



13 Ways to Kill Your Community - Synopsis

We all do things that undermine our opportunity for success, whether we are consciously aware of it or not. When Doug spoke to high school students he realized they had all been told time and again how to be successful. The challenge for them, like so many of us, is to realize the consequences of some of our choices, and how they undermine our success. Communities are no different. Many want success, make plans for it, and work hard to be successful, but daily they make decisions or display attitudes that work counter to their long range goals. If we simply stop doing what encourages failure, and ensure our attitude is aligned with our goals, our communities can and will prosper well into the next generation. The first step in producing a healthy community comes in the realization that a community's success or failure depends on the members of that community possessing a deep and real willingness to change, and a desire to fight for success. If a community doesn't truly desire it, nothing will change. Below are summaries of each chapter outlining the attitudes that are causing our communities to wither and die.

1. Don't have Quality Water

The first of *13 Ways* that you can do to ensure the failure of your community is to have poor quality and quantity of water. A sensory analysis of a glass of tap water is an accurate reflection of the state of affairs in a community. If the quality of water is good, you will most often see new subdivisions, new businesses, and a clean shopping district. If the water quality is poor you will most often see businesses are closing, the shopping core looks decrepit, and there are many old houses for sale. Likewise, the quantity of water available determines if we can grow our town, our businesses, and our industries. Failure comes in ensuring you don't have good quality or quantities of water.

2. Don't Attract Business

To kill your community, do not entice new businesses especially if they may be competing with existing businesses. Analysis demonstrates that in a community where there is only one grocery store, that grocery store owner is usually barely making a living. If there are two grocery stores in a similar sized community, however, both store owners do quite well. With three the potential and realized success of the owners was even larger. The reason is that people like choice, variety, and quality, and they like to feel they are purchasing in a competitive environment that assures the best price. In communities where competition is limited, people choose to drive where there is more choice, more variety and better prices due to competition. When they do that money leaves your community forever, businesses and the local economy wanes, and death is inevitable.

3. Ignore Youth

It's very important to push youth away, and I don't just mean kids, I mean young families, young couples and single folks under 40. Youth have energy and ideas, are great volunteers, and are the future of your community. They chose to live there for a reason and want to see it grow, and want to help it be prosperous. So if failure is what you seek, it is important to chase them away and then wonder why they are gone. Better yet, you could try to keep them from ever leaving to get an education or new experiences they can bring back to your community, and they can become non-contributing members of your community who don't know anything but what has always been done. There are many exceptional ways to ensure your youth leave or don't care, but the critical thing is to stay focused on sucking the energy and life out of them so the future of your community can vanish as fast as its youth does.

4. Don't Assess Your Community's Need or Values

Every community lacks something. Whether it is a small town that lacks daycare services or a hardware store, or it is a large city that lacks community spirit or has traffic issues, every community has needs. Every community has values too, that are core to what its future is going to be about. Assessing needs and values gives you the foundation on how to improve your community and ensure its success. So, don't do that. Every community has competitive advantages over other communities that would make people want to move to or live there. Every other community has disadvantages that deter people from locating there, as well. Accomplishing failure means you need to focus on keeping the disadvantages while ignoring the competitive advantages.

5. Shop Elsewhere

Shopping locally will keep dollars in your community, and every dollar spent within a community reaches seven other hands before it leaves the community, which keeps the local economy advancing. Each dollar spent outside the community is gone forever. It isn't just about the public needing to support business, however. Businesses have grown to expect people to shop locally and don't always provide the price, quality, selection, or service that folks demand. Drive your community's economy into the ground by ensuring that businesses and consumers demand from each other, instead of supporting each other, and your future will leave town as fast as the dollars.

6. Don't Paint

Slow and painful destruction can be summed up in two words: "don't paint." It also includes not sweeping, dusting, planting flowers, or anything that makes a community attractive. A community's appearance is the most telling sign of its own pride, it's the clearest indication of faith in itself and it is the clearest outward sign of its future. I know that saying a community's appearance is critical to its success is like saying we should

judge a book by its cover, but in reality, we do exactly that. Failure may take a concerted effort to turn your town ugly, and of course that will only create the façade of failure, it will only create the illusion that your town is dying, and in essence it will only put an ugly cover on your book. With patience, however, no one will pick up that book to read, no one will be attracted to your community, and eventually that illusion of failure will become a reality.

7. Don't Cooperate

One of the essential requirements for success, in *anything*, is cooperation. What you can do right now is to refuse to meaningfully cooperate with other organizations, businesses, agencies, boards or other communities. That is a purely passive way to try to kill your community. If you want to be more proactive your group should actively fight others. Compete with them on similar projects, fight for the same grants, the same volunteers and the same fundraising dollars, until energy is depleted and nothing has been accomplished. However, others may catch on and avoid you like the plague, so there are even more devious methods to consider. The most effective way is not to avoid partnerships, but to enter into them and destroy them from the inside. Join forces under the guise of cooperation and then undermine all work that goes on. You can be assured of leading your community to failure if you are cunning enough.

8. Live in the Past

To destroy a community takes the right attitude. Living in the past is absolutely an essential attitude to kill your community. You could be a happy person that just thinks the future is fraught with peril and we should never move forward, but return to the glory days of old, or you could be one of those that dwell on past problems, mistakes, and failures. They either long for the glory days of old, or they dwell on the things that went wrong yesterday. They want everything to return yesterday or complain about past injustices that can never be fixed. In every community, there are plenty with this attitude. They speak first and are the angriest, or they are kind and soft spoken. Either way, at all costs, they never let the conversation turn to the future, and without a future, your community has only a past.

9. Ignore Your Seniors

One group you must relegate to the back-rooms and side streets because they are a dangerous group that could cause a riot of success is seniors. They are often viewed as uninterested, but don't be fooled. Seniors typically have more time and money than people still raising a family or working full-time jobs. They have worked for, and are about to invest in, having a quality of life, but if you don't give it to them, they can move away and take their time and money with them. Some communities think it is best to warehouse them in 'old folks' homes, assuming they will play shuffleboard and crib harmlessly until they die. They are wrong. They will get out and do things like volunteer and spend

money. As long as they are in the community they call home they are dangerous. You are best to give them nothing of what they want and need so they must leave and then, and only then, can your community enjoy its slow and inevitable death.

10. Be Short Sighted

Confine your thoughts to only local issues and local problems, or be short sighted. You need to stay in sight of the water tower both figuratively and literally in the way you think. Don't look outside your community for new ideas or emerging trends. Few communities actually succeed with their own creative, unique ideas because there are so few original ideas, and the mistakes that accompany them are costly. Most borrow ideas from other successful groups that will most often happily share what worked for them. Ensuring failure, however, requires trying the same thing you have always done, those things that have never worked, again and again and again. Communities that seek out ideas and find partners that extend beyond the sight of the water tower, find an entire new world of opportunities. They find the future. They succeed. Keep your ideas within reach of the water tower and you can ensure you can fail without ever having to fret over the world of opportunities available just out of sight.

11. Ignore Immigrants and Newcomers

Newcomers and immigrants bring an entrepreneurial attitude and community spirit that make them a threat to the failure of your community. They come from places where they never had what we have, and so they see our communities as a world of open possibilities and a fantastic life, with just a little work. Immigrants have the same attitude and drive that our fore-fathers had. We don't have it anymore and it is frightening and intimidating to us now. To ensure failure you need to shut those people out of all community and economic development organizations, leadership opportunities, and business ventures. They will only cause trouble and be infectious at building success. Consider spending time in the local coffee shop talking about them and their strange ways. Make them feel excluded and different. If you are lucky they will not only feel excluded but may in fact change their mind about your community and decide to leave, then, finally, your community can fail in peace.

12. Become Complacent

Success can happen to anybody. Once you have some success, the best way to ensure it goes away is to assume it will always come to you and will require no effort on your part. Assuming you are miles ahead, and always will be, is the fastest way to ensure everyone else passes right by you. In reality everything is either healthy or dying. Many people say they want to have a 'sustainable' community, but what they really mean is that they want the 'status quo.' In this world there is no such thing. Everything changes and it takes a lot of work to just hold your ground. In the words of Wayne Gretzky, "it takes a lot to get to the top, it takes even more to stay on top." Seeking to be vibrant, dynamic, responsive,

adaptive, and enterprising can give you what your community needs to keep from dying, but seeking the status quo immediately becomes complacency, and complacency is the perfect way to ensure that your community will end in good time.

13. Don't take Responsibility

Ensuring failure is easy if you can recruit the type of people that blame everything, every wrong and every challenge, on someone else. Positive thinking, enterprising, and entrepreneurial people recognize a void as an opportunity to make money, to develop new skills, or experience a new challenge. Negative people see challenges as impossible obstacles to overcome, and will always pass on the responsibility and the challenge to someone else. To kill a community, you and everyone you know must not take responsibility for anything that is wrong. Convince others that everything wrong is someone else's fault and someone else's responsibility, that way, you will not feel compelled to fix the problems, and your community can perish with pride, and guilt free.

In the non-fiction book, *13 Ways to Kill Your Community*, we outline 13 ways that communities sabotage themselves, often without knowing it. Now that you've learned the *13 Ways*, as a community, as an individual, you have the ability to change yourself and the future of your community. Go out and fight the attitudes that sabotage success. Our communities are worth fighting for, if anything ever was worth a fight . . . and remember that you are not alone. You will face criticism and negativity, but our advice is to simply smile and remind the critics that, "those who say it cannot be done, should not interrupt those who are doing it." And if all else fails . . . give us a call.



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