It is more a matter of believing the good than of seeing it as the fruit of our efforts.

Chuang Tzu
China, third century B.C.E
A Call to Community: Using Strengths-Based Leadership in a Community of Practice

Andi Witczak
Director, Center for Service Learning
University of Kansas
insanely optimistic
lost but making good time
Shift in thinking

deficit-based vs asset-based
How can I use my strengths?
“How do I do this?”

The question is a defense against the action. It is a leap past the question of purpose, past the question of intentions, and past the drama of responsibility.

The question “How?”—more than any other question—looks for the answer outside of us. It is an indirect expression of our doubts...

Peter Block
Stewardship
What if I used my strengths everyday (at home and work)?

What if my co-workers used their strengths everyday?
Creation vs. Problem-Solving

When you are solving a problem, you are taking action to have something go away: *the problem*. 

When you are creating, you are taking action to have something come into being: *the creation*. 

Notice that the intentions of these actions are opposite.

Robert Fritz  
*The Path of Least Resistance*
If the [problem-solving] process is successful, you might eliminate the problem.

Then what you have is the absence of the problem you are solving.

But what you do not have is the presence of the result you want to create.

Robert Fritz
The Path of Least Resistance
Community of Practice

Made up of people who share a common interest and who work together to expand their individual and collective capacity to imagine, create, and innovate change over time.

based on Vogt, Brown, and Isaacs
Community as a System

Sustainability is the capacity of a system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose.

Michael Fullen
Community of Practice

working definition

Made up of people who share a common interest and who work together to expand their individual and collective capacity to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose.
Until you have a community you don’t truly have a voice.

Parker Palmer
Five Interlocking Habits of the Heart

1. **We must understand that we are all in this together.**

Parker Palmer
*Healing the Heart of Democracy*
1. We must understand that we are all in this together.

2. **We must develop an appreciation of the value of “otherness.”**
1. We must understand that we are all in this together.

2. We must develop an appreciation of the value of “otherness.”

3. **We must cultivate the ability to hold tension in life-giving ways.**
1. We must understand that we are all in this together.

2. We must develop an appreciation of the value of “otherness.”

3. We must cultivate the ability to hold tension in life-giving ways.

4. **We must generate a sense of personal voice and agency**
1. We must understand that we are all in this together.
2. We must develop an appreciation of the value of “otherness.”
3. We must cultivate the ability to hold tension in life-giving ways.
4. We must generate a sense of personal voice and agency.
5. **We must strengthen our capacity to create community.**

Parker Palmer

*Healing the Heart of Democracy*
The Public Narrative Process

Narrative is not talking “about” values; rather narrative embodies and communicates values. And it is through the shared experience of our values that we can engage others, motivate one another to act, and find courage to take risks, explore possibility, and face the challenges we must face.

Marshall Ganz
What is Public Narrative?
If I am not for myself, who is for me?
If I am only for myself, what am I?
If not now, when?

Rabbi Hillel the Elder
Pirke Avot 1:14
We all have a story of self.

What’s utterly unique about each of us is not the categories we belong to; what’s utterly unique to us is our own journey of learning to be a full human being.

Marshall Ganz

*Why Stories Matter: The Art and Craft of Social Change*
The second story is the story of us.
That’s an answer to the question, Why are we called? What experiences and values do we share as a community that call us to what we are called to?

Marshall Ganz
Finally, there’s the story of now—the fierce urgency of now

The story of now is realizing, after the sharing of values and aspirations, that the world out there is not as it ought to be.

Marshall Ganz
Deficit Model of Community

Each piece is working hard on its own purpose, but parallel efforts added together do not make a community.

Peter Block, *Community*
Stop “Best Practices” and “Benchmarking”
The essential question then is this:

What if, those of us who care about the KU community, could create a future for ourselves that is not just an incremental improvement, but one that is different from what we have now—one that creates a sense of belonging among all?
The Gifts Conversation
So the point is not to become a leader. The point is to become yourself, to use yourself completely—all your skills, gifts, and energies—in order to make your vision manifest.

Warren Bennis