Chaffee Together

How might we connect the community and inspire participation and shared culture?

Framework

* McMillan & Chavis (1986) formed the theory that has become the most widely accepted of why communities work. McMillan wrote:
  + “Sense of community is a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together (McMillan, 1976).

Their theory focuses on four factors crucial to a healthy, successful community:

* + Membership
    - Boundaries
    - Emotional Safety
    - A sense of belonging and identification
    - Personal investment
    - A common symbol system
  + Influence
  + Integration and fulfilment of needs
  + Shared emotional connection
* Heath & Heath’s approach to change laid out in their book *Switch*, and Cialdini’s 6 Influencing strategies both have something to offer in this regard and might be used with any Chaffee working group seeking to inspire and engage (see pages 4 - 5)

Possibilities

* Heroes - who are the community heroes? Can they be enrolled in this effort? Consider enrolling Junior Chaffee Ambassadors who will be more likely to engage the younger generation. Social norms, social proof is simply the principle of people doing what they see other people doing and over time becoming more confident in so doing. This is a particularly important and useful principle when enrolling local heroes (it is the admittedly absurd but effective notion of the celebrity endorsement)
* Tweak the environment - contact newcomers and younger members of the community early and provide the means by which they might engage with heritage, views, wildlife etc. Junior Chaffee Ambassadors might also provide ranger programmes to introduce newcomers and existing community members to ranching, land management etc.
* Tell stories - tell stories that create feeling and capture early successes in print form and online postings. These might be short clips of both those established in the community and those new to it, the key being that they, respectively, reference the desire to welcome new members of the community and the welcome received as a new member of the community. There might also be reference made, indirectly to the sentiment of ‘grow or die’ i.e. the prosperity and opportunity that newcomers bring, and the opportunity that existing Chaffee residents (Chaffees?) have to ‘guide’ newcomers through their lands. These might alternately also be simple voxpops of what it means to be a Chaffee resident
* Use lots of images of people in any materials produced - this is a ‘people campaign’ and the more local images are used, the more people will recognise others and want to associate themselves with it. Find those bright spots and spotlight them - look for the stories of those who epitomise Chaffee country, especially those who might have overcome some disadvantage or obstacle to make it so
* Run Chaffee Welcomes - monthly induction events that make newcomers feel welcome and provide an opportunity to tell people something about the community they’re joining. Realtors and land registry must be able to help with this?
* Provide welcome packs for newcomers - this suggestion is based on the simple principle of reciprocity (per Cialdini). It doesn’t have to be a full hamper or wildly expensive, just a couple of simple, well thought through gifts, perhaps reflecting the environment in which they live, and welcoming them to it. It might also include a ‘how we try to be in Chaffee’ publication that, in a really fun way, talks about its agricultural heritage, natural resources and community … with lots of pictures of diverse people featured therein
* Launch an annual Chaffography competition - (OK, I know that was a stretch) in which locals can submit photographs that show the Chaffee community at its best. It can be done using categories - people, places, purpose - or similar. A local gallery might exhibit the Top 10 in each category, plus the winner and two runners up, with prizes sponsored and donated by a local business. The competition provides a focal point, an opportunity for an annual reception and if properly set-up from the outset in the competition rules, image rights for Envision Chaffee materials
* Get feedback - Meet with newcomers in focus groups to get feedback on their experiences and needs when first arriving in the community i.e. learn how to better establish welcomed migrants into Chaffee. Also, highlight stories of exceptional integration into the Chaffee community outside
* Launch Chaffee Week - one could ask people to pledge to do ‘favors for neighbors’ in that week. Maybe share these on local media. Based on Cialdini’s Commitment and Consistency principle, people are more likely to do something they have committed to orally or in writing. The annual Chaffee Week would provide one vehicle for reinforcing the campaign messages and launching additional initiatives each year.
* Consider an Inspiring the Chaffee Future type network that connects new residents and employers with the schools in the area. It needn’t be on anything like the scale of the Education and Employers organisation here: <http://www.educationandemployers.org/about-the-charity/> but it might give an idea of what could be achieved. This could also reasonably be delegated to the schools themselves, who will in any case need to be enrolled in this campaign
* Be clear about some of the simple behaviors you wish to establish and sustain. Ensure they are culturally neutral and repeated often, even perhaps used as straplines e.g. say “hi neighbour”, “smile with those eyes”, “check on what your neighbour needs”
* Publish a ‘Chaffee Wisdom’ coffee table book - there’s always someone out there to volunteer to manage a project like this. They just need to pull together the collected wisdom of Chaffee residents – each page would contain the written wisdom (closely edited) of an individual Chaffee resident, articulating what it means to be a Chaffee resident and memories of Chaffee, plus a photo of the that contributor. These kinds of book are often best funded by asking, say, 300 people to sponsor and purchase the book up front; their names are then listed on a back page of the book when published. We use that approach a lot here in the UK when publishing books about the history of a local area and it always proves very popular
* Remember, small favours lead to large favours - if you can get someone to commit to, say, placing a small sign on their lawn saying Chafee Rocks, then they are much more likely to make a large commitment, say, hosting a Chaffee Chow-Down at a later date. Look for those quirky type of events that will pique people’s interest
* Get the kids on board - if the kids like it, the parents follow. Kids like stickers, bright colours, fun mascots, and cool stories of derring do. What school programs exist that connect the kids to the environment and to, say, Chaffee’s more elderly population? Intergenerational events tend to inspire very effectively. The elderly have many memories to share, the young many questions to ask. Or get kids to make short films (< 5 minutes) about their community and screen the top three at a reception. We have seen great success here in an anti-knife crime campaign that empowers kids to make a film about the issues of knife crime in their communities; the result is a significant drop in knife crime as the social identity of the children involved, and indeed viewing those films, shifts. I’m not for a moment suggesting that Chaffee has a knife crime issue, but rather illustrating that this approach can create significant behavioural change and engagement. Getting the kids to integrate will help the broader community to do so; perhaps consider a Kids Inspiring Community programme in which kids are empowered to work with the elderly, less fortunate kids, the land, animals, or whatever they choose. Per Frederick Douglas, “It’s easier to build strong children than repair broken men”
* Chaffee mentoring scheme - adults could mentor kids, existing residents could ‘mentor’ or pair with new members of the community, encouraging them to engage and invest in the community
* Remember the strength of women - women tend to be more reliable; it’s why many micro finance schemes in developing countries will only lend to women - because they deliver what they say they are going to deliver and invariably repay the loan. But the trait applies to most societies, not just developing ones
* Create a hub or central location that people can rally in (for example – the “Loo, View & a Brew” London created for the Olympic site), but also think about dividing the community into neighborhoods or cells, and appointing neighbourhood leaders or community panels to ensure organising efforts are delegated and ears are kept to the ground, with initiatives managed in a ground up, not top down manner. Make any hub really easy to access, visible, flexible and provide materials that help people find it
* Community blogs - attached to any Envision Chaffee website might be a blog for one or two residents. These residents would be asked to write a blog for one month only. Of course, it provides insight into the lives of newcomers to the community and those established in it, but also creates a following, because their circle of 50 or more will all likely follow it for that month, and some thereafter. Over six or nine months, that should start to create a useful ripple effect. The blog of any youngster might be centred on a theme such as ‘I dared …’ or ‘I discovered …’ in which that youngster is introduced to something in the community (fishing, a heritage sight etc.) that they haven’t encountered previously
* Break a Record - a fun and great way to bring a community out in force is to launch a world record challenge; for example, the most number of X, the longest Y. There’s plenty enough records out there to tackle and it would help put Chaffee and its values on the map and further define its character

Influencing Strategies

The six ‘weapons of influence’ which can aid us in making any cultural or behavioural shifts are:

* **Reciprocity** - People tend to return a favour, thus the pervasiveness of free samples in marketing
* **Commitment and Consistency** - If people commit, orally or in writing, to an idea or goal, they are more likely to honour that commitment. Even if the original incentive or motivation is removed after they have already agreed, they will continue to honour the agreement
* **Social Proof** - People will do things that they see other people doing
* **Authority** - People will tend to obey authority figures (even if they are asked to perform objectionable acts)
* **Liking** - People are easily persuaded by other people that they like
* **Scarcity** - Perceived scarcity will generate demand

Based on studies presented in Influence, Science and Practice by R. Cialdini (2000)