

Building Healthy Communities

Department of
Agricultural Economics



Sustaining Progress

A Model that Identifies Key Variables and Explains
Why Organized Efforts Succeed and Fail

In a competitive world, progress is viewed as a highly valued outcome. What encourages and allows progress to occur? What slows it or blocks it? This publication addresses these two questions.

All organizations, free to determine their own future and to define progress, will have members who are concerned with guiding the organization forward. These members want to leave a legacy of progress. This publication is created for these leaders.

This publication presents a model with five critical variables. The reader will learn about how the model is specified and the five key forms of capital used in sustaining progress. Next comes a discussion about the role of leadership in the change process, followed by a community case study. Finally, short literature review is provided.

Model Specification

The model was formulated after a review of the literature. The model is made of the five key variables specified:

$$\text{Progress} = f(\mathbf{A}, \mathbf{V}, \mathbf{P}, \mathbf{R}, \mathbf{B})$$

A A set of **attitudes** based on core values and principles that shape the culture of an organization and define the character of its leaders.

- V** A compelling **vision** of an exciting future. The vision gives focus and direction to planned efforts, while challenging, motivating, and uniting team members.
- P** An action **plan** that is designed to guide the process as the vision is pursued.
- R** A set of **resources** necessary to implement the plan.
- B** A set of outcomes that **benefit** all those involved in the process and other stakeholders.

A mathematical way to express the above generalized formula is:

$$\text{Progress} = (\mathbf{A} \times \mathbf{V} \times \mathbf{P} \times \mathbf{R} \times \mathbf{B})$$

This shows that the variables in the equation compound. All variables have to be positive, because just one can block progress. (See Figure 1)

Five Forms of Capital

A comprehensive approach to community development is well planned with adequate resources. These resources are grouped into five forms of capital by Green and Haine.

The five forms of capital are:

1. Human Capital
2. Social Capital
3. Financial Capital
4. Engineered Capital
5. Natural and Environmental Capital

Human Capital is the set of knowledge and skills people accumulate and use in a team effort. It also includes the core values and principles that shape people's attitudes.

Social Capital is the trust and working relationships within a team, organization, or a city. *Financial Capital* is all forms of assets used in the exchange process including cash, credit, and barter. *Engineered Capital* is the collection of human created products. This includes physical assets such as houses, hospitals, medicines, computers, DVDs, and DVD players. Also, this includes all other engineered products not otherwise classified such as city ordinances, organizational bylaws, corporate structures, and computer programs. *Natural and Environmental Capital* is the earth and its resources including air, water, soil, flora, and fauna.

Change is
inevitable, but
progress is not.

— Bertrand Russell

The Role of Leadership in Guiding Change

No proactive change is without one or more champions who act as leaders in one or more phases of the process. These people are most effective if they bring positive energy to an organization or team effort. Attitude (A) based on sound values and principles shape the culture of an organization. Key leaders bring these to the task. Ideally, leaders are positive people who have a set of values and principles that the team can easily accept and reinforce. For example, the value that “everyone’s opinion matters” is an important one. Leaders stimulate ideas and encourage everyone on the team help set the agenda without losing sight of the mission of the team.

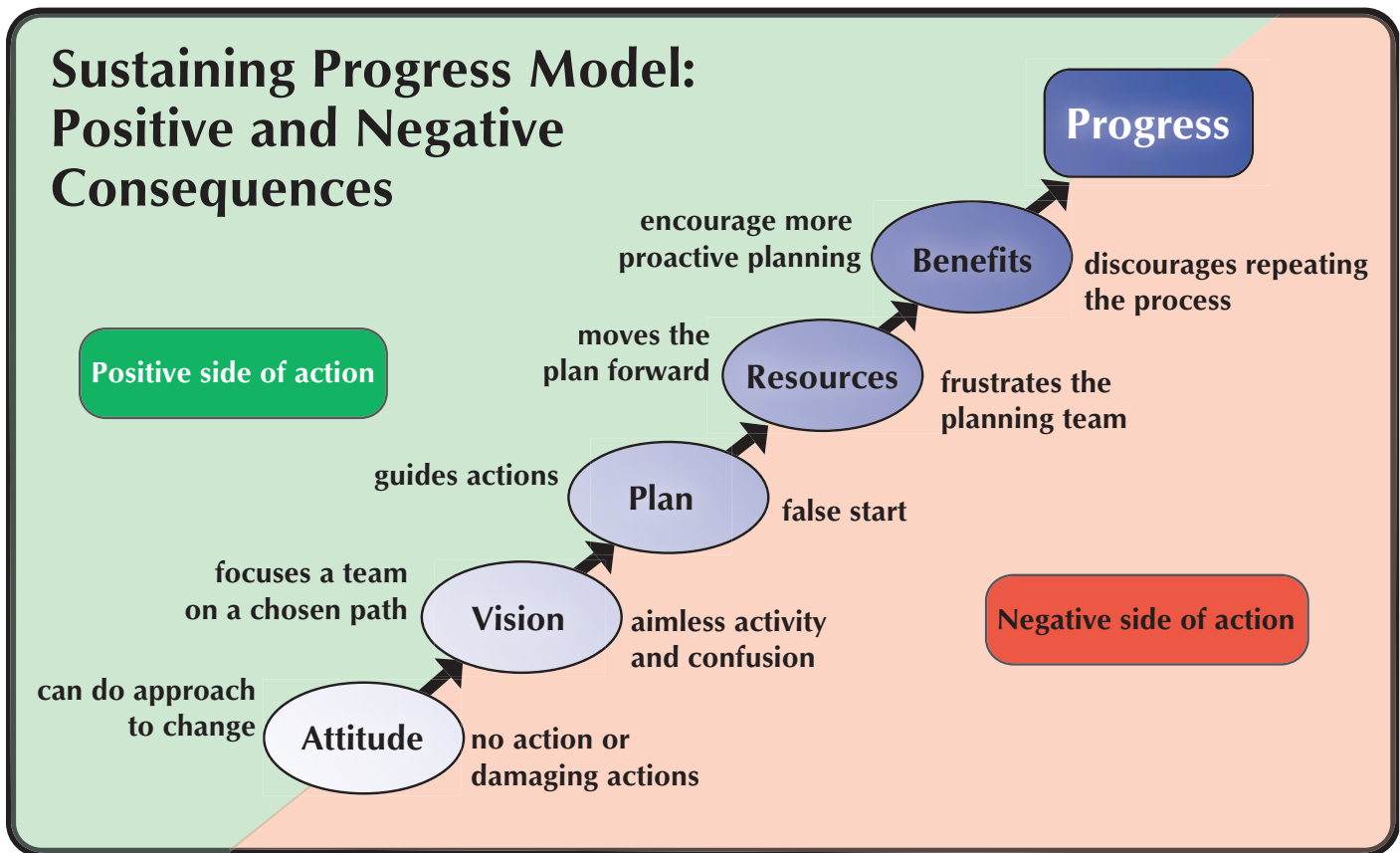
Leaders have to be visionary people, or be willing to champion a vision created by others. The V stands for vision, and no team effort will be successful without it. The vision statement gives focus and direction to the leadership and the team. Without a vision, goals, and objectives, any outcome will do. A team effort would not be organized unless these essential instigators and directional navigators are present. A good vision statement not only focuses and gives direction to the process, but also challenges, motivates, and unites the team. The vision must be clearly stated and universally understood. No ambiguity

will do. Steven Covey makes this point when he states: “Begin with the end in mind.”

Leaders have to be able to lead the process of constructing and implementing a plan (P). Some people are better at constructing plans, and others are better at implementing plans. This is why a team effort is necessary, and the leadership may change hands or fan out as the process goes forward. Action planning should be vision charged. This means that the vision is the overarching driver of the plan. The leadership team must believe in and champion the vision in order to challenge, motivate, and unite their team. The team, not just the leadership, must build the plan. Only by knowing everyone’s abilities can the leadership match tasks with talents. This can be assessed with a time and talent survey and database. The team may be charged with implementing the plan, but not always. In many circumstances the mission of the team is to build a plan that can be implemented by other organizations and decision makers.

Planning directs activity and allocates resources. There are two types of plans. The living ones are in use and continually adjusted. The dead ones are set aside, buried, and soon forgotten. John Kotter and others make a case for short-term win-win outcomes that are visible and encourage

Figure 1.



those leading change. These outcomes should result from low risk, high visibility, low cost, and short-term projects. Hiebert and Klatt suggest the leadership team have a short-term plan to generate small wins. Then, the successes should be celebrated. They believe that quick wins silence cynics.

Plans need resources for action to begin. There are many different types of resources (**R**), including five forms of capital have been presented. The most important is the ability of people to lead, manage, produce, make smart decisions, and learn from successes and failures. This is *Human Capital*. Leadership resources are most important during the construction and implementation of the plan. Leaders must be knowledgeable and able to identify, gain control of, and allocate resources. Sometimes people with excellent networks and good political connections can do this well. Management skills are necessary during the action phase of the process.

Benefits (**B**) have to be real in the minds of the team and the rest of the stakeholders. Leadership must continually remind the team about the outcomes they are working toward. These benefits are often called the incentives that make the effort worthwhile.

In summary, the roles of leaders specified in this publication are 1) modeling attitudes, 2) championing compelling visions, 3) building and implementing a plan, 4) identifying, securing, and allocating resources, and 5) creating win-win outcomes. Nothing — no plan, no actions, and no outcomes — will happen without high-quality leadership. Leadership is like fuel. Organizations need leadership resources to operate just as engines need fuel to run. High-quality leadership, just like high-quality fuel, improves the efficiency of a team effort and a strong organization.

Community Example

Carla Kuhn, director of the Courtland Arts Council, provides the following story. Courtland, Kansas, population 313 in the 2002 Census, started their arts council with a leap of faith. In 1993, the Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing was sponsoring *The Russian Festival*, and the fledgling arts council decided to bring a Russian dance troupe to town with the hopes that people would support the event. At that time, Kuhn writes, the arts council was little more than an idea (*a vision of what could be*). The council had no money, no office, no staff, and no plans. But, taking advantage of the opportunity to host 46 Russian dancers, the council got to work.

“Three months later on May 4, after intense planning, cooperation, and community generosity, the council presented *Svernye Uzory* to a sellout crowd of 600 people from all over north central Kansas and Nebraska.” Kuhn reports that the council also made a profit.

In May of 2001, the council hosted the Glen Miller Orchestra, and 700 tickets were sold. By 2002, the council had a downtown building, a budget, and part-time staff.

It took enthusiastic people with a vision to start the Courtland Arts Council. The group planned and acted. They found resources, and now many benefit from their programs. The Courtland Community Arts Council now serves North Central Kansas With arts, education, events, and entertainment.

This example shows how the *Sustaining Progress Model* actually works. People with positive attitudes and vision can make plans, find the resources, and accomplish things that benefit many stakeholders. It all starts with people who want to make a difference.

See Darling’s Web site for a PowerPoint presentation of this model in the section labeled Extension Resources www.agecon.ksu.edu/ddarling.

Literature Review

There is a long list of publications on change models and decision systems. Within the Cooperative Extension Service system of Land Grant Universities, the first citation found on the well-known *Social Action Process* is the following: Beal, George, et al., (1966) *Social Action and Integration in Program Planning*. This process lays out a systematic set of steps to follow when conceiving and starting a new community development project that addresses a problem or opportunity.

Information about change models has been published in three K-State Research and Extension publications. Ringler and Trent wrote *Selling Ideas and Programs through Social Action* in 1971. Then Johnson wrote *The Social Action Process: Selling Ideas and Programs* in 1987. Darling and Sisk wrote *Alternative Planning Procedures* in 1995. These last two authors present and contrast three planning processes, then go on to explain the value of each and when each should be used.

One of the most powerful mechanisms to bring about change within a community or organization is to engage in a stakeholder-driven strategic visioning process. Strategic visioning harnesses the power of vision with the analytical techniques of traditional strategic planning processes. Adding asset-based tools makes it even more effective. This approach is described in detail by Peterson in 1995 in *Har-*

When the rate of
change outside an
organization is greater
than the rate inside,
the organization is in
trouble.

— Jack Welsh,
retired CEO of GE Corp.

nessing the Power of Vision – Ten Steps to Creating a Strategic Vision and Action Plan for Community Development.

Another effort to provide useful materials to community leaders and teams was written by a national team of Cooperative Extension Service educators and published by the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development. The *Vision to Action* manual (2001) is a tool kit for those involved in leading efforts to bring about positive change. The materials cover a wide variety of subjects, but do not include one specific process. The team, with the help of one or more facilitators, is challenged to answer three questions:

1. What do we want to preserve?
2. What do we want to change and improve?
3. What do we want to create?

The *Vision to Action* manual is written as a follow-up to the *Take Charge* manual (1990) also developed by a national team of Extension educators. They designed the manual to help small-town citizen groups address community economic development issues. This North Central Regional Center for Rural Development publication was introduced in 1990. The manual was organized around three simple planning steps:

1. Where are we now?
2. Where do we want to be?
3. How do we get there?

Change models are fairly common in the management, organizational behavior, and leadership literature. A well-regarded one can be found in *Leading Change* (1996), by John Kotter. He presents an eight-stage process of implementing major change in an organization. Kotter has discovered through experience that:

The art of progress is to
preserve order amid
change and to preserve
change amid order

— Alfred North Whitehead

1. A person or a group of people have to establish a sense of urgency.
2. The initiators must gather a guiding coalition.
3. The coalition needs to develop a compelling vision and plan to realize their vision.
4. They must communicate the compelling vision of an attractive future.
5. The leaders must empower a broad-based group to act on the vision, the plan, and the strategies.
6. These actions should, ideally, bring about short-term, highly visible, inexpensive improvements.
7. Once momentum is working for the leaders and those involved in changing the organization, the gains should be consolidated, and leaders should move forward with more change.
8. Finally, the leadership team should anchor the new system(s) into an improved corporate culture.

Kotter states that each stage is vital to the process and skipping over one would be a mistake.

Hiebert and Klatt (2001) wrote *The Encyclopedia of Leadership*. It includes a Sustaining Change Model. Their model contains five factors: 1) start with the big picture, 2) get buy-in, 3) construct a team with the correct skills and tools, 4) manage risk, and 5) take action. Each factor in the model is multiplied against all other factors. This functional form is designed to highlight the importance of the interdependence of each factor.

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The only way to
predict the future,
is to create it.

— Neal Donald Walsh

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