

# Instigating Community Success -This Newspaper

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Our communities are in serious trouble. You may be confident your community is doing fine, but appearances can be deceiving. It may look viable and well, but most of our rural communities are suffering from population decline and a reduction in the number of businesses. That trend leads to shrinking tax bases, which in turn means reduced services levels and no new infrastructure investments, which drives more people and businesses to move out of town...and it becomes a vicious circle that spells the end of your community.

If you want a future, you must work on building one, instead of holding onto the past. You need to realize the world is changing dramatically and your community must prepare for it, and prepare to capitalize on it. The problem is, most people spend most of their energy lamenting that things aren't the way they used to be, claiming that the future is not going to get any better, and arguing that even if it could be better, it's impossible to achieve anyway. Those folks declare defeat before they even try. That is the attitude that sabotages our success. Those are the attitudes that kill our communities.

If you want success, you need to be creative and bold in your endeavours. Frankly, your community needs to discover a little of that risk-taking frontier attitude that made our forbearers cross oceans and continents to start a new life, and build a community, in a place they had never even seen before. You have all the tools and resources you need, and far more than they had when they arrived. You just need to get up, dust yourself off, and realize that your community is the most important thing worth saving. If you have a strong community, then your families can take care of themselves and each other, and that is the foundation on which we build a strong nation.

Often, we think it will all be okay if we can just get the mine or the mill to re-open. If we can just get some industry to come to town that employs 250 people, it will all be okay...at least until they close...again. Your community is not dead because that mill closed, or the mine closed, or because of any business closing. It's not dead because the chamber of commerce closed its doors, or because a volunteer organization folded, or because the playground equipment is old. It means you need to get to work on new opportunities, and stop wasting time lamenting the past.

Your community is not even beyond saving when it loses its school. Although losing the school can certainly make your work an uphill battle in the short-term, it is not a death knell for your community. The world is changing, and it won't be long before the school building itself becomes the old model for educating people. None of these challenges is insurmountable if you are willing to work, be open-minded and optimistic, and to talk about new opportunities. And yes, there are always new opportunities.

The real death knell of a community comes when the community newspaper is no longer concerned about the community, when the community and the newspaper no longer support each other, or when the community newspaper finally shuts down. The coffee shop is no substitute; it's the place where truth is rarely spread, and a kind word is rarely said. It is not the clearing house for wise, informed, and respectful discussions. Your community newspaper is that place. Your newspaper instigates and facilitates community wide discussion about the community's future, and in that regard, it can play a crucial role in the work you are about to undertake in making your community better.

If you are reading this column, then your community newspaper is one of those that has decided it wants to be part of a successful community. It is ready to instigate and facilitate discussion about the future of your community. As part of that effort, it will be printing this column every week. In this column, we will be discussing new ideas and strategies for community success, as well as the attitudes and efforts that lead to failure. We will be giving you material to help instigate discussion within your community. We can't do it for you, and this newspaper can't do it for you. But we can help you, if you are willing to step up and be a part of making your community successful.

*This syndicated content is provided by Doug Griffiths, best-selling author and chief community builder at 13 Ways, a company with a mission to push communities to face their challenges to find their unique path to success. For more information visit [www.13ways.ca](http://www.13ways.ca), or we can start the conversation at [info@13ways.ca](mailto:info@13ways.ca).*