

## CONTRIBUTION TO COMMUNITY

### What is contribution to community?

**Contribution to community is the demonstration of the commitment to do something to leave a positive stamp on the broader community – local, regional and or global.**

### Why is it important to contribute to the community?

By making a contribution to the community we are in some way shape or form making a positive difference to the broader community. We can do this in diverse ways, for example contributions can be financial, or in kind i.e. donating products and or services, or it can be having a sincere desire to make a difference and acting on that desire in some way, shape or form that comes naturally to us. It is giving to others in a way that will impact not only individuals, but whole groups of people, perhaps, for example, bringing about a positive change in the way a community does a certain thing or shifting a group perception to a more positive one.

Can you imagine how much of an impact there would be if every individual on the planet somehow made a contribution to the wider community? It would very likely not only create a better quality of life for everyone, it would also help people to shift from scarcity thinking to a more abundant outlook.

As well as the positive results for the community that come from people making a contribution, it also benefits the giver themselves, as they experience the fulfilment, satisfaction and self-worth that can come from being able to make a positive difference in whole communities.

Then there is the knock-on effect of group mobilisation – when a community realises it has the power to influence and make a difference the speed with which change can happen rises exponentially as more and more people become involved. A good example is Live Aid, back in the 1980s, that was an incredibly successful 'grass roots' event, that not only achieved its goal (in fact it surpassed it), but it also created a blue print for a way to contribute on a large scale that has since been followed time and time again.

If we look around us, we can see the results of group and community choices that have been made and the impact that has manifested from them. What is important is to consider in what ways have these choices made an impact? Have the outcomes been positive or negative and what can we learn from what has gone before?

For some people contributing to the community comes naturally as a part of what they do; for others it is something that requires an extra output of energy and effort to achieve. It is perfectly possible, however, for everyone to contribute in some way if the effort is made to find a way that feeds positively into the rest of one's life and has a personal relevance.

The importance of making a positive contribution to community is that the cumulative effect of this effort can create better circumstances and conditions for large numbers of people which, on a planet as full as ours is becoming, is now more than every a necessity.

And if you stop to consider your day to day and week to week actions, you may well realise that you are already contributing in ways you simply hadn't noticed; to contribute more may simply be a case of becoming aware of the impact and contribution you already make and building on this.

If we make no effort to contribute to community we are missing an opportunity to create a more caring and responsive environment both for ourselves and for others. It may, of course, be that an individual is fully committed to giving and contributing in other ways, however it is worth acknowledging the power that lies in creating an effect in an entire community and considering if there is a way we can play at least a small part in some type of contribution to community so that we harness the potential that lies within groups to create positive, en masse change.

### Why is it so easy to slip up in the area of contribution to community?

One way we can slip up in the area of contribution to community is by not looking outside of ourselves and our own lives. We can easily become totally absorbed by the busyness and speed of 21<sup>st</sup> century living, and slip into focusing only on ourselves and meeting our own needs. If one is running on empty oneself this way of operating seems to make perfect sense. The error in this thinking, however, is that it is assuming that contribution will take more energy and overlooking the fact that we can actually gain huge returns from contribution in the form of increased inspiration and energy, self-worth, fulfilment, not to mention friendship and connection, that can all come from contributing to community. So rather than approaching contribution to community as a 'should' it can help enormously to think about it in terms of how it could be rewarding and fulfilling and compliment what you are trying to achieve in your own life.

Accepting the status quo is another way we can slip up in this area. This comes from a mindset that thinks there is nothing you can do to make a difference, 'little old me' cannot make a significant change in the grand scheme of things. This, however, is a self-fulfilling belief that stops us even giving something a go, which in turn means we don't give ourselves the chance to ever find out what we are truly capable of achieving or contributing, and keeps the belief of powerlessness in place.

Also we can slip up in the area of contribution to community by not thinking outside of the square to see where or how we could make a positive contribution. We may have fixed ideas about how contribution to community has to be done, or about what form it should take, and not realise that our natural skills and talents may well be the better place to look for ideas about what contribution we could personally make.

It would be a less interesting world if there were only a limited number of ways to contribute. Fortunately this is not the case; the limits of our imaginations are the only real limits we have to work with. If we each drop the 'should' thinking around contribution and ask ourselves instead, 'how would I like to contribute using what I know and love as a starting point?' we might just find we come up with some innovation and inspiration.

## Evaluate your own contribution to community

- In what ways do you positively contribute to broader community? Remember to think outside the square as you answer this question as you may be contributing in small ways that you haven't even considered – for example:
  - Are there any local clubs that you are a member of? Local clubs or associations could not exist if it weren't for members.
  - Perhaps you are a regular walker who says hello to both people you recognise and new faces as you take your exercise. Who knows whose day you brightened, at just the right moment, with your acknowledgement of them as a fell human being? Something as small as this can create an invaluable sense of connection and belonging in both yourself and others.
  - Do you use your local shops and take the time to say hello and create connection with the people who work there?

Although these are examples of small ways in which we can be making a contribution to our community they are still very a very valuable contribution – just imagine what a different experience we would have if everyone did just one of the above.

Remember also that the more traditional ways of contributing are, of course, totally valid – so it might be that you sponsor a child through a charity that works with whole communities; or perhaps you volunteer for a community group or charity from time to time; or perhaps you do pro bono work sometimes as your way of contributing.

- If you are not able to think of ways in which you are currently contributing to community, think back over your life time and note the ways you have contributed in the past;
  - Have you ever belonged to any clubs or associations?
  - Have you ever joined in with any local projects, such as bush replanting, or rubbish collecting?
- If you do feel you are contributing to community, rate your current contribution in relation to how much you think you could be contributing e.g. if contributing to your fullest potential is a 10, and not contributing at all is a 1, where are you now?
- Next think of someone you know who has made exceptional contributions to the community. How would you rate yourself in comparison to this person (if they were a 10, what would you be)?
  - What's one thing you could do to improve how you'd rate yourself?

## Improve your contribution to community

After you have completed your evaluation, if you have noticed some room for improvement, you might like to try some of the following strategies:

- Notice how it makes you feel when others are able to support or contribute towards something that you are doing. Notice the specific behaviours they do that create you to

experience them as contributing. Allow these insights to provide behavioural guidance, added motivation and inspiration for you to commit to becoming exceptional in your own contribution to community.

- Temporarily suspend limited thinking and write about the way in which you would like to contribute to the wider community if you had all the resources you needed to do so. Then work back from this ideal vision to concrete, achievable action steps you could now in the direction of this vision. Place this written vision somewhere prominent to remind you of your personal commitment to becoming more giving to the community.
- Make a list of activities and skills that bring you enjoyment and satisfaction. Make a list of the connections or resources that you would like to have in your local or wider community. Then identify a community organisation, charity or group that could benefit from your knowledge in these areas and that might offer you either beneficial connections or experiences.
- Consider the possibility that when we give or contribute with generous intent we open the door for all sorts of possibilities to arise. It might be useful to consider the possibility that we receive in the act of giving? Check this out for yourself in terms of instances where you have generously given; have you had a sense of receiving something good in return (even if simply the after glow of having acted with generosity!).
- Think of the ways other people contribute to community that you most admire or that seem the most fun and fulfilling. What would your version of this be?
- Decide on one small new way in which you would like to contribute to community and act on it today!

## Further resources

If you would like to develop further in the area of contribution to community, the following books, courses and consultants may be worth considering. Please note that High Ideals does not endorse or receive any direct benefit from recommending the following resources, the list is simply a suggestive collection of materials that members of the High Ideals management team have found useful in their own development.

- **The Go-Giver** by Bob Burg and John David Mann – This is a brilliant little book about the transformation of a young man from a “go-getter” to a “go-giver” and the remarkable business results one can get from giving well and wisely. There are five “laws” in the book that are easy to explore in a relevant and practical way.
- **Aiming Higher: 25 stories of how companies prosper by combining sound management and social vision** by David Bollier
- **The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success** by Deepak Chopra
- <http://learningtogive.org/resources/folktales/> - Learning to Give is a wonderful site which includes a curriculum and training resources, including stories, which can help both children and adults understand the value and benefits of giving. It is a service of The League, found at <http://leagueworldwide.org/>
- <http://www.high-ideals.com> – Check out the Member Directory section for High Ideals members who offer services that could support you, such as coaching, mentoring or consulting on High Ideals criteria/values.

## Author and editor acknowledgement

**High Ideals** would like to acknowledge and thank Narelle Holland for her work on this document. Narelle is the Victorian State Membership Manager of High Ideals, a life coach, consultant and trainer and assessor. To find out more about Narelle, please visit her profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

This document is part of the **High Ideals** Criteria Information Series, edited by Claire Stretch. For more information on Claire please visit her profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

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