

COMMUNITY RADIO SHOW

“Approaching Donors in an ABCD Way”

Community Radio Show Text

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Guest: Dan Duncan (Dan)

Brought to you by The Leadership Practice, the Community Strengthening Training & Technical Assistance Provider for the Corporation for National & Community Service

TODD: Welcome to the August Community [Radio Show]. My name is Todd Wellman and I am with Public Allies, the Community Strengthening Training & Technical Assistance provider of the Corporation for National Service. Today’s call is brought to you by The Leadership Practice, a partnership between Public Allies and the ABCD Institute at Northwestern University.

TODD: For the next 25 minutes or so, we will explore how many community organizations work with an asset based community development mindset, but the leaders of these organizations do not always know how to approach potential donors without changing their good work to go against their asset-based values. This is because the typical way to fund a project is to point out problems and then create a needs statement around those issues even though the organizations want to highlight and utilize the gifts and abilities of a community. Join community fund expert Dan Duncan as he shares his strategies culled from over 30 years in the nonprofit sector on (1) how to approach new donors in an asset-based manner; and (2) how to continue with current donors but in a way that reflects the positive qualities of communities. Dan is an asset based community development practitioner; works for the United Way of Tucson & Southern Arizona, so is a grantor of funds; and he is also a grantee—he applies for funds from different sources.

Please welcome Dan to the show.

TODD: So Dan, we’re here today to talk about Approaching Donors in an ABCD Way—but before we dive into that, can you give us an overview of the various ways that people do—or feel they have to—approach donors?

DAN:

- There are 3 broad groups of donors: individuals (small or large); institutional / government grants; foundations / united way / organization structured giving
- Also, idea of charity v. investment; funders, donors, and investors—people want a return on an investment and want successful results—which is different than the old model of next year will be worst than last year
- The intellectual capacity of the people who have the funds and if they are going to give; things are moving from charity to investment
- Charity—better to give than receive, so get more about needs side; ABCD—investment—seeing communities grow
- People looking for funds do not look at their capacity but instead look at creating a program to fix something in a community

TODD: What are the principals of asset based that you would use when approaching a donor?

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DAN:

- assets & strengths
- engagement / producing of own well-being instead of recipients of service
- results—the key piece—donors today are beginning to ask the “so what” question—what’s going to make a difference and this provides a greater opportunity for success

TODD: So you’re saying that it’s going to become harder and harder to be needs based?

DAN:

- Yes
- ABCD-focused gives a better sense for success
- It also creates less dependency, reduce recipients of service and increasing investment

TODD: What system does needs-based giving perpetuate?

DAN:

- You’ve all heard of needs assessment—he’s never seen one help anyone in 30 years
- And it doesn’t move more money than the assessment actually costs
- The old system perpetuates needs assessments

TODD: So, we need to start moving to asset-based giving—what are the first steps?

DAN:

- First, learn / review ABCD
- Look internally and assess your organization
- There are some books and tools, but this cannot just be about putting a new bow on old work
- The first tool that orgs need to do is start doing ABCD-focused work
- Review where people are engaged in the process—are the recipients of service engaged throughout and at the beginning—or are the people only brought in at the end to ask how it looks or to continue as recipients of service?

TODD: So say someone is at this level, is there a specific tool people can use to begin shifting his / her asks to be more asset-focused?

DAN:

- There is a workbook - Discovering Community Power: A Guide to Mobilizing Local Assets and Your Organization’s Capacity
- The W.K. Kellogg Foundation is very interested in proposals that both improve the community and strengthen the applicant organization; our experience indicates that proposals which connect with and engage a wide range of community resources are more effective than those which involve only the staff of the lead organization; we are also convinced that non-profit organizations are much more powerful community actors when they are not exclusively focused on needs, problems, and deficiencies but are effectively connected to the resources, or assets, of the local community
- This document will help any organization:
 - Strengthen its own organization by enhancing connections with the community’s assets
 - Strengthen the community by investing in the community’s assets
 - Strengthen current and future community based projects, activities, and proposals

