
Taking the Lead on Difficult Community Issues



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of Chamber Executives

Taking the Lead



Vail Valley Partnership

- Chris Romer & Erik Williams
- Vail Valley CO
- 775 members

Convergent Nonprofit Solutions

- Erin Bemis
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Today's Agenda

Introduction

Steps to take / Process

Case Studies

- **Tempe AZ**
- **Lake Tahoe CA**
- **Eugene OR**
- **Kalispell MT**
- **Vail Valley CO**

Key takeaways

Session Description

Taking the lead on difficult community issues can be a challenging but rewarding endeavor. Chambers of Commerce have a unique position in the community, often serving as a bridge between businesses, government, and community organizations. By taking the lead on difficult community issues, Chambers can foster positive change, drive economic development, and enhance the overall well-being of the community they serve. Hear from two chamber executives who will share case studies and their experience in leveraging resources, influence, and connections within the business community to get things done.



**Taking the lead?
Difficult community conversations?**

Eh. Sounds hard.



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One thing kids like is to be tricked. For instance, I was going to take my little nephew to Disneyland, but instead I drove him to an old burned-out warehouse. "Oh, no," I said, "Disneyland burned down." He cried and cried, but I think deep down he thought it was a pretty good joke. I started to drive over to the real Disneyland, but it was getting pretty late.

Jack Handey

WWW.STOREMYPIC.COM



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Manage the Process: Prepare

Prepare Thoroughly:

- Research the issue extensively to understand all perspectives.
- Identify key stakeholders and their concerns.
- Identify and create | secure plan for funding.
- Gather data, facts, and evidence to support your position or to facilitate informed discussions.

Manage the Process: Goals

Set SMART Goals:

- Specific - clear and concise
- Measurable - how to track progress
- Achievable – not too little, not too much
- Relevant - does it matter? What is the WHY?
- Time – Bound – start to finish AND everything in between



Manage the Process: Objectives

Set Clear Objectives:

- Define the goals and outcomes you want to achieve from the conversation.
- Ensure that these objectives are realistic, measurable and achievable. Are they investable?

Manage the Process: Space

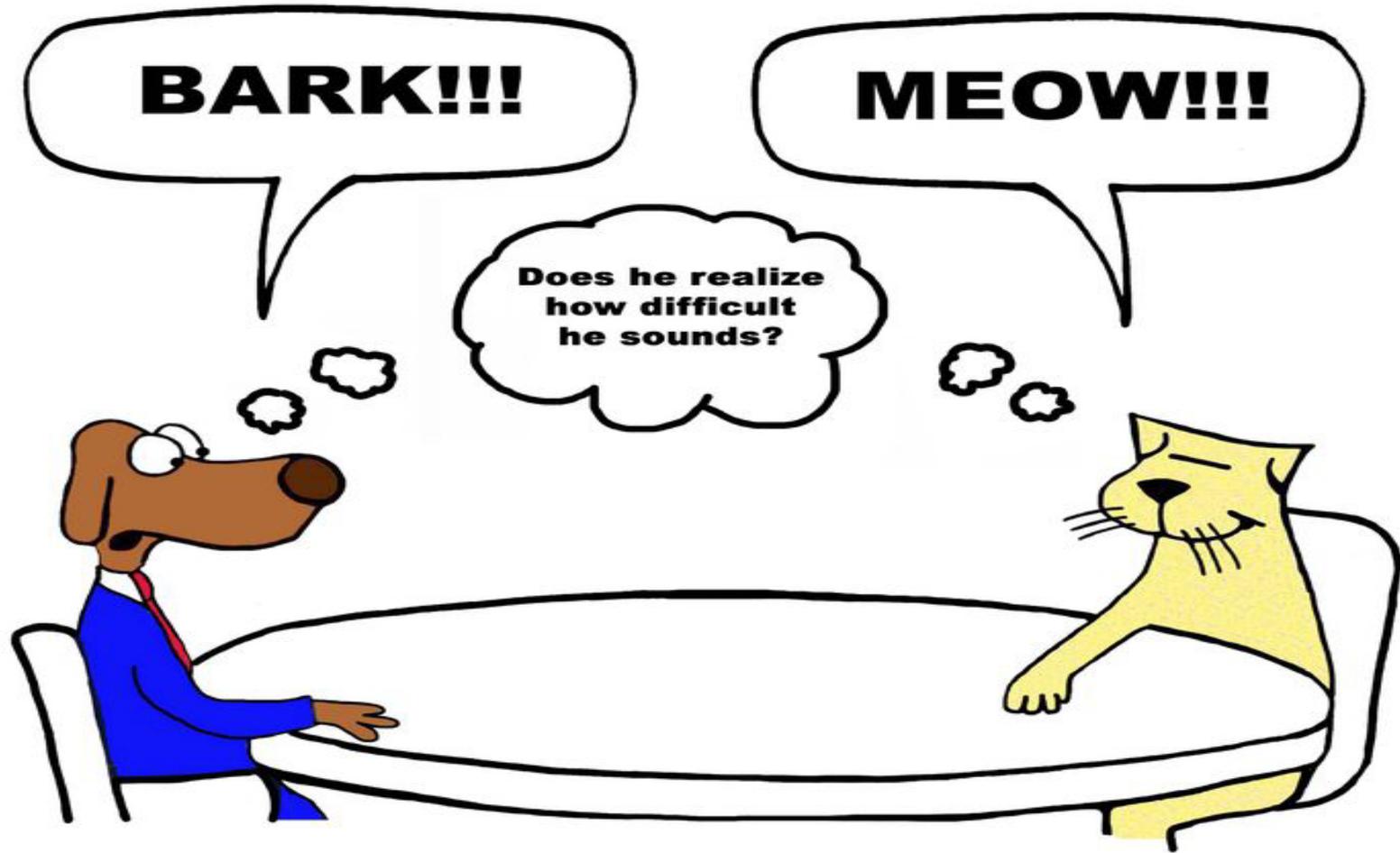
Create a Safe and Inclusive Space:

- Choose a neutral and welcoming venue or platform for the conversation.
- Establish ground rules for respectful dialogue.
- Encourage diverse representation and perspectives in the discussion.

Manage the Process: Communicate

Communicate Clearly:

- Craft clear and concise messaging that conveys your Chamber's position.
- Avoid jargon and complex language that might alienate or confuse participants.
- Provide context and background information as necessary.



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Manage the Process: Listen

Listen with Intention:

- Actively listen to all sides of the issue, through all mediums of communication.
- Ask questions to collect data. This is important through every phase of managing the issue.
- Outcomes and goals likely will shift through your process based on what you've 'heard'.



Manage the Process: Engage

Engage with Empathy:

- Acknowledge and validate participants' concerns and emotions.
- Show empathy and understanding even if you disagree with certain viewpoints.
- Use "I" statements to express your Chamber's perspective rather than making accusatory statements.

Manage the Process: Manage

Manage Conflict:

- Anticipate and address conflicts that may arise during the conversation.
- Have a process in place for mediating disputes or disagreements.
- Focus on common goals and areas of agreement to build bridges.

Manage the Process: Collaborate

Encourage Solutions and Collaboration:

- Shift the conversation towards problem-solving and actionable solutions.
- Highlight areas where the community can work together for mutual benefit.
- Offer resources or support to implement solutions.

DEEP THOUGHT OF THE DAY

**Some people are like slinkies,
They don't really have a purpose,
But they still bring a smile to your face
when you push them down the stairs.**

<http://www.myconfinedspace.com/>



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Manage the Process: Follow up

Follow Up and Stay Engaged:

- After the conversation, follow up with participants to provide updates on actions taken.
- Maintain ongoing communication and engagement with the community.
- Be transparent about the Chamber's efforts and progress

Manage the Process: Adapt

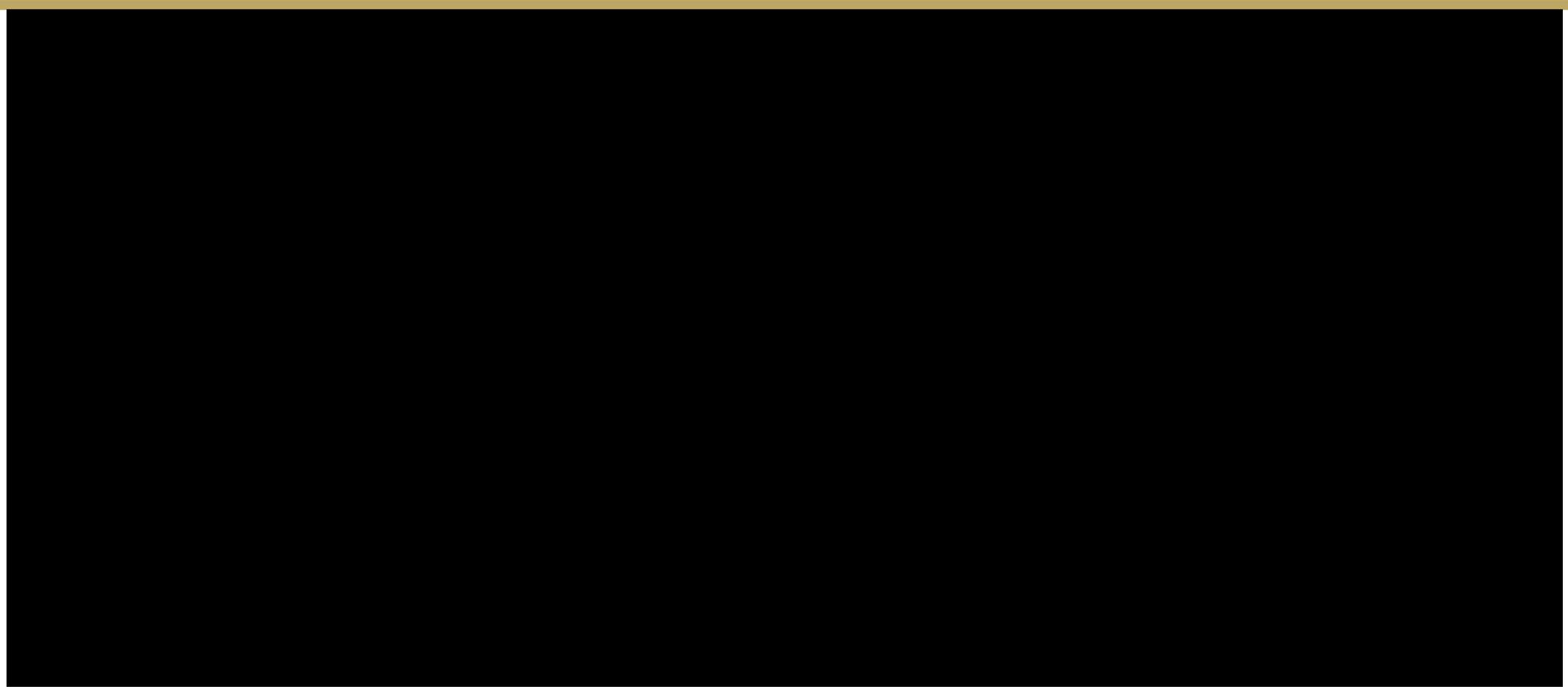
Learn and Adapt:

- Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of your communication and engagement strategies.
- Be willing to adapt and evolve your approach based on feedback and outcomes.
- Learn from past conversations and apply lessons to future ones.

“Some people without brains do an awful lot of talking.”
Wizard of Oz



Case Study: Tempe, AZ



Tempe, AZ

The issue:

Ballot initiative for entertainment district

Key lessons learned:

You don't always win

Key takeaways:

- **Build coalitions**
- **Push your message**
- **Chamber as convener**



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Case Study: Lake Tahoe, CA



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Lake Tahoe, CA

The issue:

Workforce housing

Key lessons learned:

Solving community problems requires collaboration

Key takeaways:

- **Coalition building is vital**
- **Grant funding is attainable**
- **Chamber as champion for key issues**



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Case Study: Eugene, OR



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Eugene, OR

The issue:
Homelessness

Key lessons learned:
Importance of board leadership

- Key takeaways:**
- **Process – it takes time to do it right**
 - **Collective impact model**
 - **Chamber as convener**

Case Study: Kalispell, MT



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Kalispell, MT

The issue:

Leading through change

Key lessons learned:

Mission driven work requires courage

Key takeaways:

- **Remember who your constituents are**
- **Advocacy is a key role for chambers**
- **Chamber as champion**



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Vail Valley, CO

The issue:

Ballot initiative for regional transit

Key lessons learned:

Don't be afraid to do hard things

Key takeaways:

- **The timing is never perfect**
- **Listen to your stakeholders**
- **Chamber as catalyst**



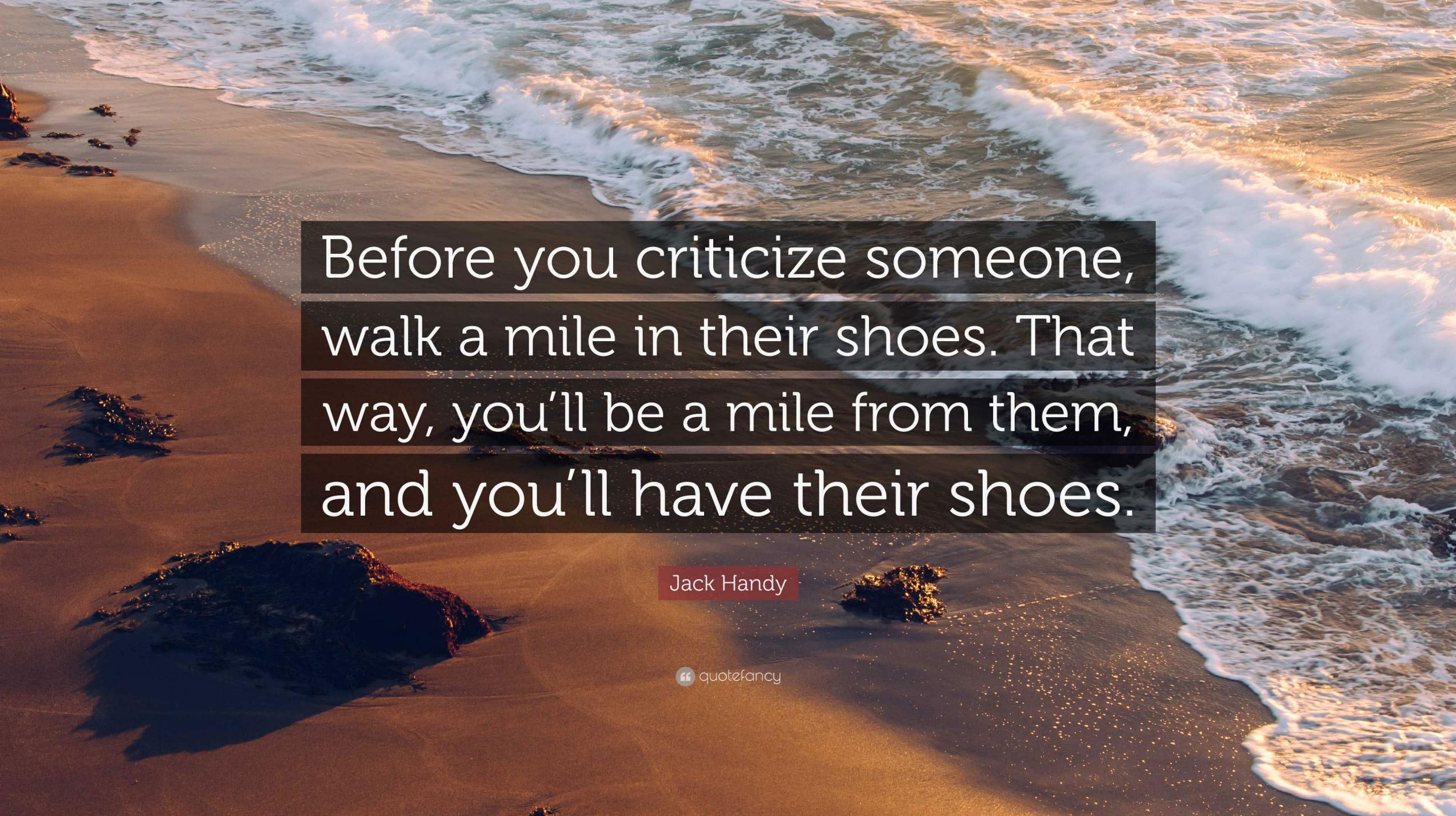
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What NOT to do

- 1. Set unrealistic | unsupported outcomes**
- 2. Be a sore loser (or an obnoxious winner)**
- 3. Be unprepared**
- 4. Be unbending | unwilling to adapt or compromise**
- 5. Try to do it alone**

Key Takeaways

- 1. Community leadership is hard**
- 2. Be committed to the process**
- 3. Problem solving – addressing community issues – is a 'sweet spot' for chambers**
- 4. Build coalitions**



Before you criticize someone,
walk a mile in their shoes. That
way, you'll be a mile from them,
and you'll have their shoes.

Jack Handy

“ quote fancy

Questions?



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