

Connecting the Good Worldwide: Connecting for a Shift

Connecting the Good Worldwide has evolved into what could be called a “network-centric” organization. Instead of very few people (either a CEO, executive director/management team, religious or political leader) having the power to direct the organization from the "top", a networked organization distributes leadership horizontally throughout the network. This happens through teams (in our case, we call these people weavers) of people who do their work connecting people and organizations every day throughout the community, mostly invisibly.

A networked structure is a natural response to the failure of modern institutions (business, political, religious, social) to address the complexity of modern spiritual, social, ecological, and economic problems. If you analyze each of these institutional sectors of community life, you will see that there are millions of smaller organizations that have been formed in the last 40 years at the grass roots level within each of these sectors as a response to the "top down" way of organizing of the 20th century.

The business sector. There are over 200 independent business networks that have formed the American Independent Business Alliance and the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies representing tens of thousands of businesses. This is a grass roots response of Main Street to the top down control of "Wall Street." Also, the largest growth is in the food sector with local Community Supported Agriculture, Farmers Markets, Coops, and urban farming networks using a market-based approach to increase local food production and consumption.

The religious sector. Since the 1960's, there has emerged a huge segment (24%) of the American people who have left institutional religious groups and have become what has been called the "spiritual but not religious"--what could be the largest "denomination" in the US. Also, according to recent surveys, many Christians today are seeking alternative forms of worship in what are called "simple (house) churches" and other "Emergent" grass roots forms.

The social and political realm. In the book Blessed Unrest, Paul Hawken speaks about the millions of grass roots groups throughout the world who are concerned about the environment, human rights, social and economic justice, and peace. He calls this a global movement without a name.

These grass roots movements operate on parallel tracks but may never work together---they are fragmented. From our experience, it is the fragmentation of our society and local communities into “sub-communities” that is the single most important problem facing humanity.

There are many examples of how this works. The obvious example is how we form into sub groups based on narrow political and religious beliefs. Given the nature of the changes facing the world, it is natural that people form “tribal” groups for support around what they believe.

People also form sub-communities based on their passion to make a difference. People may be focused on local food but not focus at all on issues of poverty or the environment; some are focused on personal spirituality, but not on social action or justice; some work as social activists, but consider “spirituality” to soft and not important; some work on areas outside the community globally, but never take the time to get to know their neighbor; etc.

How do we bring together all of the parallel threads of people and groups already making a difference and yet not create just another self-interested organization?

To move toward a “conscious community” we use a network-centric approach with no staff, no office, no hierarchy, no gurus---only 5 shared values and 12 common needs. Its purpose is to Connect the Good in each community by being of service to the needs of all the existing positive efforts. That is one way it does not develop self-interest.

Also, the Internet provides a template for organizing that enhances communication in a very transparent and horizontal way. The vehicle for Conscious Community is not endless planning meetings where people strategize and plan projects and actions, usually with a lot of ego. Rather, the Connecting the Good Hub is a vehicle that allows people to share what they are passionate about across all of the sub-communities mentioned earlier. In this kind of “sacred” space people can support one another by sharing information, resources, and connections freely, using the Internet as a tool to enhance efforts to build a self-sufficient community.

As people connect over simple, shared values and common needs, the barriers that once were there begin to disappear. This kind of connectivity is needed to build Unity through practical and common goals. As an example, we have brought together “Evangelical Christian” folks with “Neo-Pagans” who want to support a strong local food movement.

We are not re-inventing the wheel by duplicating the good that organizations are already doing. Instead, we offer connectivity for co-creation and coming together beyond what could be called our own “network ghettos” that may be pretty but still disconnected from the broader community.

Wouldn't it take more time to be involved in a network-centric process? Of course, this is an understandable concern because we all have issues with time management. But, since a network-centric organization does not involve raising funds for staff or provide direct services, the only “extra work” is connecting with others in new ways. What we call “weaving” is something that can be integrated into your daily routine and its premise is very simple: you find opportunities to support others to find the resources they need to make their passion become a reality. You have faith that in doing this, all of your needs for “your thing” will be met.

What we are talking about is a shift in consciousness to build a “larger container” for our daily interactions than the one we have at present. We can always grow and expand.

Today, this kind of growth and expansion is not an idle luxury for those who simply believe in this as an idea. The reason to do this kind of weaving community is necessary at this point in human history for our survival.

Your participation in this kind of network is needed now more than ever as the voices of division have been given the biggest microphones on radio and on TV. We don't have to follow these voices. We can bind together the power of Good into an effective community movement for transformation without having to be against anything.

As Dr. Albert Schweitzer once said, “Civilization can only revive when there shall come into being in a number of individuals a new tone of mind independent of the one prevalent among the crowd and in opposition to it. A new public opinion must be created privately and unobtrusively. The existing one is maintained by the press, by propaganda, by organization, and by financial influences which are at its disposal. The unnatural way of spreading ideas must be opposed by the natural one, which goes from man to man and relies solely on the truth of the thoughts and the hearer's receptiveness of new truth.”

Let us become aware of what has happened to us in following those voices. Let's remember that we come from one Source, that we are all connected, and we are one family.