately left behind. Resist skipping this step though since it is sometimes easier for people to think in terms of what something isn't before they can wrap their minds around what it is.

These are the actions that could be generated. Again, make sure these things are mentioned and point out that this clarifies the need for our rules: business advertising, seeking to make money off of neighbors, creating barriers between neighbors, offering judgmental criteria for an activity, hierarchical approach which values one person's contribution over another's, unethical choices, and setting up a social service. There may need to be an explanation about the value of empowerment versus a social service that maintains social barriers between service providers and service clients.

7) Now ask for those actions that DO tie with the words and concepts of the BeNe vision.

These are some actions that were generated based on BeNe:LS experience. This list includes actions taken by neighbors and actions taken by the BeNe group leadership team. This is where everything should begin to gel and folks will know "what to do" and why they want to make those action plans: give advice, offer opinions, have fun, involve everyone in decisions about what projects to do, homeless mats, create learning opportunities, create infrastructure to facilitate sharing material resources and skills, fuel the BeNe culture, create projects for shared benefit, facilitate opportunities for neighbors to support other key community group goals, highlight successes, share group joys, use a "fluid" management approach with an eye to progress and accountability to everything (this important management approach will be explained more specifically elsewhere), establish structures that facilitate neighbor's ability to bond based on shared interests, provide framework to make doing neighborly acts of kindness easier, create visual displays of BeNe in action throughout the community.

8) To more deeply internalize the vision and to give hope that accomplishing this vision is within the realm of possibilities, it is now important to directly tie these specific actions to the words and concepts that describe the BeNe vision (i.e. our destination and reason for existing) generated earlier. Using a bright colored pen, put a letter of the alphabet next to each word / concept on your posted sheet.

9) Finally, to tie the actions to the words / concepts, using the same colored pen, write the letter of each word / concept in front of each action listed. You will end up with a picture of what needs to be done to get us to where we want to go!

10) Smile, laugh, and bask in the enthusiasm for being part of a movement that moves us to a better place!

***** BeNe VISION., MISSION AND VALUES *****

The Being Neighborly VISION for Lake Stevens is that we become an “it takes a village” type place where neighbors actively support each other in a way that fosters the highest level of livability for our city and sustainability for our planet.

Our MISSION is to facilitate the empowerment of neighbors so that they can create the needed processes, opportunities and projects to satisfy their needs within the framework of our vision and core values.

Our core VALUES are integrity, empowerment, community, kindness, helpfulness, generosity and inclusiveness.