Building CommUNITY Notes | **Belonging**

1. What does belonging look like to you? Is it different at work vs. in the community?
    a. Belonging is knowing people have different lives and priorities outside of work. It's important to be particularly inclusive to women and mothers in today's world. Workplaces should be accommodating to people with personal situations in order for them to feel "belonging".
    b. As employers, you need to make yourself vulnerable and approachable so people can approach you and tell them what the workplace is missing. "Your voice lets others have a voice."
    c. Feeling that you have a purpose and feeling free to talk to whomever about whatever
    d. Being able to walk into a workplace and feeling safe & included, comfortable, feeling welcome, and not having to change who you are to fit in.
    e. People can go to a different/larger community and act completely different from the person they are in our community. Our community is not as accepting of overall appearance.
    f. People get comfortable in small communities like ours and don't want to see change. It's important, however, to challenge the status quo and make change anyway.
    g. Belonging is transitional. What it feels like to belong at age 18 is different than age 60. Older groups want to be independent and won't ask for assistance.
    h. At work, things have been done to create an inclusive culture. This can go to the community level too (someone might go to a specific store over others, because they appreciate seeing the same people and having conversations with them. They feel like they "belong" to that store.)

2. What does/can your company do to be sure people feel they belong and are a part of the team?
    a. New staff are introduced to everyone so they instantly feel a part of the team.
    b. Bringing people from all departments together can be tough, especially in a large organization.
    c. Volunteering together allows you to forget work and hang out/catch up with your coworkers in a more informal setting.
    d. Host parties, picnics, events, and all-staff meetings to be inclusive of all employees.
    e. Maternity/paternity leave – some companies offer 6-8 weeks paid for both mothers & fathers
    f. Helping non-english speaking employees by offering classes and having bi-lingual staff.
    g. No human connection leads to increased turnover and demoralizes employees.

3. Besides traditional on-boarding for a new employee, what does your business do to get team members connected to each other and their interests outside of work?
    a. Shut down for a day with your other locations and have an "employee party".
    b. Volunteer together – implement a policy where people get paid for their volunteer hours.
    c. On-boarding employees together so they have a "buddy" they go everywhere with. Continually checking on them to see how they are doing.
    d. Host new employee for lunch with leadership to get to know each other.
    e. Continually having lunch together allows people to unwind and get to know one another.

4. Time together in the workplace is important, but what can we do to help people connect to our community after hours?
    a. People are concerned with themselves and not the community. After hours is really hard. Some companies have to force people to utilize their paid volunteer hours.
    b. The biggest piece of getting people to participate after hours is creating a culture where they feel like they want to be around their co-workers, even when they don't have to. If people are looking forward to the end of the day so they can get away from their annoying coworkers, they definitely won't be hanging out with them in an unpaid setting.

Building CommUNITY Notes | **Community**

1. What are examples of ways your company volunteers to give back to the community
   a. Helping out local non-profits
      i. Humane society
      ii. Community Kitchen
      iii. Downtown cleanup days
   b. Participating in a service club
      i. Many options to choose from in North Iowa!

2. What would you recommend to someone new to the area as a way to get involved in the community?
   a. Introduce them to the Chamber to either get involved with their programs directly or for a referral to other volunteer organizations
   b. Send them to Visit Mason City
   c. Showcase the art in downtown Mason City
   d. Refer them to chamber and visitor websites. Also discussed thisisnorthiowa.com
   e. Take them to a service club meeting or at least show them a list of options
   f. Ask them what their passions are and then find the best fit for them
   g. Help with human services – contact Community Health Center
   h. Include ways to get involved in the water bill – something that goes to everyone

3. What components make up a strong community?
   a. People giving back to make it strong
   b. Family-owned businesses (and supporting them)
   c. Supporting local
   d. Pride among residents
   e. People and positive attitudes
   f. Being vulnerable and showing what we have to offer

4. What can we do to make Mason City, Clear Lake, and surrounding areas feel more united as one community?
   a. Share positive narratives
   b. Collaborate with one another instead of competing
   c. Chambers and the North Iowa Corridor working together and sharing outside of our circles
   d. Put more effort reaching out to the younger demographic
   e. Make sure all people are connected to resources they need

5. If you're new to the area, what are some thing you noticed about North Iowa when you first arrived (good or bad)?
   a. It was difficult to find work with higher level of experience (education)
   b. Finding housing was very difficult
   c. First impression: "Get me out of here" – it felt trashy. Lots of vacant buildings (20 years ago)
   d. People are very cliquey
   e. Hard to get connected

Building CommUNITY Notes | **Workplace**

1. What is your workplace doing well when it comes to inclusion & belonging?
   a. Programs, trainings, webinars:
      i. Plant manager leading by example – encouraging employees to participate but not making it a requirement (no resentment).
      ii. Incentivizing with food! Letting staff know you will be participating as a team, and if they'd like to join there will be lunch in it for them!
      iii. Personality tests are a great way to understand the people you work with
   b. Volunteering as a team
      i. Creates a sense of inclusion with each other AND with the community
      ii. Community members trust employees of the company because they have seen them giving back
      iii. Volunteer time is included in the workweek, staff are given time off to volunteer
   c. Company-wide gatherings
      i. Food trucks
      ii. Holiday parties (although this can be tough for shift workers)
   d. Business Attire
      i. Not dressing as formal for work helps customers feel at ease/they are welcome to patronize the business
   e. Inter-office newsletter
      i. Regular communication with team about who is new on staff, highlighting accomplishments from different departments, spotlight on employees
   f. Employing bilingual staff members to ensure you can communicate with employees and customers

2. What ideas do you have to improve how your workplace handles inclusion & belonging?
   a. Customer service
      i. This is a big issue – heard from multiple groups
      ii. If people don't feel welcomed from the moment they walk in the door, they won't return, rudeness can be interpreted as bias or prejudice
      iii. COVID changed how we interact in forward-facing roles, need to "rehabilitate" people!
   b. More office gatherings
      i. These are coming back after COVID, but many people said they don't do enough all-staff gatherings/events

3. What can the chamber do to help encourage businesses to be more involved with Building CommUNITY?
   a. Be persistent
      i. People used to have to see things 6 times for it to resonate, now it's more like 20 times
      ii. Nag people! Keep reminding, and do it face-to-face when possible
   b. Direct people to assistance
      i. Chamber can be a funnel to help people find resources and answers
   c. Make a business case for Building CommUNITY
      i. Gather testimonials for how participating has impacted a business's bottom line. Does it add staff? Help with retention?

Building CommUNITY Notes | **Sessions**

1. What topics would you like to see offered?
   a. Transportation and accessibility in the community
      i. Transportation resources for individuals with disabilities and those without access to a vehicle
      ii. Brainstorming session on how to make the community more accessible and improve transportation options
   b. Community cleanliness and environment
      i. Discussion regarding ways to keep the local environment safe, clean and accessible
      ii. Presentation regarding ongoing clean-up and beautification efforts and initiatives and how people can get involved
   c. Language interpreter resources
      i. Different translation options for local organizations and businesses
      ii. How to spread awareness of resources for non-English speakers
   d. LGBTQ and Gender Identity
      i. Include information on terminology and appropriate language (e.g. pronouns) in the workplace
   e. Local organizations and their resources
      i. Presentation with different organizations and businesses showcasing what they have to offer in terms of resources, programs, assistance and guidance
   f. Micronesian population
      i. How to bridge cultural gaps and foster a sense of cultural understanding
   g. Personality types
      i. "DiSC" assessment
   h. More sessions regarding generational differences and how to bridge generational gaps in the workplace

2. Do you have any speaker recommendations from trainings you've completed in the past?
   a. Speaker who was at the HHS Healthy Eating Conference
   b. "Ouch! That stereotype hurts!" program
   c. "Coming Together for Racial Understanding" program

3. Are there any obstacles to keep employees from attending? Is there a best time/day to offer session?
   a. Consensus on a preference for mid-week over Mondays or Fridays
   b. Late morning or midday were suggested as preferable times for sessions
   c. Having lunch/food at meetings was suggested as a way to incentivize people to attend

4. Would you prefer in-person, online, or hybrid sessions?
   a. Consensus that people enjoy the interactivity of the in-person sessions and are not as interested in online-only sessions
   b. Hybrid options should be available for those who are unable to attend in-person
   c. Potential options for having remote speakers with in-person workshops