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THE CLEAR VIEW

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Why Town Hall Meetings?

By: Kelly Kuenstler, MPA

Gallup's Annual Governance Survey conducted in 2023 showed Americans have the most faith in local governments (67%) and the least faith in the legislative branch of the federal government (32%). I am unsure of the outcome of the 2024 Governance Survey but feel certain trust won't be any better this year.

How can we, as local government officials, do our part to keep faith in local government as high as possible? I submit that one way is through the use of Town Hall Meetings. They are a perfect way to bring citizens together, to get feedback on what is working and what isn't and a good means of information sharing. Technology allows citizens to even attend virtually and some programs allow citizens to participate remotely.

Other benefits of Town Hall Meetings are visible leadership. Citizens like to feel connected to their leaders. These meetings promote collaboration by encouraging citizens to mingle with elected officials and city leaders. They can serve as a platform for elected leaders to communicate with their constituency on a personal level. Town Hall Meetings use citizen feedback to improve local services, they can play a crucial role in allowing citizens to play a role in shaping policies, they allow citizens to voice their concerns on local initiatives and this type of citizen involvement can help ensure that government officials are responsive to the needs and concerns of the people.

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Does Better Matter More Than Bigger?

By: Marty Schmitt, MA

I wanted to take a moment to share my thoughts on the importance of prioritizing 'better' over 'bigger'. In our daily pursuit of growth and success, it's easy to get caught up in the idea that bigger is always better. However, I firmly believe the other way around - better almost always leads to bigger, naturally.

By focusing on being better in these areas identified below, we can create a stronger foundation for sustainable growth:

Personal Development: Encourages personal growth, self-improvement, learning new skills, leadership development, enhancing one's abilities and well-being over simply achieving more milestones or accumulating possessions. It promotes a more balanced and fulfilling approach to life/work.

Business: In a business context, "better over bigger" is focusing on improving the quality of services, efficiency and customer experiences rather than solely striving for rapid growth or expansion. This can lead to higher customer satisfaction, loyalty, and long-term success.

Quality Improvement: Enhancing the quality of our services to better meet customer needs and expectations. This can lead to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty....and more Contracts.

Operational Efficiency: Prioritizing the well-being and development of our employees can drive better performance. Also streamlining our processes to improve productivity by having an innovative approach or use of technology will improve our efficiency. I believe an efficient operation can make a business more resilient and profitable without necessarily growing in size.

Customer Experience: Focusing on providing exceptional customer service and building strong relationships with clients. A loyal customer base can be more valuable than a larger, less engaged one. We have always prided ourselves on repeat clients.

Innovation: Investing in research and development to create innovative solutions and stay ahead of competitors. This can help a company maintain a competitive edge without simply getting bigger. All these aspects of better over bigger in the above areas can lead to growth opportunities for you personally and professionally.

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Kelly Kuenstler, MPA

Vice President - Clear Career Professionals

Kelly Kuenstler's passion for public service has shaped her career as Director of the Administrative Office of the District Attorneys, County Manager, and City Manager. She now serves as Vice President of Training Services at Clear Career Professionals. With a master's in Public Administration from New Mexico State University (2002), Kelly has earned awards in both New Mexico and Texas, including State Employee of the Year and City Manager of the Year. Active in professional organizations, boards, and academia, she champions ethical government management and mentors aspiring public servants, making her a valuable addition to our team.



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Why Town Hall Meetings?

Stumbling blocks might be the complexity of organizing one, the time it takes preparing a good one or even social issues as not all persons feel comfortable airing their concerns or praises publicly. None of these are hard to overcome. The time it takes to organize and prepare an effective meeting is time well spent. To overcome any social issues that might surface, technology can be used so that unfiltered comments from citizens not comfortable speaking in public can be shared and considered as well.

A typical Town Hall Agenda might involve an introduction by the top executive, presentations on local initiatives and demonstrations on past goals achieved and potential future goals. They can even involve resident feedback on local services. Prioritizing issues that are of broad community concern and ensuring diverse perspectives foster comprehensive discussions in these types of meetings. Finally, selecting a suitable venue that is equipped with audio and visual aids and has ample space for all attendees is a must!

Town Hall Meetings can play a crucial role in promoting constituent engagement and in government accountability. I encourage you to explore the benefits of holding one in your municipality or county. The end of a year or the beginning of the year are perfect times to share what worked the previous year and what didn't and to construct goals for the upcoming year and well into the future. Let us know if we can help!

By: Kelly Kuentler, MPA



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Does Better matter more than bigger?

I recently read a blog by Phil Love titled “Bigger is Not Always Better” which had this example that helps explain my thinking of being Better over Bigger:



S. Truett Cathy, Founder of Chick-fil-A

“At the end of the table sat S. Truett Cathy, the founder and CEO of Chick-Fil-A. He seemed disengaged through most of the meeting. Then suddenly, he began to bang his fist on the table and continued to do so until the room was quiet. All eyes were on him as he spoke. ‘You have been consumed with how to make Chick-Fil-A bigger, how to grow. You are focusing on the wrong goal. You need to focus on how we can make our company better. If we are better, then our customers will demand for us to be bigger, and growth will come naturally.’”

There is a long-running belief that things grow or die. In startups and in business, growth tends to mean more topline revenue. But growth doesn’t have to mean more topline revenue. Growth can also mean improvement, better product, better systems, better processes. In summary, by prioritizing better in all areas of our business, we can create a strong foundation for sustainable growth and success. Better almost always leads to bigger, naturally. So, let us know what you think! Do you believe better matters more than bigger?

By: Marty Schmitt, MA



Marty Schmitt, MA
President - AG|CM



Marty Schmitt, appointed President of AG|CM in January 2022, brings over 25 years of construction and leadership experience. Since joining AG|CM in 2007, Marty has held pivotal roles, including leading the City of Corpus Christi CIP Bond program and managing a \$300 million TAMU System construction initiative. As Vice President, he successfully established AG|CM's East Texas regional presence. Marty's career began at Kiewit Construction Company, contributing to Boston's iconic “Big Dig” and later managing offshore fabrication in Corpus Christi. Known for prioritizing growth and employee development, Marty fosters professional learning and teamwork to drive AG|CM's success and inspire its workforce.