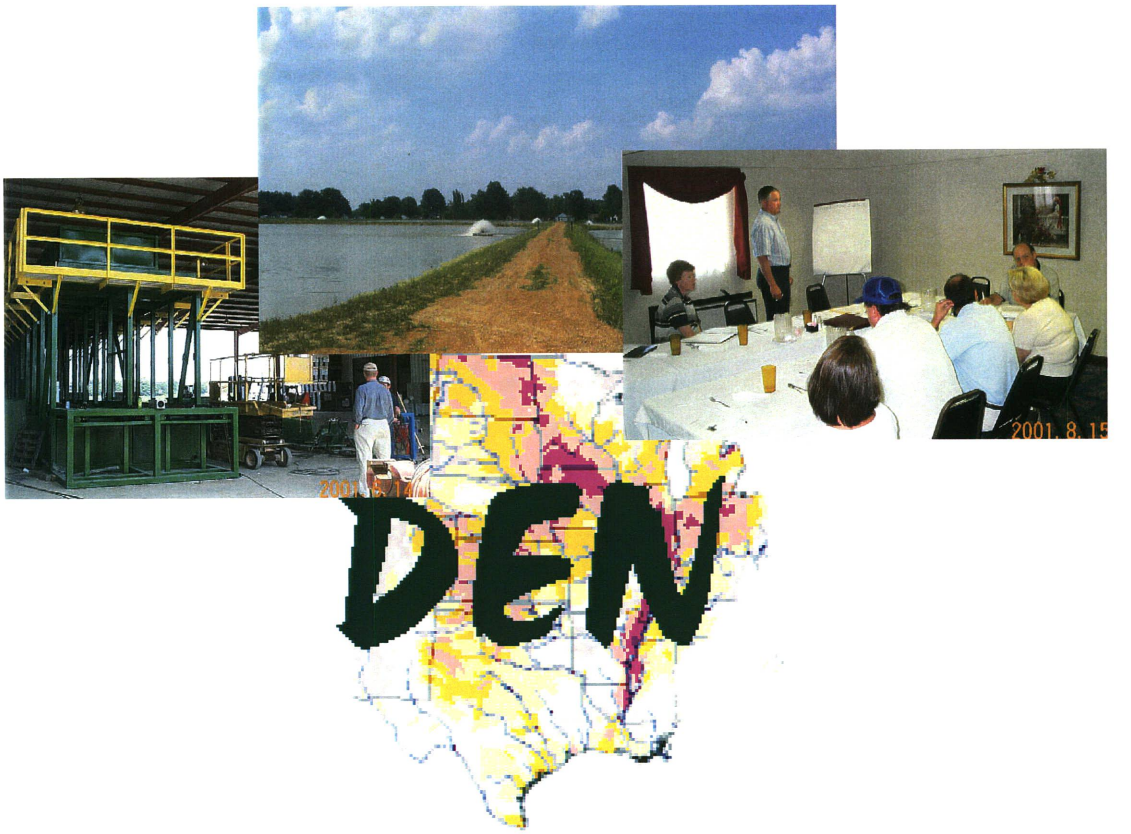
Transforming agents:
new generation organizing



seventeen successful agents of enterprise facilitation

Delta Enterprise Network
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Transforming agents: new generation organizing

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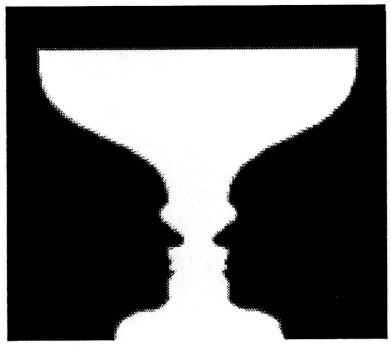

Introduction

Transforming agents has two meanings similar to the illustration above. Some people see two faces, others see a vase. We present here profiles of "agents" who have transformed rural communities with their skills in facilitation and organizing. These agents (or call them sparkplugs, integrators, coaches, inspirations, teachers, leaders, counselors, catalysts, provocateurs) can inspire and organize others to pursue their dreams. Their skills have moved beyond those of the entrepreneur. They know how to help groups of people develop successful new marketing and processing enterprises.

But the goal of this collection is also helping to **transform agents**. A number of agencies have been built around raw commodity production. These agencies have excellent field agents, but production of raw commodities alone is no longer profitable. Farmers must take an entrepreneurial approach to agriculture. Many have studied the qualities of entrepreneurs. Our task is to explore how these excellent agents can become better facilitators of entrepreneurial activity.

We live in one of the most entrepreneurial countries in the history of the world. At any given time, nearly 5 million Americans are active entrepreneurs. However, successful farmers, entrepreneurs and organization builders are often blissfully unaware about how they do what they do. Their self-awareness of the reasons for their success is often clouded by the laser-like focus they have on their business. Their passion for their business is so intense, often their stated reasons for success are just another means of expanding their business.

In common with entrepreneurs, agents or enterprise facilitators operate where science and practice come together. They are social artists. They ride the moving front between conventional order and the chaotic merging of forces which becomes the future. These integrators are the ones who add value not necessarily by creating new ideas, but by helping those with passionate ideas to organize them in coherent wholes–new enterprises.

Six years ago, a farmer in Lake County, Tennessee, reluctantly came to a meeting to discuss organic crop production and markets. This farmer was then a conventional cotton farmer applying the same high levels of pesticides and fertilizer used by nearly all his neighbors. At this meeting he learned of the strong and growing markets for organic crops. He decided to try a few acres of organic cotton. A couple of good facilitators began helping him experiment with organic methods on his farm. They introduced him to organic soybean production and markets. After investing heavily with time and money in production and marketing of organic soybeans, this farmer is now President of the organic certifying agency in Tennessee and last year his company sold $12 million of organic soybeans, mainly for export. In six years, he has moved from conventional cotton grower to the largest organic grower in the Delta.

This grower's experience is unusual, but illustrates the possibilities for making agriculture more ecologically sound. His changes were assisted only indirectly by any government agency or university. His sources of information and motivation were his friends and neighbors and their non-profit organization. Our mission is to empower farmers to seek new markets and move away from the standard raw commodity production traditionally promoted throughout the Delta.

We invited a Stuttgart, Arkansas, farm family to meet with a manager of a Japanese food company interested in purchasing edible soybeans. These farmers went into the meetings with standard Delta attitudes toward genetically-modified soybeans. They contended those countries which discourage use of GM beans should wake up, realize there is nothing wrong with GM beans, and start importing them. They visited, ate dinner, and rode around for a weekend with this Japanese manager. He told them he was offering $22 a bushel, but that there could be absolutely no GM beans in anything his company bought. The conclusion of these Arkansas farmers after he left: "Why don't we just sell them what they want?"

This conclusion seems obvious to anyone who has ever built a business. If you offer people what they want, people will buy it. Though farmers have been urged to treat their farms as businesses for decades, this most basic principle has been left out. Instead, two generations of farmers have been pushed by our agro-industrial complex to produce raw commodities with high levels of pesticides and fertilizers. Now we are flooding the world with massive amounts of cheap raw commodities, which consumers increasingly do not want, and whose production requires production and use of vast quantities of pesticides and fertilizers. Others have chronicled the rise and power of the agro-industrial complex. Our task is to determine how we can get out of the mess American agriculture is in.

Our answer is that we have to organize new economic and social institutions which provide viable alternatives.

Many farmers, consumers and non-profit organizations have woken up to the ruin being caused by conventional agriculture. As these awakenings increase, markets are rapidly expanding for wholesome foods produced in an ecologically-sound manner. What will help

more people wake up? What will help us most in creating a more ecologically-sound agriculture? How can we reach conventional farmers and help them find a better way? How can we help more farmers along the route followed by our Tennessee friend?

No one has come up with one general answer to these questions. But many have come up with an answer specific to their situation, their context. In addition, a few folks have come up with methods which have stimulated a variety of new enterprises across a community or region. For the last few years, we've been learning the methods used by successful enterprise facilitators, cooperative organizers, and just regular rural folks who have been successful at creating ecologically and economically-sound enterprises.

One consistency across all these successes is that it takes a team. If we can state one absolute law: no individual has established such an enterprise alone. Only groups win in the long run. A second consistency is the spirit of joy, hope and faith in these teams.

When such teams don't exist, someone must be the spark to help that team coalesce.

The successful agent/facilitator can do a lot more good as a facilitator of many new businesses than as the producer of just one. Not everyone can or should be an entrepreneur. In fact, in some sectors, we may have too many entrepreneurs. As Paul Hawken, founder of several successful eco-friendly businesses, said recently: "Business unchecked becomes crime." The ecological harm which accompanies unchecked pursuit of profit is well-documented. As markets increasingly demand ecologically-sound production, the successful agent will channel the passion of entrepreneurs toward these growing markets.

The task we've taken on is to detect commonalities among these successes. We persist despite the admonition of one successful *provocateur* working near the border of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, who contends:

No theory can adequately describe reality.

Consistent with that belief, the most successful facilitators don't follow any particular model, they create their own unique approach in a way that works for their region. Many have studied the process long and hard and have internalized a number of different approaches. Then when these varied and contradictory approaches become part of the facilitator, he can abandon allegiance to any one of them and create his own above and beyond all others.

For that reason, we're organizing this book from a variety of perspectives, a variety of models. Each has something to offer. None provides a "cook book."

We all have much to learn from these seventeen agents who have become excellent facilitators

Following are seventeen profiles of successful "agents of change." These agents have been successful at helping reorganize rural America to make better lives for rural people.

These are just a few of the successful agents in one region of the country. These agents all work in the region known as the Mississippi Delta–stretching from Cape Girardeau to New Orleans and encompassing parts of seven states. We've selected this region because it needs good facilitators more than any other region. The Governor of Arkansas is famous for stating recently, "There are no environmentalists in the Delta." The Delta is afflicted with a plantation mentality–which has infected both blacks and whites and stifles development. We'll explore that more in Unit 6.

The agents we present here are just a small portion of the many more successful agents we got to know in compiling this group. We hope this is the first of several volumes which will ideally would include successful agents from every town in the Delta. If you have suggestions for people we should profile, please contact us at: New Generation Organizing, 920 Hwy 153, Almyra, AR 72003

Though every approach is unique, there are some similarities–which we've tried to explore following each group of profiles.

Unit 1 Charlotte Schexnayder
Harold Eli
Common purpose: *Organizing the country: community by community*

Unit 2 Annette Meyer
John Gardner
Common attitudes: *Embracing multiple perspectives*

Unit 3 Lee Meyer
Ed Martsolf
Common approach: *Managing chaos*

Unit 4 Wayne Mattingly
Ken Goddard
Paul Teague
Common topic: *Innovation is the heart of any enterprise*

Unit 5 Joe Bryant
Harvey Williams
Larry Miller
Common focus: *Passion supplanting fear*

Unit 6 Van Ayers
Highlighted thread: *Local power structures*

Unit 7 Deborah Webb
Vaughn Grisham
Richard Mc Carthy
Common goal: *Putting the passion to work: motivating teams*

Unit 8 Bill Green
Pulling the threads together: *Constructing learning systems*

As you read these stories and perspectives, we hope you see the common threads emerging. Gradually, building on these varied perspectives and cases, we hope to show a path through which all these perspectives can be united. Our foremost hope is that you will join us and the many others who are working to reform agricultural and food systems to enhance human and ecosystem health.

More details on the various approaches used by these agents, as well as other websites and references to publications referred to here, can be found on our website: www.deltanetwork.org.

Any errors or omissions in these profiles are our fault, not the agents'. We'd like to thank all these agents for their time and especially their efforts in revitalizing rural communities. And we'd like to apologize in advance for the inadequacy of these written profiles.

Contact information for each the the agents profiled here is in Appendix 1. What we present here are only words which can be interpreted in many ways. To fully appreciate each agents unique and powerful approach, you'll have to talk to them yourself, or better yet, work with them.

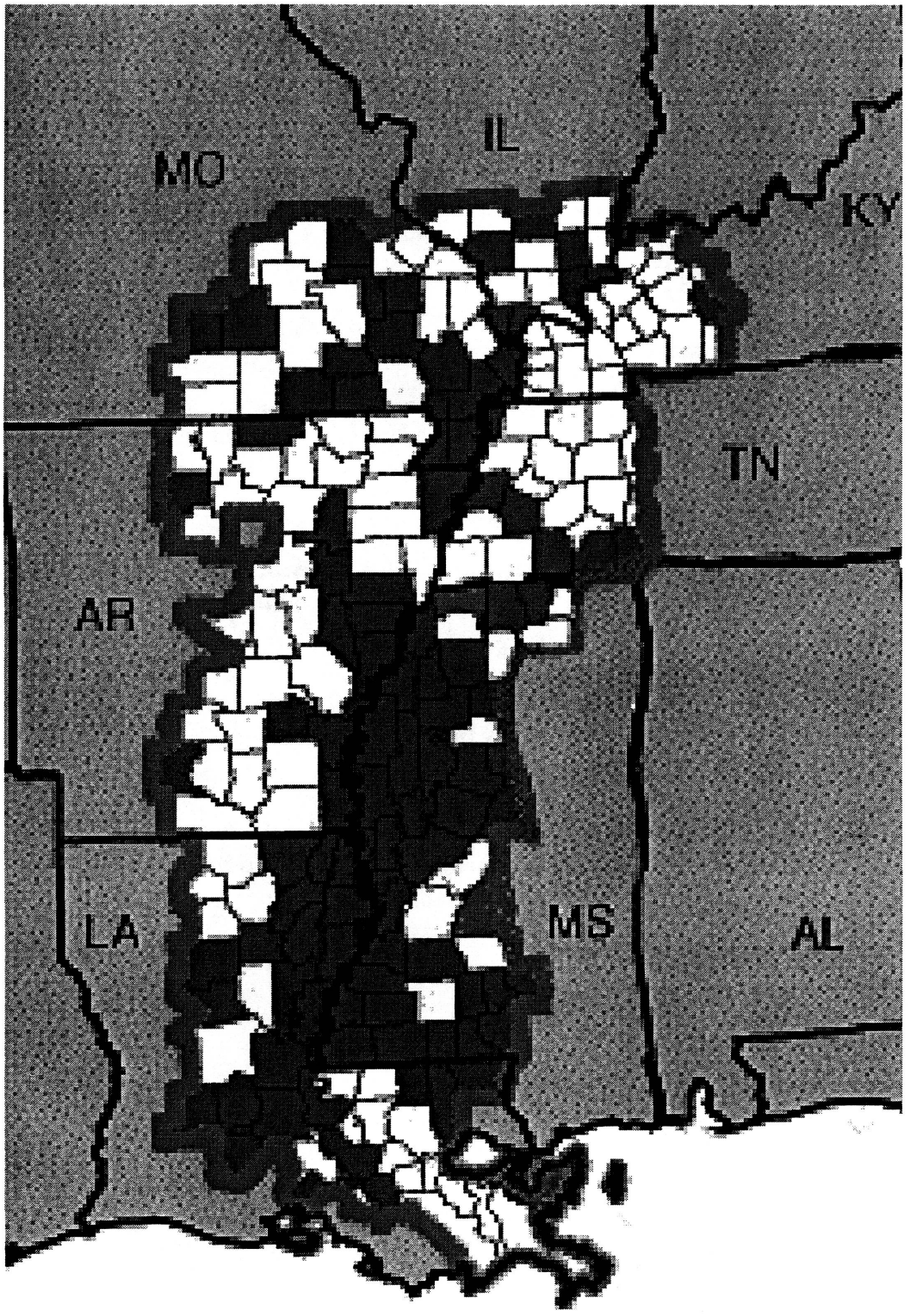

Figure 1. The Mississippi Delta is a region of persistent poverty reaching from Southeast Missouri to the Gulf of Mexico. Dumas (near the intersection of Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana) is a bright spot in the red counties (those in the bottom 10% of U.S. counties nationwide).

Charlotte Schexnayder

Dumas, Arkansas

Leadership is a chain reaction, as long as no one person dominates.

Progress in East Arkansas

Dumas is one of the few brighter spots in the impoverished Mississippi River Delta. On a beautiful mid-February day, we came to visit Charlotte Schexnayder to try to find out why. Our discussions began at the opening of a new store. Charlotte was presiding at the ribbon-cutting in a reviving downtown. This event was just the latest in a series of new businesses springing up in Dumas. When one town blossoms in a dying landscape, the process begins long before outsiders notice the difference.

> In the beginning: "You can't possibly be the editor, you're a girl.

In 1944, Charlotte Tillar was 20 years old when she became assistant editor of the *McGehee Times* in the Arkansas Delta. The men had gone to war and she was a recent graduate of LSU in sociology and journalism. As one of the few women editors at the time and young to boot, she was tested. On the first day, a visitor said, "You can't possibly be the editor, you're just a girl." But Charlotte says "it's been great fun. The best fun is proving yourself." After six years at the county seat paper, she and her new husband, Melvin Schexnayder, bought the other newspaper in the county, the *Dumas Clarion.* During the 44 years they ran the paper, Dumas grew to become the leading town in the region looked on with envy by surrounding communities. Officials in neighboring communities say, Why does Dumas get everything?

Charlotte has some ideas why:

- We have a optimism and a willingness to work together.
- This town had vision when others didn't.
- Dumas has a can-do attitude. We were turned down four times before we got the first industry in our industrial park.

Community newspapers and development

Another is: "A good newspaper is the soul of a community." Charlotte knows of the success of Tupelo's newspaper in developing that region of Mississippi. She and her husband have used some of the same approaches in Dumas.

"An aggressive newspaper is key to any town. It's really hard to find a booming area with a lousy newspaper." The Schexnayders' paper "was in the middle of every drive, every project for the town. One of the biggest problems for rural areas is the loss of small, locally-owned newspapers."

Any development effort must be broad-based. No one person can dominate in any way." "A newspaper is a good vehicle to bring people together to share ideas." "People have to go beyond me, myself and mine."

Charlotte's office is messy. She tells the story of an editor she worked with who always had a clean desk, but "never wrote stories, never did anything." Charlotte is concerned with getting things done. When she and her husband retired from the newspaper business, she became a full-time volunteer for the Dumas Chamber of Commerce. "I couldn't go home and sit down and do nothing."

Charlotte had grown up near Dumas in a town named after her family, but her father and grandfather died of pneumonia when she was five and they lost the plantation three months into the Great Depression. Her mother kept the family going through rough times. Charlotte and her sisters learned to work. She muses about the different life which would have resulted from being a young mistress from a prominent family on a large plantation. In the years running the paper, Charlotte has had many opportunities to help young people getting started in the working world. A key problem with many is learning to be responsible. They need to have encouragement from someone in order to learn how to work. They hired lots of folks at the newspaper office and almost always had to teach them the key skills. A lot of counseling is needed, but mostly. by example, by listening. Welfare reform will prove difficult because we won't be able to get enough counselors. Such efforts have to be one on one. " Treat everybody the same and they'll respond in kind. It's easier in a small enterprise."

The key attitude is beyond talent. Some of the most talented couldn't learn the basics. He couldn't grasp responsibility. Responsibility is hard to teach. You probably can't teach it after a certain age. Helping young people be more responsible is the way to break the welfare cycle, though."

Getting young people involved in key to long term development efforts. "You need young people tracking what the older people are doing. On every project, get young people involved. If people haven't been involved before they are in their 30s, they rarely volunteer later."

Stimulating civic leadership

"In Dumas we have optimism and a willingness to work together. People have become good workers for the community. But it's taken an lot of mentoring and hand-holding." "Say: ', this is where you're needed and they'll respond." Civic leadership is the key to development of any region. Not politicians, but good, sound, principled business leaders."

"Why don't they get involved? They're overwhelmed with very busy lives. And they're disenchanted with anything with a government tinge."

"There is a disenchantment with government, and all leadership, which has to be overcome."

"What does it take to stimulate such civic leadership?"

- "It has to be someone on the inside of the community. An outsider can't come in and do it."

- "You have to have a vision. The Delta is beset by a lack of vision. We had vision when others didn't."

How do you do this?

- "People must understand you're not in it for yourself. You must get it done without any personal agenda. You have no other reason to ask them except the good of the project."People have to see that you have motives above personal gain, that you're not trying to make a bunch of money off the deal.

- You have to be willing to make changes and have a vision for how things could be improved.

- Involve one person, that person involves others. Nobody alone is going to get it done.

- Leadership: If one person dominates a community, it's hard to break it. You can break it with a lot of little projects.

- No community gets ahead if it only works on one project. Have to focus in a lot of directions.

- You need long-term vision, but initially few will see the value in long-term projects. "When we started working on the bridge, everyone thought we were crazy. All long term projects always seem far fetched. Pick out a few short term projects, so they can show success. Show something, even if small, that's successful. So our long term goals for downtown Dumas, we need small openings like the one this morning."

How do you know someone is going to be a good leader? "Enthusiasm, perseverance, commitment. You have to really feel in your heart that the job needs to be done."

Revitalizing Dumas

In 1954, she and Melvin came to Dumas. "In 1955, a major employer, a hardwood mill burned, leaving 100 people unemployed. In some towns this could have started a downhill slide. In Dumas, the paper helped rally efforts for an 'industrial foundation' to build an industrial park. The Pickens family provided the land. In some towns, landowners won't sell at all." The first step is getting community members to to buy in, to realize the need for economic development.

> You have to be a role model for leadership without dominating.

Dumas continued to lag until the 60s. The town was divided into factions, with "hard core on both sides." How do you decrease polarized factions in a town? "Leadership with integrity. You're acting for the ultimate good of the community. Everybody can talk to somebody to help defuse a situation. If people don't work together all is

lost." "You have to be a role model for leadership without dominating. It takes leadership to stir the pot." We saw beyond the moment and we had an aggressive mayor. You have to be politically savvy.

What does the Delta need?

"Regional Development Districts have not worked due to provincialism. An approach which might work would be to cluster communities together after you have identified towns which can work together." An example of a cluster of communities would be Dumas with Winchester, Watson, Gould, and Grady. A Watson resident once told Charlotte: 'Get more jobs in Dumas, so people from here have a place to work.' "Let's sustain key small towns to help others around it."

"The roots of poverty are education and motivation." "In the Delta we have major education and economic problems." "The Delta got lost when the jobs lost in the agricultural revolution weren't replaced." "The Delta has a lack of vision, especially in corporate agriculture. They have no desire to change. Every time something new comes in, the most influential farmers denigrate it. When the first rice crop was grown in DeSha County, people thought that farmer was off his rocker."

None of her children came back to Dumas to live. "Everybody has to do what they want to do. Some four generation families are here. Children come back and like it. People live where they enjoy living." To counter the brain drain, the Delta needs more recreation and cultural facilities.

Charlotte, ever the good facilitator, is quick to point to the involvement of other community members as the key to rural development.

In the Delta, some see the magnitude of the problem, instead of the possibilities. The problems are so huge, no one bold stroke will solve it. Instead, we need multiple solutions, lots of push in lots of different directions.

The solution won't all be done politically. "People have to get involved. We need more civic leadership. Especially from the business community and professionals. They're really the key."

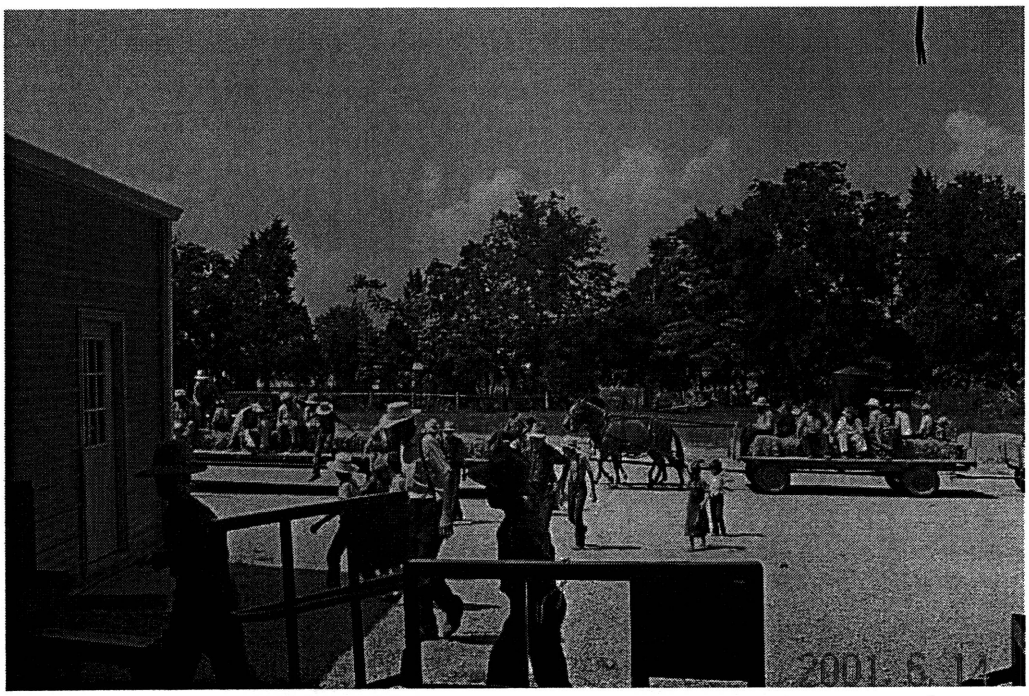

Figure 2. Mennonite farm families near Fairview, KY complete Kentucky CES field day.

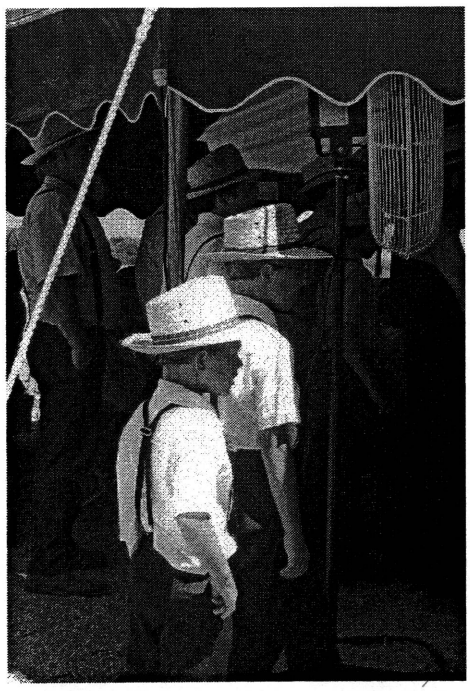

Figure 3. Mennonites participate in auction in Tennessee.

Harold Eli

Hopkinsville, Kentucky

It all begins with community.
If you don't have community, it won't work.

The quintessential small family farm

In the summer of 1996, Mennonite farmers in Christian County, Kentucky were looking for ways to expand the market for locally grown produce. Many were transitioning out of tobacco farming and others were selling some produce from roadside stands. Most had been part of a Mennonite migration to Western Kentucky from Pennsylvania around 1990. Several farmers wondered if an auction like those on the east coast was feasible in Fairview, and they decided to hold a meeting to determine interest level. Among them was Henry Leid, who had sold regularly through one of the first and largest produce auctions in the country in Leola, Pennsylvania. Henry was convinced that Fairview could duplicate the success of the Leola auction.

Amish champion, Extension facilitator

Henry was a champion of the project, but he realized he needed a facilitator to deal with the "English" as the non-Amish are known. Henry approached Harold Eli of the Kentucky State University Small Farm program. Harold has been with the group every step of the way since. Harold has been with the group every step of the way since. His first task was to help set up the first formal meeting of the group. A show of hands at the first meeting indicated that most of the group was willing to buy one or more shares at $1000 each. Henry and several others calculated it would take roughly $70,000 to establish the auction, so the auction was a go.

With the election of a Board and sales of 72 shares, the group quickly bought a piece of land on Highway 68/80, and constructed a large open-air, steel-framed auction building. The Fairview Produce Auction is now in its fifth year and operates two mornings and two evenings weekly. Most of the participants are Amish and Mennonite vegetable farmers with small acreage in Christian and Todd Counties, but mainstream farmers from across Western Kentucky bring produce, flowers, and bedding plants to the auction as well. Trucks and trailers stand among the horse-drawn buggies and wagons in the parking lot, and customers range from roadside stand operations to groceries, restaurants, produce distributors, and

individuals looking for homegrown vegetables. Hay, straw, and firewood are auctioned monthly or twice monthly depending on the season, and horses and small farm equipment are sold each spring and fall.

Extension's Role

Harold Eli is a Christian County Extension agent who's been involved in developing the thriving auction, which sold over $330,000, worth of goods in 2000. Harold helped to organize the planning meetings, and continues to coordinate field days and other events that bring growers together for production and marketing education. He was instrumental in finding groups of commercial buyers that send representatives up to bid from the Jackson/Nashville, Tennessee area and learned that a major step in recruiting commercial buyers was establishing standard packaging requirements for all of the produce. The auction now attracts grocery and wholesale buyers not only with its reputation for quality, but because it offers the convenience of consistent, uniform packaging. Harold also got involved with marketing, making phone calls, sending flyers, and distributing a newsletter to potential buyers.

Reflecting on its five-year growth, Harold remarks that while the auction was created to increase sales of local produce, it's now motivated producers to expand and diversify their operations to meet demand. Thriving due to effective cooperation, the auction also rewards individual performance in a way that many cooperative ventures do not: each item is identified by producer number in the auction. So the highest-quality produce is can be recognized and brings the highest bids. This structure creates the added benefit of encouraging all producers to strive for quality. Although the Auction Board issues quality standards, Harold says that there is rarely a problem with inferior produce.

Born and raised in Christian County, Harold grew up in a farm family that worked horses and mules, kept hogs, a milk cow, and chickens, and raised and canned its own vegetables. Despite cultural and religious differences, his background enables him to appreciate the skills, values, and goals of Amish and Mennonite farmers. With a reputation for spurning government assistance, Harold admits that "a few Amish are kindly cool to Extension," but he hasn't found this leeriness to hinder the leaders' willingness to ask for his assistance, or his ability to support and promote the auction.

Amish and Mennonite cultures extol many of the traditional virtues of small-farm communities: frugality, hard work, and neighborliness. Harold notes the presence of a "willingness to work, not get discouraged, and ride the good and the bad," that is largely missing in today's mainstream culture. When I Asked if the auction could work outside the Amish/Mennonite community, Harold answers with a story: Buying a share in the auction

hasn't brought a quick return; many of the "English" that invested bought in for the dividends and sold their shares when they didn't turn around quickly enough. A Mennonite farmer told Harold that his community wasn't interested in the dividends, and that he'd bought his shares like he'd buy a tractor, as a true investment. Just as with a tractor, the return would not come as quick cash, but as a long-range opportunity for sustenance and growth.

Auction manager Steve Sauder has been asked to speak to mainstream groups of farmers interested in copying the model, but produce auctions haven't largely caught on outside of Amish and Mennonite communities. Harold suspects that the success of the Fairview Auction is somewhat a function of culture, particularly this quality of farsightedness and devotion to small-scale, steady, slow-growth economics. The auction might not be such a natural marketing tool in other areas, particularly in communities where trusting and interdependent relationships are not as abundant. Other practicalities like time flexibility (many Amish and Mennonites practice a craft or trade rather than work in off-farm jobs to supplement farm income,) family help, and geographic proximity make the auction a good fit in Christian County, but could be drawbacks to its success in other communities. Steve Sauder advises other groups: "It starts with community. If you don't have strong community spirit first, this type of project is not for you."

Harold worked closely with Henry Leid, who has since moved from Christian County, and the other leaders in getting the auction off the ground. While an agent is often instrumental in developing the internal organization of the group, guiding consensus-building, conflict-management, or fair procedures, some culturally separate, close-knit groups may not need this outside involvement. In this case the group was accustomed to acknowledging its shared goals, cooperating, and self-organizing. Because of the insular nature of the group, Harold found he was most useful as an interlocutor, finding appropriate technical resources, establishing outside contacts, and maintaining lines of communication. When the management developed confidence in marketing (Sauder now produces a newsletter and the auction is advertised in several publications), and the growers learned the nature of buyer's needs and preferences, Harold was able to pass the torch and take a supporting role.

Organizing the country: community by community

"On the way from the railroad station he had walked tall
in the mass of moving metal and concrete
speckled with the very small eyes of people . . .
their eyes didn't grab at you
like the eyes of country people."
Tarwater in Flannery O'Connor's
"The Violent Bear it Away"

"One of the wonderful things about living in the country
and the people IN the country
is they have more of the old-fashioned attitude of
'We'll make this work.' **They create community.**"

Joyce Marlow,
author of "Country Ways"

People are healthier if they are a part of cohesive teams or communities.

During the 1950s, Roseto, PA., posed something of a mystery. Death rates in the small town of about 1,600 people were substantially lower than in neighboring communities. In particular, the rate of heart attacks was about 40 percent lower than expected and could not be explained by the prevalence of factors known to increase the risk of the disease. Citizens of Roseto smoked at the same rate as neighboring towns, they were just as overweight and sedentary, and their diet consisted of about the same amount of animal fat. But the one feature that stood out was the close-knit relations among residents in the community. The town had been originally settled by immigrants during the 1880s, who all came from the same village in rural Italy. The researchers noticed the social cohesiveness and ethos of egalitarianism that characterized the community: Proper behavior by those Rosetans who have achieved material wealth or occupational prestige requires attention to the delicate balance between ostentation and reserve, ambition and restraint, modesty and dignity. The local priest emphasized that when preoccupation with earning money exceeded the unmarked boundary it became a basis for social rejection. Rosetan culture thus provided a set of checks and balances to ensure that neither success nor failure got out of hand. It was difficult to distinguish, on the basis of dress or behavior, the wealthy from the impecunious in Roseto.

However, as these common attitudes disappeared, the incidence of heart attack in Roseto caught up with neighboring towns within a span of a decade.

The notion that social cohesion is related to the health of a population is hardly new. One hundred years ago, Emile Durkheim demonstrated that suicide rates were higher among

populations that were less cohesive. In 1979, after a nine-year study of 6,928 adults living in Alameda County, California, epidemiologists Lisa Berkman and S. Leonard Syme reported that people with few social ties were two to three times more likely to die of all causes than were those with more extensive contacts. This relationship persisted even after controlling for such characteristics as age and health practices, including cigarette smoking, drinking, exercise, and the use of medical services. The basic findings of the Alameda County Study have since been confirmed in more than a half dozen epidemiological studies in different communities.

Now everyone is getting in on the act: Community building

> *In his first extensive public remarks since the 2000 election, Al Gore said he planned to lecture on the emerging discipline of "community building" at both Fisk University, a historically black college in Nashville, and Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, about 30 miles south of Nashville. Mr. Gore, who maintains a house in Carthage, Tenn., not far from Nashville, will teach the course at Fisk along with Representative John Lewis, a Georgia Democrat who was graduated from that university.*
>
> *Community building, Mr. Gore explained, is an interdisciplinary approach that grew out of discussions at annual conferences on family issues that the Gores sponsored in Tennessee over the last nine years. It seeks to bring together authorities from fields like education, business, architecture, law and public policy to teach "all of the skills that are relevant to bringing a community to life," he said.*
>
> *When asked precisely what such a discipline would teach, Mr. Gore paused, chuckled and then referred the question to Dr. Neil Halfon, a professor at the University of California at Los Angeles who directs a small consortium of universities exploring the field. "I am going to be immersing myself in it in preparation for these teaching assignments," Mr. Gore said. Dr. Halfon said that community building differed from development models that focused purely on economics, business and design. "These economic or business strategies are important," he said, "but what is also important is the family-focused, human capital approach."*

Rural places have community already.

Organizing in rural areas is far different than organizing in cities. You need the same organizing skills but you have to start with a whole different way of looking at life. This collection is dedicated to describing that *Weltanschaung* for the benefit of those who see the crucial need to organize in rural areas.

> *When I first came here I heard that I might be considered a local after about 20 years. Lots of people come and go, so folks get choosy about who they are going to invest their time with. It takes time to build that amount of trust, over the last few years I have been making deeper friendships, but this is a slow process.*

Luckily, you don't have to be considered a local in order to be successful at rural organizing.

> *One of my most successful organizing efforts began with a meeting in Owsley county, Kentucky. I arrived to find a group discussing a recent death in the community. The coroner had ruled that the deceased had committed suicide by shooting himself twice in the chest with the sheriff's shotgun. Taken aback, I absently said: "A double-barrelled shotgun?" One Owsley resident responded: "No, single barrel. He had to reload. But it doesn't matter, he was a foreigner. He was from Ohio." I'd just arrived from Missouri, but I never had any problem organizing in Kentucky.*

Social Capital, Facilitation and Organizing

Some who write about cohesive teams and communities seem to like the term "social capital." Those who are doing the organizing rarely use the term and are often repelled by it. The phenomenon referred to by the term is exactly what this collection is about. This collection explores how good facilitators generate this phenomenon some call social capital.

The work of Robert Putnam, James Coleman, Pierre Bourdieu and others has recently focused attention on social capital as those features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate cooperation for mutual benefit. Putnam (1995: 67) shows how existence of these features enhances capacities for community problem solving.

The Charlotte Schexnayder and Harold Eli profiles illustrate the basic idea:

> *communities with limited natural and financial resources but rich in civic participation may be more successful than communites rich in natural and financial resources.*

Or, if you have a taste for academese:

> "networks of civic engagement foster sturdy norms of generalized reciprocity and encourage the emergence of social trust. Such networks facilitate coordination and communication, amplify reputations, and thus allow dilemmas of collective action to be resolved. When economic and political negotiation are embedded in dense networks of social interaction, incentives for opportunism are reduced. At the same time, networks of civic engagement embody past success at collaboration, which can serve as a cultural template for future collaboration."

We could plunge headlong into this sort of rhetoric (including the vast literature on participatory approaches), and we do on our website. However, the purpose of this collection is to present profiles of people who are really creating community.

There is a vast amount of polarized debate on which will help farmers more: more

state intervention or open markets. Neither is the answer without local organization, without cohesive local communities. And that's what we are getting ready to explore a little further.

The next set of profiles explores how two excellent facilitators (Annette Meyer of Western Kentucky and John Gardner of Missouri) have helped groups of producers organize. On a smaller scale and more rapidly, they created a little nucleus of the community Charlotte Schexnayder helped create and didn't even have to recreate the Amish lifestyle.

Figure 4. Annette Meyer, working in Kentucky, has a low-key and reflective style of facilitation. She's a good listener, encouraging the enthusiasm of others. Much of her facilitation occurs outside group meetings.

Annette Meyer Heisdorffer

Owensboro, Kentucky

Find ways to help the group get to know and trust each other.
For WKGC, it was the trip to Florida.

Out of the Lab, Into the Field

Observant, reflective, and analytic is how one co-worker describes Annette Meyer Heisdorffer. Consistent with these qualities, she completed her Ph. D., and joined Extension because she realized she preferred people to the laboratory. Daviess County hired her in 1994 to assist local vegetable growers as well as serve homeowner needs. In addition to providing technical support to commercial producers and homeowners over the last seven years, Annette has also been instrumental in organizing the West Kentucky Grower Co-op. A group of more than forty growers from Daviess and surrounding counties, the co-op cools, grades and packs squash, cucumbers, peppers, sweet corn, broccoli, and pumpkins in its Owensboro facility.

Timing and Urgency

The idea for a produce cooperative had been tossed around since 1992, though it had never really gained much strength. A private venture had secured the site, the building, and a hydro-cooler for sweet corn, but various problems had slowed down development. By 1999, with rock-bottom corn and bean prices, and the loss of tobacco as a major cash crop, area growers were desperately looking for viable alternatives. Most hadn't seriously considered vegetables because of the intensive labor requirements, but it occurred to them that labor hired to plant and strip tobacco could be weeding and harvesting a vegetable crop before the topping of tobacco. According to Annette, the sorry state of the commodities markets, and the facility and the labor in hand motivated the growers to revisit the produce co-op strategy and prompted their first serious investigation.

> Need and want both have to be there.

Exploring the Industry

One of the growers had been contacted by a vegetable broker in Florida who insisted that he had immediate need for 2000 acres of vegetables. Although this market sounded somewhat unbelievable, the prospect fueled a meeting in January 2000. Annette dates the meeting as the real start of her involvement with the project. Convinced that the group had gone beyond casual interest, she arranged a trip to Palm Beach County, Florida, to visit with Extension, brokers, growers, and several processing plants, including the Pioneer Grower Cooperative. Pioneer was interested in Kentucky sweet corn to round out its tray-pack sweet corn line. Pioneer needed a northern source to supply corn between the Florida/Georgia harvests.

The group found another sales agent on their trip to Florida that seemed like a better match than the original brokerage, because of the offered technical help as well as a marketing channel. Annette commends the group for clearly identifying its own needs at this point:

- Professional marketing with experience, good reputation, and established connections—Tim Duncan, sales agent for Whitworth Farms
- Scheduling, scouting, spraying guidance--Opticrop
- Flexibility to work with other regional co-ops to supply mixed loads—Scott County Cabbage Growers
- One year's experience and results to secure some Phase II tobacco funding when it became available.

Recognizing Common Goals

The trip to Florida was obviously helpful in finding a broker and seeing the farm and plant operations firsthand, but Annette believes that something even more crucial happened on that trip to solidify and ignite the group. Investigating the feasibility of the co-op together helped a diverse group of growers to realize they had a common goal and created a more collaborative mindset. Many cooperative ventures wither on the vine because of distrust and internal competition. The trip helped synergize key players from different parts of the county to drop their guards, see each other as allies, and work together to expedite the project. In today's agricultural climate, entrepreneurs must look for new ways to leverage their product in the market. Team-building leadership initiatives like the Green River Area Leadership Project that Annette and other area agents participated in have helped to develop common cause thinking and forge new partnerships in Western Kentucky.

> Facilitating grower to grower interaction is crucial. They have to trust each other and they have to have common goals.

Agents, Not Experts

An agent doesn't need to be a co-op guru to facilitate one's establishment. When the group needed assistance beyond her expertise, Annette put the group in touch with the Kentucky Center for Cooperative Development, where Heath Hoagland and Lionel Williamson helped the group look at capital requirements, membership organization, market potential, management structures, and operations and financial issues. Legal and fundraising assistance with specific experience in cooperative business also proved indispensable. Hugh Hayden Industries, Inc. was instrumental in preparing the group for proposal requirements, such as sourcing and comparing numerous locations to determine theirs was the best. One of the growers worked with Paul Darby of the Southern States Foundation to contact Kentucky legislators and the Department of Agriculture, eventually securing a forgivable loan and other financing for the facility upgrade and hiring staff.

Annette believes that other important forms of support are often overlooked in the process of raising investment capital. The Chamber of Commerce and other county agencies can be great

allies and should be kept in the loop, as well as the local press and business leaders. Agents can help a group value and pursue good working relationships outside of their own suppliers and buyers. A cooperative naturally has a more pronounced public image than most of the members' individual businesses ever did, and some growers have a hard time adjusting to the association. Agents can help smooth the transition and help individual members become better representatives of the company.

The Interpreter Role

Annette has traveled extensively in the U.S. and abroad, from her first 4-H exchange trip to Japan in grade school, to her most recent trip to Mexico to investigate some trade possibilities with the growers' group. Her experience with other cultures has helped her understand how customs, belief systems, and language affect working relationships. An agent can help interpret local norms for out-of-town operations, and make communication more effective between the group and outsiders. Agents should be encouraged to travel, visit, and share ideas outside the community. Often the best agents have worked in environments that are very different from Extension, or been part of other organizations. These agents are often skilled at "speaking different languages," and helping others to understand different perspectives. Or they can facilitate the learning process by fleshing out impartial communication: a broker rudely refuses some blemished squash without explaining what he's looking for or what his buyer's standards are, and the agent might step in to encourage this conversation. More often she is needed to identify internal communication gaps and advise the Co-op Board, management, or members to share concerns, raise questions, explain actions, or discuss plans earlier and more effectively.

Facilitate the learning process by fleshing out impartial communication.

It's Not Your Baby

One of the biggest challenges of facilitating a new enterprise is letting it go. "The growers won't be happy as you back away, but you need to." Unless she can step back from her involvement, an agent can find she has led a project to failure; "a co-op is doomed", says Annette, "whenever success is dependent on one person in one position." An agent who organizes and leads some initial meetings can easily come to be viewed as a manager, and her enthusiasm can easily substitute for grower commitment. The enterprise must originate and develop with the group, with the agent finding resources, providing advice, and functioning as a support system and sounding board. If a leader aggressively pushes her own ideas in the early stages of development, the real needs, goals, and skills of the group don't emerge.

One of the biggest challenges of facilitating a new enterprise is letting it go.

Building a strong foundation for group enterprise requires that the collaborators analyze their individual situations carefully. An agent is not there to "sell" a project, no matter how much she believes in it. A hot new plan with great

potential is not necessarily right for each person pursuing it, but if the agent is deeply engaged it may be hard to throw a wet blanket where it's needed. "Each grower must do his own homework, to analyze his operation and see whether it's an appropriate move." A profitable venture won't necessarily confer benefits on each participant". As a facilitator, one is inclined to excite people, rouse them to action, and convince them to take risks, but in many cases the most critical responsibility is to encourage caution. Questions such as "Does the venture make sense with your land/equipment/labor? Is it economical for you? How does it fit into your long-term plans?" might help potential participants see the venture in light of their own particular circumstances.

Training agents

Annette summarizes a few basic several attitudes and skills AEDs need and need to impart to members of the new enterprise. First, agents have to have an open mind, not be set in their ways. They must help the attitudes of the growers to be flexible. Some growers just are naturally too cautious and that's ok, they just won't be the first involved in the effort.

Nobody ever thinks about these qualities.

This skill is more than just being open to new ideas. The agent must be able to help the growers see situations the way buyers and others see them. Annette puts it this way:

> "You're dealing with feelings and beliefs. You can't come out and say, this is how they see it, without being rude. People don't absorb this by just hearing it, they have to experience it. The more experienced agent can prepare the groups, but for the alternate perspective to sink in, the growers have to experience it."

Some of the other skills Annette feels agents must have include:

- The agent has to listen to people, and not just to their words.
- The agent has to be able to find and recruit expertise to the project.
- The agent has to help the group be willing to take it over.
- The agent has to be willing to switch roles and recognize when she needs to. At some point the agent becomes less an organizer and more a cheerleader who says 'Have you thought of this?'

What would training for agents look like? Formal training of agents would help, but mostly agents need mentoring with a notebook of concise readings to get started.

One Tough Year and A Half

In mid June, out at the West Kentucky Grower Co-op plant, twelve workers are busy on the squash line and a machine crew is constructing the new sweet corn hydro-cooler. The plant will

stay busy until late fall when the pumpkins and broccoli are finished.

It's been eight years in the making, but "one tough year and a half" from the potboiler meeting that first really brought Annette and the group together. Although the group had long shared an objective, the various requirements for an alliance—urgency, commitment, and leadership—weren't present from the start. Desperation can antagonize growers further, or it can foster unity. Market conditions forced the members to look beyond their individual operations for a new source of income, but then they had to engage as an effective group. With guidance from Annette, they were able to capitalize on their common ground, locate valuable resources, and explore the best ways to function as an organization.

Where is the relationship of facilitator and cooperative going?

"The facilitator never drops the group totally. Some level of maintenance is necessary for a long time for several reasons including the need for outside, independent evaluation of ideas, finding other resources, networking." As the group and business grows and evolves, they need extra special care to examine "why they want what they want." Now Annette's role is to observe at the meetings, see what they really need, and help them find answers to their questions.

Figure 5. Dakota Growers Pasta Company is one of several new generation cooperatives which John Gardner helped facilitate in Carrington, N.C.

John Gardner

Columbia, Missouri

Facilitators and champions are both needed, but facilitators shouldn't become champions.

Preaching value-added diversification

It's hard to get a good facilitator to admit that they were the cause of change. John Gardner has the archetypal facilitator humility. Yet many folks say that before John Gardner got to Carrington, North Dakota, nothing was happening and when he left it was hopping.

John recently started his new position at the University of Missouri – Columbia as Associate Dean of the College of Agriculture. He is also the head honcho of the state's extension service and has been traveling regularly, meeting agents, farmers and farmer groups. John also noted that being Dean of a large southern land-grant university has been quite a change from managing a large coop or from managing the Carrington Research Station in North Dakota.

It's hard to get a good facilitator to admit that he is the cause of change.

John is now preaching value-added diversification as leader of Extension in Missouri. His themes as he crosses Missouri:

- "If you want to stay in agriculture, then you need to learn how to position your farm for market-driven agriculture that's a-coming" Need to consider "changing your business plan from commodity to a more market- and consumer-driven agriculture.
- "Agriculture has been held as a unique business But money has been sucked out of alternative agriculture by the huge R&D and venture capital needs of other industries.
- "Extension, to face the transition, will be need to be linked up to many different parties, such as business schools, partnerships with businesses and law schools."

What makes a good facilitator?

John believes we don't know near enough about the skills good facilitators need. However, he's convinced that:

- Facilitation skills translate into effecting a "cultural change".
- Facilitators must know how to assist farmers in the process of moving from sole business proprietors to investing with partners and working collaboratively.
- Facilitation with farmers is particularly hard, because their business style is a lifestyle and everything they have and are is invested in it.
- Farming is not only a business, but it's where the family lives and socializes, so change is

a higher-risk proposal than for nearly all other businesses.

- The good facilitator needs to link up all the parties in the "value-chain".

John believes the public sector should be providing community development and not technology transfer. The latter services can be bought and plenty of people are ready to sell the services.

The facilitating agent needs to be "scale-neutral", and understand the value-chain in order to help with a design of a business that would be suitable.

John says much can be learned from successful facilitators such as Jim LeCureux of Bad Axe, MI; Bill Patrie – ND Rural Electric Cooperatives; Rudy Radke, Valley City, Barnes County, ND; Larry Lev, Oregon State.

John said that Rudy and other successful agents are "cut loose to do whatever he wanted" and now has "lots of projects."

The North Dakota Experience

John attributes much of his success in North Dakota to the culture of North Dakota and the mindset of some North Dakota towns. "You need to have a good social context to understand North Dakota." He notes that it is rather homogeneous for the most part and the variety of crops produced are limited. They are "very practical" group of people. Also, they have acted collectively and "going it for themselves" for many years, since there was not a lot of private interest in building services and infrastructure in North Dakota. The state started its own bank, state mill and has a long history of helping enterprises started. It is "[socially-acceptable] to lean on the public sector to deliver the [research and development] for grower-owned ventures."

John Gardner came to North Dakota in the late 80's, after the farm crisis had started. The governor appointed a 38-member economic group "to get beyond the corporations." The feeling was "we need to own". John describes his role as providing technical assistance for growers.

Within North Dakota, Carrington was a "natural" for entrepreneurial facilitation for a number of reasons.

1) good meeting place.
2) outside of Fargo area and more "centered" both socially and regionally (between Fargo and Bismarck).
3) Had some real leaders.

One of these leaders was Ken Throlson. The North American Bison Cooperative was started in 1993 by Ken Throlson who "championed" it into existence and kept it going. The coop was a "very heterogeneous" group, have persons of many experiences, different backgrounds and motivations. A champion is someone who has the "moxy to organize and will bleed til it hurts" to keep the organization going.

Another key North Dakota champion was Mike Warner, a Hillsboro, ND, farmer, who has catalyzed a number of new coop enterprises with his "charisma". "Mike says that every coop should have a self-destruct clause – the coop has to have the chaos to survive. This should happen when the Board reaches the "milk and cookies" stage (fed information and sent home –

no longer a decision-making body).

A "new generation cooperative" can not be run like a business with a CEO. "In the first years or so, it's got to be run by the board. And this is part of the problem, too."

For those involved in training extension agents a key factor, according to John, is helping them with the cultural shift from "price-taking" to "price-making." John notes that as their boss, he "just need to keep supporting and convincing people that they there is another way and they can do it."

John often quotes other people, and is supportive of farmers, agents, facilitators, theorists alike when they have hit home. He is always giving others credit – often citing who it was that came up with a concept or phrase. He is an active listener and willing – even eager – to incorporate others ideas into worldview.

From facilitator to manager and back again

From his experience, John has come to feel that one of the pitfalls of being a good facilitator of coops is inevitably starting to think of starting their own. Having gained a good reputation and noted for capability, it is fairly easy to "sell" an idea to others and start a coop. However, "you become too close to see" what is happening far too close and one can not be both good facilitator and a good manager – they don't work together and at least one of the jobs will suffer as a result.

The cooperative John managed was a grower-owned and operated processor of speciality oil seeds. The major technical difficult was getting the plant operating efficiently because of the diversity of seeds. Their approach was to make the processing robust enough before oil extraction that all the seeds are at the same consistency for oil extraction. This approach proved difficult for the construction company. Even though a performance bond existed, the company pulled out and went to court.

From John's experience with this cooperative and in other new value-added operations, he contends you lose half of the equity before the business starts building equity. "We need to work with banks to set up a model so that there is some acceptance of this 50% loss to 25% loss with remaining ability to still work."

Q: What did you do before you started running this cooperative, how did you set an atmosphere conducive to formation of the enterprise?

A:

- The facilitator needs to have a mixture of open-mindedness and positive attitude, in "other words, do you look at the glass as half full."
- While the idea is being identified, it may change as interested farmers meet and work out the business.
- It is incumbent upon the facilitator to keep fanning the motivation that brought them together in the first place.

- The facilitator will probably find that they are working against, and for changing, the "culture of conformity."

In North Dakota there were good networks for lending, legal and technical. At Carrington Station, it was John's job to know these networks/circles of people and make sure you have good relations with them BEFORE a group even gets together to talk about a business venture – "so that you could know what is reasonable." A good business incubator will have a good understanding of how it all fits together, and have the 'experts' to go to for advise or involvement when their time has come. John noted that it was essential to have a person who could gel these enterprise components together at the onstart of development. (For ND, knowing milling and processing people was important for most of the crops that could be grown successfully there).

John noted that his role changed and his responsibilities changed as the boards were established and the enterprise developed. It became more necessary to be able to enable the group to continue flourishing, from providing a meeting space to providing further technical expertise to being an ambassador for public relations (having the scientist explain to the press or to government officials/regulators).

The Board Gels

Once the network of business components is connected to the research station, then work on having the board "gel". It happens in several different ways. There is the "magnet approach" where a champion of a business venture pulls the board together and works to maintain it. John notes that these type of boards will fall apart if the champion should leave, and so the life of the coop is invariably linked to one person.

Of these type of boards, John detailed two subsets: "synthetic" and "populist".

The synthetic board is one that the champion has recruited the board members to satisfy certain needs, such as geographic representation, political alignment, or to garner money (person has influence with potential investors or is a potential investor himself). These boards undergo intensive "grooming and training". (An example is United Spring Wheat Processors.)

The populist board is more grassroots in nature and doesn't like the training involved with being a board-member (i.e. how to read a balance sheet).

Another way that boards are formed are when "several groups combine into one organization/coop". Here "several leaders come together and these become strong boards that are most likely to survive" over time. There is a more democratic environment and the expectation that leaders will change over time and thus a willingness to foster leadership on a board.

The last way is the "local way", where the board forms because "they want to put something in their backyard." It is parochial in nature and is motivated by a general desire of local economic development – it matters less WHAT type of enterprise it is and matters more that it is located in an area. The danger in this approach is that an enterprise will be championed which is not appropriate to the locality for any number of reasons that make it less competitive. John notes that these sorts of coops tend not to succeed. Being that they are looking for any economic development, they are "very likely to be thin on resources already."

Enterprise development process

The enterprise development process that has grown from experience over the years is as follows. The enterprise idea is "launched", then the board is "grown". Once the board is established, work to attract investors, and then finally the location for the facilities is determined. John notes that only after the business is set-up, then the location that makes it most competitive is chosen – "taking the parochialism out of it."

John was an agronomist for five years at Carrington Station and then he became the manager. The mission of the station was "rural development" and to "put the sciences into public space." The station evolved into a "place for people with ideas." Most people would come into the the center for technical assistance.

'In the commodity model consumers are the enemy. We heading for a post-commodity-value-chain and it's going to happen with every crop. Transitioning to the new model will take awhile because they are so trained to believe that customers are disposable.' "There will be a 'hodge-podge' of marketing in the future. There will be sole proprietors, and collective owners.

Extension's role is to train folks to do their own research and create one's OWN business plan.

The process of change will lead to financial risk. Look at the new business start-ups and the possibility of failure. But you can't be afraid to fail, or won't do it. Resistance to trying because failure is thought to bring on social stigma as well as an added financial risk. But you need a shining example, in order to "boost up the community model."

Success doesn't necessarily beget self-learning. Many members of successful cooperatives become convinced the way their business worked is the only way one can work.

Government doesn't necessarily 'need to support "New Agriculture"'. It does, however, need to have a personal relationship with farming. Not many scientists have a sense of rural communities, much less rural development – including rural sociologists. How about field work sabbaticals – where a community adopts a scientist. At Carrington, they had a forester, economist and agronomist, but it they were assigned to a place were their discipline rated second-rate to the needs of the community.

The station needs to be a co-learner where the community directs the program in a formal and informal process. Responsibility of community members to bring issues to the center and responsibility of scientists to show the history of the technology and know the technology. Agricultural professionals and extension need to realize that agriculture has a sociological and environmental impact (e.g. silent spring), and be comfortable with admitting that we don't have all the answers. It is incumbent that both parties be challenged.

The great thing about the Carrington station is that it was a satellite of the university, and because of the distance, were left to do what they felt needed. The station had its own line of funding directly from state legislation – one more way in which the station was able to distance itself from the goals and expectations coming from the university (versus station's clientele).

In addition, the station employed post-docs, purposely young and with families and fostered their integration into the community. They brought new energy into the rural community and a naiveity that automatically questions the status quo and local power structures. While these families didn't stay all but several years, the event of losing staff was refreshing for the program and for the community. "Things don't get said until someone leaves." Distance, figuratively and logistically, provides a space for reflection and discussion. Without these, the work can't be done. "Only the way out stations can do this work."

John thinks there are common principles among facilitators. He suggested a focus group of facilitators to come up with the training and skills. Training would need to address the "lack of belief that this commodity doesn't apply to me."

Facilitators need to have empathy with the people they are working with presently and in the future. How do you get empathy skills? It means allowing for prioritization for knowing what the baggage is and know what's important. When an interviewerr suggested that it was "love", John mulled it over and then said, "yeah, it's love. I couldn't have done the last ten years if I hadn't been there for ten years before that falling in love with Carrington."

John is an agronomist that picked up facilitation, but admits he has not reflected on how to do it. He has focused on being a research and extension manager, seeing that staff was helping out start-ups.

One conclusion he has reached is that the facilitator needs to have conceptual pluralism (be able to see an issue from several completely different perspectives). Often its the scientists who are most unable to appreciate different perspectives, as John discovered when he role-played four different persons around a new crops topic to an assembly of scientists recently.

The facilitator needs to be able to see an issue from several completely different perspectives.

John Gardner said that he roughly estimates that a third of all extensions agents might "have it" to be facilitators.

Take home lesson:

John contends that a facilitator shouldn't become a champion. Bill Patrie and John both tried it and failed. At the less successful new generation cooperatives, the group of farmers isn't the champion. The most successful ventures, such as Dakota Growers, all have farmers as the champions.

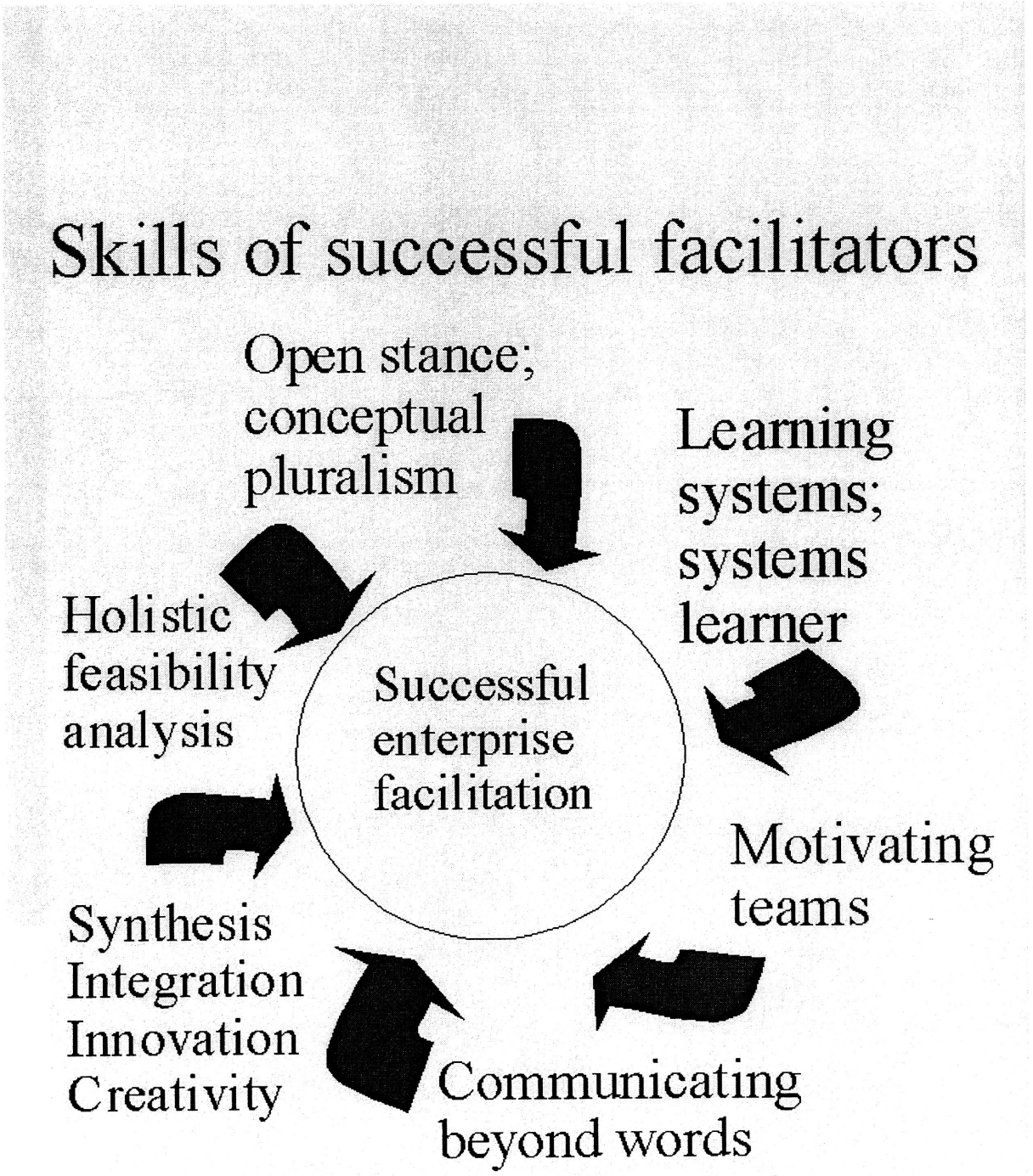

Figure 6. One conceptualization of the set of skills good facilitators bring to their groups.

Embracing multiple perspectives

Communication across the revolutionary divide is inevitably partial.
Thomas Kuhn

Persons whose thinking is embedded in a given paradigm
cannot perceive the reality that is seen by those
whose thinking is embedded in another paradigm--
it is like the blind talking to the deaf. Milbrath, 1994.

Mokita:
The truth that everyone knows but no one admits.
in a language of Irian Jaya

Understanding and helping your group requires being able to step outside it.

The passion which is required for any successful new enterprise inexorably leads to becoming totally immersed. If you love something, you'll become immersed in it. You'll want to know all about it. You'll be much more likely to be creative in it because you load your mind more fully with it. That sort of immersion is key. Until you are immersed in a system you can't hope to understand it. And you'll be better at it than someone who is only in it for money. *Unless.* Unless you never surface from your immersion to explore other systems. The incubation stage characteristic of creativity is really a time of exploration of other systems. If you become and stay immersed in a particular system, you'll be unable to see inadequacies of that system's assumptions and algorithms.

The examples are legion of business and intellectual failures due to being too deeply embedded in a particular view of the world. Even the most creative, highly motivated, highly passionate team can fail gloriously if they become too committed to an inadequate perspective.

The good facilitator realizes the at least partial inadequacy of any past approach. The good facilitator has enthusiasm for the new approach his group is taking. But he knows there's always a better perspective waiting to be found.

John and Annette take an even better approach.

They know different perspectives work best in different situations. In the always novel situations encountered by a new enterprise, the facilitator needs a multitude of perspectives to pick and choose from and help build new ones. The good facilitator cannot afford the appealing luxury of believing that there is one right way of looking at the world, that everyone else is wrong.

Look at the sailing ship builders, buggy makers, vacuum TV and radio manufacturers, U.S. motorcycle firms and perhaps the most bewildering, the makers of hard-disk drives, a sector that has witnessed a changing of the guard every time the industry standard has shrunk in size. In all these industries, inadequate perspectives (on the industry they dominated) resulted in failure of many highly successful firms. The dedication to and immersion in one particular perspective on an industry resulted in the failure of each of these firms. They were so entranced by one perspective by their "one right way of doing things" that they could not see the value of another. Many of these companies' managements did everything they had been taught to do: They had their competitive antennae up, listened astutely to customers, and invested aggressively in new technologies to provide their customers with what they wanted--and yet they still lost their market leadership.

This happens when a company is not open to a fresh perspective which marks the death or marginalization of an existing market, a breakthrough that turns customers demands on their heads: Hydraulic excavators replacing cable-operated mechanical shovels is an example.

What is particularly pernicious about such innovations is their serendipity. Usually they are unplanned, and generally unwanted by mainstream markets. They are usually less reliable, initially more expensive and get their start in parallel markets. Once their manufacturers turn their attentions upstream, however, their rapid growth quickly gobbles up the market of their older rivals from below.

Honda's conquering of the United States, and eventually global, motorcycle markets is a classic example of a disruptive technology at work. The motorcycle company's domination of the North American and European markets has been cited as a superb example of corporate strategic thinking and aggressive execution. According to these accounts, Honda employed a manufacturing plan to cut prices, expand volume and gradually build an unassailable lead based on its low-cost manufacturing position in the market. Honda used this base to move upmarket and eventually blow away all its Western rivals except for Harley Davidson and BMW, which barely survived. The truth, though, is a little different.

The first Honda bikes imported to the United States in 1959 bombed badly. The engines sprung leaks and the clutches wore out on the long, fast, open-highway cruises Americans liked to use motorbikes for. One fateful weekend one of the frustrated Honda marketing representatives took his 50cc Honda Cub out for a ride in the hills of western Los Angeles to let off some steam. Some intrigued onlookers asked him where they could purchase such a bike and the Cub, eventually repackaged as the first dirt bike, began being sold from recreation shops. From that base, Honda aimed up-market and the rest is history.

Harley Davidson at one point did seek to fight back but immediately ran into problems. Primarily, its distributors revolted. Going down market and small was hurting the bike's heavy image. Harley retreated to the high end, where it has remained ever since.

When taking an innovative perspective is impossible for a company, many spin off a different company where a corporate culture can be built around the alternative perspective.

In industries like agriculture, where the cost of entry is high, it is especially difficult to introduce new perspectives and innovations to change the basic mode of operation.

When academic peer review and the permanent government are present to enable careers and enterprises based on inadequate perspectives, the examples expands exponentially.

In industrial monopolies, many government bureaucracies, and most academic promotion and review processes, taking an impractical, inadequate perspective does not necessarily lead to destruction of careers or enterprises–as long as enough people who control resources (academic peers, journal editors, politicians) agree with you. In such systems protected from most external competing influences, a perspective can long survive and prosper only to quickly wilt and fail when the system is opened to strong and novel external forces.

Two totally contradictory thought-systems often survive virtually side-by-side.

As long as two systems are closed, they can maintain totally different perspectives. Here's an example from agriculture and ecology. Environmentalists like diversity and assume monocrops are bad. People who defend conventional crop production (let's call them productionists) like to defend monocrops.

The environmentalist preference for diversity has roots in the "balance of nature" concepts of competing populations keeping each other in check. Diversity is assumed to lend stability to ecosystems. Supporting research is illustrated by examples such as Hendrix et al. (1989) showing grass strips in soybean fields leading to less pest damage by increasing predators of pest species. Tonhasca and Byrne (1994) contend through meta-analysis that the average difference in insect density due to diversification is over 60%.

Productionists note that stable, climax ecosystems invariably have fewer species present than systems in flux. This position is supported by recent ecological studies. Reice (1994) provides several examples including his own long-term work in North Carolina. New Hope Creek, disturbed frequently by flooding has 10 times as many different macroinvertebrate species as the nearby, but stable Botany Pond. Allen Savory (1988) even asserts that a lack of physical disturbance for some years not only results in simpler, less diversified communities but communities which are less resilient when disturbed.

Productionists can then write books with titles such as Crop Ecology which defend monocropping by citing the low species diversity of many climax communities such as the Coast Redwood (Sequoia sempervirens) association of California, brigalow (Acacia harpophylla) shrublands of Queensland Australia, salt marshes and many others in a variety of climatic conditions. Ecologists, in fact, now see stability as associated with lack of diversity in ecosystems as different as sage scrub lands and oak-pine forest. The mechanisms behind the decrease in diversity in stable ecosystems are now being uncovered. A fast growing area in plant ecology is "positive feedback switches" where plant species change

their environment to make it more suitable for themselves thus decreasing diversity, but increasing their own species abundance. Often these mechanisms involve the release of chemicals, enabling conventional farmers and researchers to argue herbicides are natural.

Ecologists respond that, under stable environmental conditions, systems can evolve where a few species are very dominant and diversity declines. However, when stress hits, it is systems with high diversity which weather the storm best.

Polarization inhibits synthesis. This sort of argument goes back and forth with neither side convincing the other and not likely to. The environmentalist sees the redwood forest as a complex community of species interacting synergistically to create a highly productive ecosystem. The productionist see one highly dominant species with many similarities to monocultured crops.

Environmentalism is a religion for some, just as the conventional paradigm of chemically-based production agriculture is an article of faith for others.

This controversy illustrates how each side is wedded to a set of beliefs and practices. Clarity of information will not alter their ability to interpret information according to their paradigm. Environmentalism is a religion for some, just as the conventional paradigm of chemically-based production agriculture is an article of faith for others. In long as agronomists and ecologists can maintain their closed peer review systems, no unification of these approaches is likely.

Many say: "Better communication will solve our problems." Though true on one level, just sitting down and talking, without changing our assumptions, does nothing but waste time.

But communication can go beyond our assumptions to understand the assumptions of a totall different and perhaps opposing perspective. If such communication can embrace the need to reconcile and synthesize these opposing assumptions–that will solve our problems.

"When two principles really do meet
which cannot be reconciled with one another,
then each man declares the other a fool and heretic."
Wittgenstein

Annette and John illustrate how successful a systems facilitator is extremely adept at understanding new perspectives. More important, the facilitator appreciates the importance of each particular perspective in its context. She is able to keep several perspectives in mind at once. If the ability of a system to last means resilience (the ability to come up with the right response in right situation), then we need a variety of approaches--which means being able to take multiple perspectives. Such an approach is consistent with an ecological systems approach since it stresses multiple, overlapping strategies rather than silver bullets.

The effective systems facilitator doesn't try to prove he's right. He doesn't even try to

force different perspectives to mesh. He just keeps all the major perspectives in his head at same time. Then he goes ahead and does what he feels is best

Academics and intellectuals get their rewards by coming up with the next better idea. Those managing systems in business and agriculture are just indulging themselves wasting their time when they get into such esoteric debates. They must solve specific problems by drawing on all sorts of solutions to past problems and coming up with a unique solution to their present situation. ***The trick is to keep your mind from being embedded in any particular paradigm.***

When you are stuck in a particular paradigm, it's impossible to come up with any a solution which doesn't fit the paradigm. The only possible solution is what you are doing because that's the only perspective you know. Innovation and creativity depend on this conceptual pluralism. Creating a innovative solution requires the ability to keep both the existing perspective (the useful characteristics of the formerly effective solution) and the opposing perspective ("the problem situation") in mind until a way of merging the two can be constructed. The Hegelian dialectic (thesis–antithesis–synthesis) is another way of stating this. Before a synthesis can emerge, one must be able to hold both thesis and antithesis in mind.

One of the fathers of agricultural systems facilitation, Richard Bawden, calls it paradigmatic pluralism. Norgaard calls it "disciplinary tribalism." The various disciplines are set of solutions agreed to by people who have similar jobs. All easily agree. And reinforce each other. And when they get in control of resources, watch out

When one embraces such conceptual pluralism, transformation of public policy becomes possible. In Kentucky in 1992, the state Division of Water proposed new groundwater protection rules which would require every farmer to prove he is not a polluter at a cost estimated at $30,000 per farm. This led to a state-wide protest by farmers. The power of farm organizations led environmentalists to fear that all efforts to protect the environment would be damaged.

To resolve the situation, a number of systems agriculture facilitators organized and participated in a "consensus group" convened with both farmer and environmentalist representatives along with other industries affecting groundwater.

Employing systems facilitation enabled environmentalists to agree that family farms should be preserved while farm representatives agreed that no willful polluter of groundwater should be defended by the agricultural community.

Continuing application of systems facilitation enabled the creation of nationally innovative legislation which established the Kentucky Agricultural Water Quality Authority where farmers and environmentalists jointly develop and improve all surface and groundwater regulations and practices.

Today the same coalition is using the same methods to pursue a diversification/value-added initiative, along with a number of adjoining states.

Diverging perspectives in American agriculture

Throughout the Delta, a set of polarized beliefs is blocking environmentally sound economic development. Black-white, liberal-conservative, farmer-environmentalist, the list of entrenched polar opposites encompasses nearly every facet of social and economic relations--including rural development. Most community and rural development specialists work only with the poor communities. Meanwhile agricultural development rests in the hands of those who benefit from least-cost production of raw commodities. The farmers and land owners who control and manage the productive natural resources of the region have been ignored or even seen as the enemy of rural development. Agricultural development in the South has historically meant producing least-cost commodities more and more efficiently.

Presently, nearly all agricultural producers in the Delta are least cost producers, meaning a farmer must produce and sell a crop at a lesser cost in order to maintain a market share. This is difficult, specifically in agriculture, in that there are numerous producers competing with each other and those competing with many more foreign producers. This market requires a grower to adopt only those practices which are least cost, and avoid environmental practices that take away from the bottom line, even if their own health or worker's health is considered.

New efforts are needed to break the vicious cycle of polarization and pessimism by uniting rural communities around the vast opportunities available in creation of ecologically-sound, locally-owned value-added enterprises.

Most **politicians, administrators of rural development programs, and foundation executives** have one ***mokita*** in common. In their world, those who succeed are those who have passion for their *programs* which lead to development. They have adopted a basic assumption that people from outside a situation can come in, induce a certain set of activities, and there will be change for the good. The only question is which activities should be performed. To participate you have to participate in their activities. The people who end up participating are the people who are willing to go along with the program. These are usually not the most innovative and entrepreneurial people. Good entrepreneurs can't stand to sit in meetings for hours and hours on end. And entrepreneurs, people with passion for their dreams, are at the heart of any enterprise and at the heart of economic development. Successful facilitation depends on allowing the dreams of local entrepreneurs to be the heart of economic development, not the dreams of politicians and government.

For the facilitator, then, the first rule of this approach is counter-intuitive: do nothing. Do nothing until you've found people with passion for their innovation. The assumptions of government programs are limiting since they put the emphasis on the program, not the people. Good facilitators help government bureaucrats find a more basic, foundational assumption: Put people' passion and dreams at the heart of any program.

Look again at the approaches of Annette and John to see how some are able to help their groups adopt multiple perspectives.

In farming we all have procedures by which we plow, scout for alfalfa weevils, decide when to spray, decide how much to sidedress our corn. Some of these procedures

operate mainly at a level where they influence a broad range of other patterns. If you really believe that "organic agriculture will not work," this belief is more than a set of words you endorse in casual conversation. It is a way of thinking which influences all sorts of activities on your farm.

Another pattern at this level involves not trying anything new until it works for your neighbors. This type of "social algorithm" acts to insure that all sorts of systems under its control (soil biota, beneficial insect habitat, new ideas of all sorts) evolve in ways consistent with itself.

According to this perspective, local leadership--the managers of social systems--can then both insure conventional, traditional approaches or catalyze innovation. Local change agents will not be successful if they do not recognize the influence of social systems and their leadership.

Local leadership is usually a part of broader social systems which operate to influence the local social systems. The algorithms at this level could almost be called paradigms. One example is: "free market, rugged individualist, accept no charity, word hard, produce and act right, distrust government." Another is: "nature is good, men are greedy, government programs are needed to control man."

And at all these levels there are all sorts of ways of thinking and ways of doing things which have never been put into words but nonetheless structure the farmer's existence such that an innovation must fit into them before it can be adopted.

A basic problem is that environmentalists, farmers and researchers of all stripes often appear convinced of the complete logical and empirical justification of their activities. In social interaction (including public policy creation), such naive realism serves to polarize rather than achieve the consensus.

Given these basic different assumptions, even when coalitions are achieved to a accomplish common objective, they fall apart. The underlying problem is that coalitions quickly fall apart unless the disparate parts can be unified around a new perspective, a new way of defining problems, a new paradigm.

Ta is a Chinese verb which refers to the understanding that lets one take things lightly. When you're certain of your skill, you face situations with a relaxed confidence. You are "cool." The opposite is concerned, anxious, purposive action.

> *"When you sell your experience–whether to a boss, a client or even a friend–you have a limited repertoire. On the other hand when you sell your curiosity and eagerness to learn about something you sell from a bucket that's infintely deep, that represents an unlimited repertoire. My expertise has always been my ignorance–my admission and my acceptance of not knowing. My work comes from questions, not answers."*

Won is a Korean noun which means the unwillingness to let go of illusions, thus causing the suffering. When one is in a bad relationship, a bad job, or a bad political situation, one refuses to exit the relationship and thus one suffers. But when one abandons

replaces inadequate assumptions, vast improvement is possible. One day, the East Germans stopped believing their government and a few days later, it collapsed.

Pay attention to feedback and not to assumptions

> *The control of car emissions of carbon monoxide and unburned hydrocarbons, for example, led manufacturers to raise engine flame temperature in such a way that more oxides of nitrogen were emitted. Air pollution was not fully measured by the former indicators and worsened by adherence to those indicators.*

The attention to feedback in a multi-perspective systems approach insures that choice of indicators is part of an iterative loop to revisit indicators according to their effect--knowing that no indicator will fully capture the essence of sustainability.

Since the good facilitator must simultaneously entertain multiple view of the world and must always realize every approach is inadequate, *how do we keep from descending into chaos?*

That's what we explore in the next two profiles.

Lee Meyer

Lexington, Kentucky

Create conditions so that enterprises can coalesce.

Facilitator of facilitation

Lee Meyer has a provocative metaphor for rural enterprise creation. "It's like the solar system being created out of an amorphous mass of gas and energy." You work long and steadily over the years to spread ideas, stimulate learning, help anyone who asks. The new enterprises coalesce out of this seemingly chaotic mass you've been working years to create.

The new enterprises coalesce out of this seemingly chaotic mass you've been working years to create.

In recent months, Lee has been watching numerous such enterprises coalesce. These have included several initiatives of the Kentucky Agricultural Develoment Board (ADB), where the beef industry has made far more progress than any other group in obtaining support. An example is Wayne County where the local agent has become an excellent facilitator of county-wide efforts to improve cattle genetics. Lee's role has been to catalyze and stimulate the work of the agent for the two years the project took to incubate. Now it has reached fruition in a state-wide project funded by the ADB. Lee helped create the "amorphous mass" while the agent catalyzed the "planets" from that mass.

"All of these efforts are totally dependent on teams/multiple players. In some instances I may have been a catalyst. In others, I was just part of a team, playing my (sometimes bit) role. This is not just modesty. In each case there were local people who really made things happen. They need to get the attention. Perhaps the lesson is that they are the real initiators, but often the local people need someone else to get the ball rolling. That person (e.g. me) plays a key and necessary role, but in the overall initiative, (s)he may be a minor player."

Lee's conclusions are based on over 20 years experience working with various groups to establish local meat systems across Kentucky. He's been most active in facilitating various collaborative beef marketing operations, an effort he describes as "taking a conventional enterprise and moving it up a notch." Lee thinks that great opportunities exist to direct current resources and infrastructure to new organization and marketing channels. The challenge is that new crops, new facilities, and new technology are catchier and generate more interest, particularly from funders, than transforming an existing industry through local integration.

Lee's experience is that every worthwhile enterprise requires years of nurture before it becomes reality. One particular regional group he has been involved with (known by the acronym

SMMART) has taken three years to develop into a powerful beef marketing effort and other initiatives.

Beef industry facilitators

Lee is currently involved in a five-state beef initiative that plans to hire and train producers to function as field educators and take an active role in developing new enterprises. These leaders will have been the early adopters that can share experiences, provide feedback and evaluation, and liaison between producers and various agencies and resources. The leaders will occasionally meet in groups to reflect on the process, discuss ideas and plans, and continue leadership training. The Cattlemen's Association was looking for a facilitation program when Lee "planted" the idea of using a farmer-to-farmer model, which has been one of the most effective methods for sharing information and developing strong networks.

The Kentucky beef industry has had recent success attracting state and county funding, which Lee attributes to some early initiatives that set the stage for further activity and support. Although a unified plan calling for millions of tobacco dollars to be distributed across the various agricultural sectors was ultimately rejected, it set a precedent for support of various other programs. An effort to put cattle on reclaimed land grew into the Mountain Cattle Association, which sponsored several projects, including one that worked with farmers to feed calves after weaning, growing more value before sale, and a collaborative for local heifer sales.

The same pattern is evident in hog production, where a successful cooperative marketing and buying association has spun off numerous other proposals from producer groups. Lee attributes the number of spinoffs to growing ability in the industry to work together across agency lines. Often in the past the livestock associations, county groups, and Farm Bureau acted independently and competitively; Lee is now seeing more agency leaders recognizing the value of a team approach.

Servant Leadership

Lee thinks that the number of new local livestock ventures in Kentucky is also a consequence of the breadth of leadership programs that the state has adopted–including the KLAES project.

Lee especially believes that "servant leadership" is a particularly powerful model in agriculture and rural organizing. The servant-leader holds a strong desire to serve the needs of others, and through serving he/she develops leadership aspirations. Traditional autocratic leaders begin with a desire for control or power, and may or may not develop the desire to serve. Followers of servant leadership view the approach as the most effective means of empowering people to grow, exercise their freedom, take responsibility for themselves and their communities, and serve others. To Lee, a

> There is no one best way to lead/facilitate. There are a continuum of equally effective approaches which are tied to the temperament of the facilitator.

hierarchical system that distances leaders and creates passive followers doesn't bond people or foster the leadership "ripple effect" that's needed to sustain collaborative enterprise. Some degree of servant-oriented leadership is essential for "outsiders," geographic, demographic, or professional, if they are truly to be accepted by and useful to a group.

Leadership viewed in this way is less about control than about facilitation. However, Lee contends that there is no one best way to lead/facilitate. Lee describes a continuum of equally effective approaches which are tied to the temperament of the facilitator. One effective facilitator waits for a proposal, performs a slow, careful assessment, and makes quiet recommendations, guiding progress from the shadows, while another more aggressively introduces ideas and throws himself/herself into a ringleader position. Most agents don't match either extreme type but lie somewhere in between. "Different models can work and must be consistent with the agent's personality," says Lee, "there are as many models as there are agents." An astute leader can choose from both models and construct his/her own style, expanding or retracting his/her role as needed during development of an enterprise. However he/she must also ensure that the group develops strength in its own right, independent of one personality or presence.

Lee hypothesizes that there are two ways in which collaborative action is stimulated: either a strong leader(s) is present, and ideas come and go until one hitches on to the leadership, or an idea is in place, and leadership capacity is built up around it. Eventually both strong ideas and effective leadership must emerge for the vision to become a viable enterprise. Although the leader or the idea can initially kick off the enterprise development, it can't continue to run without both inputs.

Helping planets to coalesce

When idea and leadership coalesce, the group "matures" toward enactment of its plans, as evidenced by concrete steps, e.g. conducting a marketing analysis and feasibility study, writing a business plan, hiring a consultant, electing a Board of Directors. Lee's analogy is the solar system, where charged particles (farmers/leaders and ideas) are floating around in the atmosphere, until they unite. In uniting, they emit new energy (the concrete action which eventually produces the enterprise.)

Lee sees training traditional ag agents as somewhat difficult due to the understandable reluctance of agents to waste time on "touchy-feely" exercises. He favors a Trojan Horse approach where agents are attracted to a training program due to the hard benefits it will achieve (new, diversified enterprises). Then, once they see the program as legitimate, they will be open to training in all the skills they need as enterprise facilitators.

> The most basic skill of the facilitator is the ability to find common ground between members of the group.

More than anything, potential facilitators need mentoring, opportunity to share ideas and a safe place to share failures. Effective tools which mess

with their personalities are much easier to introduce in such an environment. For example, every facilitator should expect conflict to arise in his group. It's a normal stage of group development. When it appears, facilitators with different temperaments will successfully work through the conflict in entirely different ways.

The most basic skill of the facilitator is the ability to find common ground between members of the group. The dialectic between two seemingly opposite perspectives is used by the successful facilitator to help the group create a new synthesis. By helping the group find common ground, the facilitator helps to maximize participation in the project.

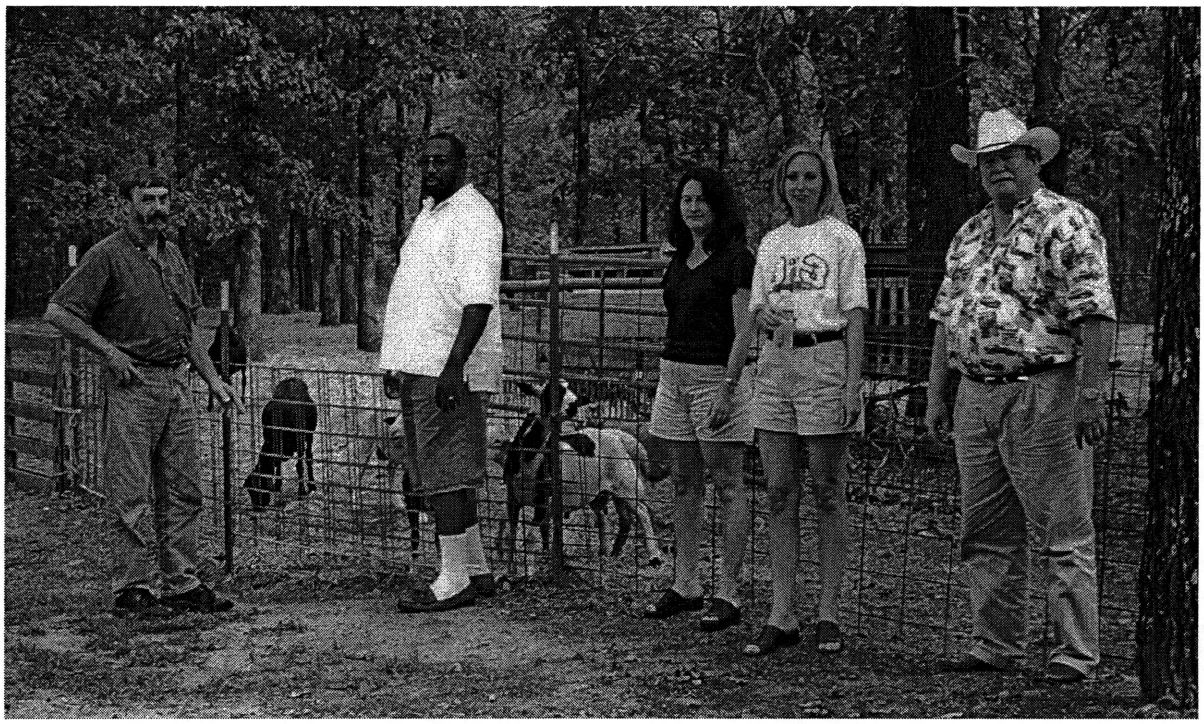

Figure 7. The best rural facilitators have a deep and personal understanding of managing chaos–often stemming from farming or owning small businesses. Ed Martsolf does both as well as being an excellent facilitator. Here the hairless sheep which make up part of his farm are seen behind a group of farmers and rural organizers Ed is working with in Arkansas..

Ed Martsolf

Petit Jean Mountain, Arkansas

You gotta be happy in chaos to be a good facilitator.

Facilitating from a mountain farm

Once when we visited with Ed in his hometown, it was a week after the biggest snowstorm in over a decade. Mentioning a picture of his daughters in a sleigh on the front page of the paper produced his response, "Two years ago the paper would have printed pictures of accidents and problems resulting from a big snow storm. Now, it's really changed. But what I really hoped for was a close-up of my daughters, but they liked the sleigh." Later we would talk about his work which led to the paper's change.

Ed had just returned from facilitating a session in Vermont where he was really inspired by the participants. "I'm getting paid to inspire them and I end up inspired by them." He is "paid to do the inspiration. Words are just empty. What you really leave behind is enthusiasm. Help them to feel they can do it."

Ed says he is a teacher and a farmer. He jokes in his seminars that he chose that combination because farmers don't work in winter and teachers don't work in summers. So you do both and you shouldn't have to work at all. His farm produces hair sheep (sells breeding stock and maintains the registry for the breed) and honey for wholesale and retail markets.

Q: How did you get started in this?

A: In 1980, had a degree in agricultural education and came to the Heifer Project International. He came to HPI headquarters in Little Rock to apply for a job in Cameroon. One of these interviewers suggested he should look into interviews down the hall being held for another job. At that time, he interviewed for an "odd job", where in a year's time he was to justify keeping the organization's 1200 acre ranch. He helped to establish it as a learning center "International Livestock Center". An outreach to volunteers and students became the central structuring point to the program. A variety of learning experiences, both formal and informal, of various time periods were available. The second structuring point was that the ranch needed to be self-supporting. The raising of livestock, processing and selling had to cover the costs of operating the ranch -- and this in turn was important to the educational outreach component. The ranch also began to be a place where innovated and new enterprises could be created and developed by the entrepreneur.

Ed took over the 1200 acre HPI International Livestock Center at Perryville with the mission of making it an asset for HPI instead of a drain. He turned it into a people place and put HPI into the education business.

In the first step, he used volunteerism as a tool to build the educational activities where regular, everyday folks could become involved, feel productive, do something worthwhile. Then in step 2, he made a farm of it so it could generate income. He created business plans for each enterprise on the farm. Each must stand on its own merit.

After both steps were complete, the Center became a formal education institution. They began selling education, finding markets, creating a marketable product.

Ed worked with the Heifer Project for 11 years until competing tensions convinced him to leave. There was some resentment building over the success of the livestock center -- it had become more than asset to the project, but also a symbol of what the project was. Not something that the leadership of the project wanted. He had been working with the Center for Holistic Resource Management, which had become a client of the Livestock Center. In 1991, he made the transition to conducting HRM seminars and left the Heifer Project. In 1992, the Centers for HRM downsized and a good portion of the seminar leaders went private rather than moving to New Mexico.

In that transition year before going on his own, he had begun to realize that "delivery wasn't quite matching the needs of the groups" he was working with. In some ways then, it was fortuitous that he went on his own and could develop the seminars as he saw fit. Ed would be developing his technique and skills for the next seven years till the present.

Facilitating seminars

Ed is flexible in how he teaches HRM, but a large majority of his "classes" are three-day seminars that participants pay $1,000 a piece. He reports that he likes to work with communities over a period of two years, and works with up to two communities at a time, but at different stages (one community is one year in, when Ed starts to work with the second). For each seminar participant, he offers free consulting for the following six months and invites people to call him. He notes that very few do so, which is the main reason he can offer this service.

Ed notes that people attend his seminars for one of two reasons. A majority of the seminar participants come for "pain relief"; they have significant problems before them and are in trouble -- looking to the seminar to help them out. Some come because they are "conference junkies" -- they are interested in learning opportunities. Ten percent come because they are "just that progressive".

Q: Why do people come to his seminars?
A: "Pain relief." Over 50% have a significant challenge. A few (<10%) are just progressive innovators and want to be ready for change. Some just like to go to trainings in the winter, but are not innovators, out front.

His seminars are "parachute work." "The most expensive and least effective education there is." Every time he does a seminar, he's looking for a group with whom he can establish a long

term relationship (e.g., a two year contract). To establish this long term relationship, he's looking to make contact with a particular type of person in his audience.

At the seminars, Ed is looking for "the right person", someone who is "able and ready to change", and has a "good profile" and is a "good example" for the others. He notes that the right person is someone he "clicks" with and "something stands out" about them -- to make them good for a long-term project (a.k.a "main project"). This person also has leadership qualities in the group. They are someone who listens and speaks the common language of the group. They have excellent communication skills and their interaction with others encourages participation and investment in the group. The right person is also someone who becomes "excited by it" -- HRM.

He's also looking for: a "good profile". A person who's situation that would mean something to others who'd look at it.

"There are a hundred different ways to find them. It boils down to some chemistry gets going, something just clicks with them."

Ed says that while group organizing is not the main purpose of the seminars, he prefers to see it happen. Group organizing allows individuals to help each other continue the education process within a peer group setup. This reinforces not only the lessons of the seminar, but is fundamental to the teachings of HRM.

Facilitation techniques

Ed jokes that he has dreamed of having a seminar that consists solely of break-time, but as it is, it is important to have breaks so that there can be discussion, reflection and more informal and valuable sharing between participants. Ed installs "feedback loops" in the seminars, enabling him to get a sense of what's happening with the participants.

One of the problems with standard Holistic Resource Management (HRM) training is too much theory, philosophy. Not near enough practical, day to day, concrete applications. Engagement and buzz tells what people are interested in.

"It's hard to get honest feedback from farmers. They're too polite." The best feedback comes in informal situations later. Then you get comments like "way too much thinking for me."

Engagement is also another tenet of his techniques/modules -- again, to see what people are thinking -- where they are at in the seminar -- "what is coming out of their heads". Later, Ed will say that it is important that people hear their own voices in the group setting, particularly early on. About three fourths of participants, in Ed's experience, are intimidated by groups settings and speaking to a group of people. Ed sees his job as making it as easy, comfortable and successful for these people to speak as soon as possible in the seminars. With a relaxed and welcomed environment, intimacy has a better chance of being expressed. This somewhat seemingly simple outcome having people hear the sound of their own voices -- is invaluable to the success of the seminar.

an effective means of establishing a working and workable atmosphere. He is not comfortable with formal introductions and greeting circles.

Ed notes that in responding to such feedback as "way too much thinking for me" and "not enough practical stuff", he is interested in having the first and third day indoors and the second day spent on a farm.

The seminar's structure varies with the group and it is important to Ed that he is flexible enough to construct a seminar that meets the group's needs and interests -- that it is applicable/appropriate to the group. However, the modules of the seminar are fairly consistent for all of them and they are based on HRM teachings.

The basics of HRM:

- **goal setting**
- **Decision-making and testing decisions against the goal**
- **Practical applications of biological and financial planning.**
- **Then how to function as a group and interact with the community.**

The first half of the first day involves the entire group in a goal-setting process.. Making and testing decisions. Practical applications of biological and financial systems and how they can work together. It is to be as non-threatening and non-partisan as possible. The goal is to create a "learning center" of the group participants, as peer group learning is one of the best ways for people to learn, retain and be innovative -- people are really social learners. When each person is a part of each other's management team, a farm's operations will be better off than if it is just one person. "In rural America today, farmers have become/encouraged to competitors. At the end of the seminar, it is Ed's goal that each person sees each other as a collaborator." Only a peer group can be realistic in expectations, tends to more honest, and business-based. Weak-link analysis.

For the longer term relationships, Ed tries to encourage development of a type of group along the lines of the Argentine Model. In this model, the peer group forms for the purpose of being part of each other's management team just as if you'd hired an outside consultant. Participants invest in an informal group which provides:

- Hardball evaluation and analysis, really cutthroat "weak-link-a-thons"
- Social with families after hard stuff.
- Uses weak link analysis:
  - * Everyone has much in common.
  - * Noone is using all the resources available,
  - * HRM helps us look at all the resources.
  - * Each has a weak link.
  - * Chance of me finding it are low.
  - * Chance of you finding it are high.

The goal of Argentine Model is to lead participants to want to move around to each other's farms and do some good.

One of first goals for the group is to create commonalities between everyone in the group. Some of the principles that build on each other:

- no-one is using all their resources
- with all my abilities I can't see it all -- that's why I need everyone's perspective
- no matter how good or bad our operations are working, there is always a weak-link
- the chances are better of someone else finding it are much better than me

Whoever is organizing develops a simple series of questions leading people to want to visit other farms if enough are Identified and there is enough leadership year-round they may call back for follow-up.

Beginning the seminars

People come in the door to the seminar with their heads full of what they just left. Let them stay there. Trends and Consequences is a good transition because it puts them in the role of expert on their town. He assigns small groups a decade and asks them what happened in you county during that decade (40- 50s, 60-70s, 80-90s) and what were the consequences of what happened?

Start as easy and as "close to the door" as possible (start off with where their needs came from). Introduction -- pair up with someone they don't know and have to introduce each other based on one of two questions that Ed poses. (What would you keep if you could only keep one thing? If you only had $100 , what would you spend it on?) Introduction can NOT include their title, and should reveal what is unique about their operation. Illuminates values, but more importantly everyone gets to hear their own voice right away and meet someone new. This usually reveals more commonalities than people ever expect at the outcome -- "this person thinks like I do". While the introductions are going on, Ed is tracking key words, which he uses later during the values-clarification process in the afternoon.

Then there's Trends & Consequences, which gives everyone an informative role and allows everyone to be an expert in some way. It's an exercise that also brings out the history and sense of place for a community of farmers.

After this, it gets a little more specific and sophisticated. Topics covered include:

- Value-clarification,
- why are you here.
- What is motivating the decision-making?
- how do you make your decisions?

He begins value clarification with flip charts he prepared from morning, with key words

He begins value clarification with flip charts he prepared from morning, with key words scattered all over it. "This is what you said are your most important values."

Leaders identify themselves. They emerge and take over the class. Successful semenars as interactive as possible, designated leaders emerge and are successful in both the in-door and the out-door environments over the three day seminar. Emerging leaders have a natural ability to see characteristics of the land and connect back to the people and have enough experience to be credible.

"Local leaders emerge on the first day. But on the second day, on the farm, you really sort them out. You find the people with natural abilities on the land and to connect with people. On the farm, you'll see the natural people skills and whether they have experience enough to be credible. Some folks are very wise, but folks don't pay any attention to them."

Ed says that when people tell him "Ed, you wrecked my sleep last night", then he knows that some change/transition is happening -- Ed owes this to losing one set of assumptions and starting to take on another, and/or dropping the denial and illusions that they had about either their business or their family or even their own values.

Ed says he knows when the "group is cooking" because it is "buzzing". The participants are "loosened up, they have dropped their protective body language and their bodies are opening up and they spend decreasing amount of time between thinking and speaking."

His seminars are set-up to be a series of three seminars of three days each. By the 3rd seminar, Ed notes, half of the original group is still together, but they are trusting and accepting each other. When it's really good, they bring their accounting books and "open up their books to each other". The competitive attitude (that your neighbors are your competitors) is about 90% of the energy in the room on the very first day. By the end of the seminar, the atmosphere and attitudes have changed to that of your neighbor as collaborator (about 75%) -- and are starting to consider working together in some initial ways, such as marketing efforts and fieldwork.

He tries to get collaboration and competition balanced. Trying to get to 50/50 collaboration/competition. You know you're getting there when they start showing their vulnerabilities.

By the third seminar, half of the original group is there, but there are a good number of new people as well.

Skills of good facilitators

You gotta be happy in chaos to be a good facilitator. The good facilitator is adept at managing chaos, seeing order and possibilities in mass of conflicting desires and impulses.)

Q: What's it like to be a facilitator?
A: Ed says that he feels like he is "winging it", but that his seven years of experience have

given him confidence despite "not knowing the next word after the introductions". Upon further discussion, Ed reveals that he can't know the next word, since being flexible and responsive to the group means letting them inform him of what he should do next. In fact, the introductions are designed to reveal what is on the minds of the participants. The reasons that brought them to the seminar are often revealed here. He notes that he has "the modules for the seminar clearly in my mind and I know every group will need to use them." "That's the flexibility factor -- it's like a dance -- I live in terror where it might not come to me." By using the modules and reading the group's interactions, words and "buzz", Ed gets a "sense of what they are ready for or not."

Ed says his work is partly sales. I Gotta find the customer's hot button. What motivates them? What are their needs?" His job is to get folks fired up. "Turn on the green light for them thinking about possibilities." They realize they are not using all their resources. Turn the atmosphere positive, upward, "blow oxygen on it, so a fire comes up." Bringing in a story of someone who took a risk helps here. Jump into stories. "Your job is to create atmosphere. Atmosphere is contagious." A good facilitator has to have the spirit in them. Can't fake it. Before trying to lead someone else, you have to have your own experience base, your own stories. Set an attitude. Put on a mask which is postive, generous and if you wear it enough, you'll be positive and generous." You want to create an atmosphere in the group so that participants know they will be stepping out of the negative and into a positive atmosphere. Then they'll want to come back.

Ed is a humble man, often stating that he's just holding his breath until someone discovers that he's "not really a facilitator." It requires total concentration and attention to keep the group moving forward in ways that work best for them. For instance, it is important for Ed to use as much of the stories and information about the participants as he can to accomplish the modules of his seminars. Speaking with Ed in person about his work, he gives the impression of a quiet and reserved man, but as the conversation progresses, and we, the interviewers, share more of ourselves and our viewpoints, Ed becomes increasingly animated and the conversation becomes an equal dialogue.

Ed will also say that he doesn't know what it takes to make a good facilitator or principles of good facilitation, but when we start to talk more deeply about the seminars he has rich insights. "There's no story better than your story". "I'm making connections and coordinating stories". "It's your job [as facilitator] to set the atmosphere. If the groups does it, then you'll loose out." "Can't fake it when you're a facilitator leading a group." I don't really use case studies and hypothetical situations anymore, I try to replace them with real stories (my experiences) and stories from the group.

When Ed is working, he's at "150%". I find that it can be major stress to run a seminar. "I'm at 150% when I work. It requires "mental discipline to be totally tuned to the group from beginning to end"

The job can be quite tiring, one has to like traveling and being self-employed. It has a good mix of being inside and outside. "I don't work well at a desk."

Ed has mentored people. "There's about "dozen out there now" The mentor relationship has been a good experience for Ed, "really, we learn together how to do it." The Trainee approachs Ed and then arranges a seminar for Ed to teach. They need to sell the lesson and make the phone calls and after all that you'll know the material. "It's very hard work" arranging a seminar. We talk about funding the seminar, how much it will cost and how much to charge for tuition. The mentor and mentee both get paid (50-50). It's still up to the mentee to create as many experiences as possible for both their creditiability level and for developing their facilitation skills.

Ed is highly ethical and feels strongly that the seminar attendees deserve the best facilitation as possible that will lead to long-term success and continued growth. Ed not only has faith that people can and want to work together, but he has a deeper feeling for the group and the individuals in it. He repeatedly noted that he feels a responsibility toward the people that aren't engaging and interacting with the rest of the group. His attitude toward the groups are expressed by statements such as: "People are naturally brilliant not dumb." "Three people generating ideas is a better yield than one teacher or instructor." "People have an innate ability to think outside the narrow." "Don't be surprised to discover that the person who has been quiet in the group has the best idea.."

People skills

A good facilitator needs to have good "people skills". This means "respecting their time and financial investment to be there. It means wanting and encouraging folks to talk". It requires a sensitivity to "correctly respond to people." "You've got to be able to listen to the words and read between the lines." It also means "not being judgemental" and "not making someone self-conscious." A facilitator "starts with where they're at", keeping the seminar relevant to the group, such as farm operations and geography. Credibility is important not only so that people will have faith that you are the person for the job, but also to assure them that they are OK and boost self-confidence during the entire seminar.

"He's a bit like social work, you need to enable group participants to feel OK and confident and prove to them that you are listening to them. Tieing their stories and comments together is one way to show this. The facilitator's job is to help connect people's abilities and see the potential among participants, often before they see it."

Respond correctly, not too much, not too little. The harder you listen, your eyes are tired at night. Maintain control of the seminar's atmosphere (keep it positive and supportive) and the focus. Keeping an eye on the big picture and know how and when to move on from a discussion. Ready to share personal experiences

> You can't train people to be facilitators, but you can help them do a better job.

What is your current local project?
"Envision 20/20. We meet once a month in this "small enterprise region". Two years ago there was two major businesses closed down, firing their employees. Envision 20/20 had just

begun and began "infecting every business". They owe a lot to Vaughn Grisham from Oxford. He is the primary motivator for their project. A group from the 20/20 project will be going to see him in Oxford and on to Tupelo. He has several communities he works with. The project has generated a lot of hope in building the community economically after some solid facilitation of community development.

Take home lesson

Bottom line for Ed: you can't train people to be facilitators, but you can help them do a better job.

Managing Chaos

"The letter of the law kills;
the spirit of the law gives life."
II Cor. 3:6

Leadership is not a matter of command and control. It is the evocation and alignment of Spirit. Spirit cannot be commanded, it may be invited . . . Spirit rarely, if ever responds to answers, but rather to questions, which create the nutrient Open Space in which it may flow. Vision poses the question that creates the space into which Spirit flows, and becomes powerful . . . Harrison Owen

A farmer's life is managing chaos.

"I don't have time to get involved in theory. I'm solving problems." In fact anyone seeking to make a living from natural resources is managing chaos. Far from ever reaching the "balance of nature", natural phenomena are dynamic systems which never reach homeostasis.

It's comforting to believe in a "balance of nature."

Robert MacArthur, a dean of the field of ecology in the 50s and 60s posited a "balance of nature." His models supposed that an ideal climax community would eventually arise to fit any set of physical and climactic condition. This community of plant and animal populations would vary around the "equilibrium" which represented the most efficient use of food resources. In the 70s, however, ecologists began to question how often equilibrium is actually observed. What was actually observed was variation with superficial resemblance to oscillation, but the equilibrium itself never actually occurred.

All environments in all ecosystems are patchy in space and variable in time. Any equilibrium is only an average that never actually exists (Reice, 1994). A modification of equilibrium theory arose (dynamic equilibrium: Huston, 1979) to deal with these realizations, but many ecologists are rapidly abandoning the equilibrium approach because it doesn't describe or predict natural systems. Reice (1994) summarizes this perspective:

> In some systems the return frequency of disturbance is so long that the impression of equilibrium conditions develops. This is what underlies the traditional idea of climax communities. However, careful observation reveals that disturbance is ubiquitous and frequent relative to the life spans of the dominant taxa.

MacArthur's last student, William Schaffer, has led the movement to abandon the equilibrium approach in ecology and bring in chaos theory. Every organism in an ecosystem is a unique point of unpredictability (Schaffer, 1986) striving to manage its environment to make it more comfortable for its self and its offspring. Populations do balance each other by their competition. Wolves numbers will decline when they eat too many caribou. But the populations are not striving for equilibrium, but to expand their influence.

In agriculture, range management workers are joining this movement because rangelands often do not follow typical patterns of succession but have sudden, discontinuous, unpredictable changes in vegetation (Lockwood and Lockwood, 1993).

Social scientists are beginning to adopt chaos theory to understand the unpredictability of social behavior (Gregersen and Sailer, 1993). Due to the negative connotations of the term chaos, some social scientists prefer the term **transformation systems** to stress the key feature of chaotic systems: the ability to dynamically transform themselves (Loye and Eisler, 1987:58).

Approachs to managing chaos

John von Neuman is described as the father of computers and systems analysis. He contended:

> "The sciences do not try to explain, they hardly even try to interpret, they mainly make models. By a model is meant a mathematical construct which, with the addition of certain verbal interpretations, describes observed phenomena. The justification of such a mathematical construct is solely and precisely that it is expected to work."

One of von Neumann's principal claims was that **systems analysis would be able to not just predict, but control any complex phenomenon (such as the weather)** if only enough computing power was arrayed to fully describe each component and enough information about initial conditions was available. During the heyday of this belief, in the 50s and 60s, the biggest and fastest Cray supercomputers were supplied with data pouring in hourly from every nation on the globe. The weather was one area where von Neumann explicitly predicted control would result. Scientists who share this assumption still argue for ever greater computing capacity and for sending airplanes up to lay down smoke screens or seed clouds to push weather into the desired mode.

The results have been somewhat less than overpowering. Weather forecasts have become statistically better than chance, but are only speculative beyond 2-3 days and virtually worthless beyond that. Faster computers often just make the wrong predictions earlier than slow computers (MacRae, 1992:274). von Neumann himself began to realize this. Just as he was early to appreciate the potential power of computers, so was he early to question his formerly steadfast faith in quantitative, mathematical understandings of Nature.

"Just as Greek and Sanscrit are historical fact and not absolute logical necessities, it is

only reasonable to assume that logics and mathematics are similarly historically accidental forms of expression. . . [W]hen we talk mathematics we may be discussing a secondary language built on the prime language used by [Nature]." (quoted in MacRae, 1992:370)

Others state it differently. Holistic systems theory is one of the many areas of science where mathematics does not reach (Rapaport, 1986). It studies the many phenomena which are "noncomputable" (Penrose, 1989:216ff).

Unfortunately, von Neumann's untimely death prevented him from developing his later insight as fully as he had developed the systems analysis approach. This enabled his mature epiphany to be ignored by systems analysts with who are blinded by faith in reaching an mathematicalic understanding of natural systems.

This faith comes naturally since the hallmarks of the scientific revolution are the ability to make accurate quantitative predictions and to replicate experiments with the same result.
The way this is done is to contruct models or algorithms, test them, come up with new ones, etc. Since this approach has worked so well with so many phenomena, we stick with it, even when it regularly fails. Weather new computer models, not increasing predictability at all. Only better radar is helping. But this approach fails in so many situations. A new approach is needed.

The seeming chaos of unpredictability is adaptive

In fact the unpredictability of chaotic systems is adaptive, whether in human brains or ecological systems. The ability to adapt is the ability to respond to changing conditions. The systems which are best able to adapt are the ones which are least locked into particular patterns of activity.

If that is correct, then we need less to be concerned with process and achieving specific results. The most adaptive processes and their results will be unpredictable and chaotic by nature. The systems facilitator does not need to understand everything about how the group works, all he has to do is create the right conditions (in many cases attitudes) within the group. Lee Meyer's profile illustrates on way of doing this.

This perspective on systems facilitation means losing control over outcomes. You don't know what will come out of the group. You just set the stage with certain assumptions, values and attitudes, make sure these maintained, and enjoy the results.

On the surface, this approach conflicts with the conclusions of a multitude of psychological experiments which indicate that people are stressed, unhappy and even depressed with they aren't in control. Since chaotic situations are out of control, people in

such groups should be stressed, unhappy and depressed. The opposite is true. If people can get over the initial queasiness lack of control on the system, they appreciate the joy of discovery and the success of the group.

Excessive order is pathological.

An increasing number of medical disorders can be alleviated by inducing chaos. Epilepsy is a too-ordered brain, all firing at once. Add some more.
Ditto (a Southern researcher) has found evidence that excessive order, not chaos, may be the cause of nonfunctional behavior in some systems (e.g. epilepsy). Ditto and his colleagues are reported to have developed "anti-control" algorithms to detect and maintain chaos in biological systems (Regalado, 1995).

Control often looks attractive on the surface, but is always limiting and can be self-defeating. Game theorists are fond of putting fraternity boys in pairs and telling them that every time one of them can beat the other they will get a dollar. Most pairs struggle to control and dominate each other to get the dollar. Rarely the frat boys see that if they each just let the other win every other time, both can maximize their winnings with little effort.

Those in power in depressed rural areas often have this same need for control. They inhibit all change unless they are in control. Even if their portion would grow, they keep the economy from growing unless they are in control. In one of the poorest regions of the U.S., the Delta, the indigenous music is the blues. A recurring theme of the blues is that one person in power–"the man"--makes the decisions. Seeing no possible way to change this, the blues chronicles the violence and depression which results.

In the rural South, this attitude is sometimes confused with racism. But since this infection is found in most underdeveloped areas of the world, and respects no color or creed, many now call it the plantation mentality. Anyone who lives on the plantation or in that bureaucracy, whether planter's son or slave, is exposed to the attitude.

Once you're exposed, it's easy to become infected because it is such a natural attitude. If one person is greedy and selfish, he may get more stuff than you. If you don't watch out, he may take advantage of you. A good defense is to match his greediness and selfishness. The attitude then becomes a self-perpetuating cycle. Some see the destruction caused by that attitude and insist: "If only I were in power, things would change."

Such a statement reveals how we share this assumption that there is a defined system with someone in control. The real problem is not who is in power at a particular moment. If it were, we could just wait until the power brokers die out. The problem is the attitude that infects the members of the group–whether it's a plantation, a company, a government agency or a city's government. Those who realize the power in managing chaos don't try to become the president of IBM, for example. They start a new company where an entirely new

approach is possible. They don't try to become head of a government agency where nearly all the employees know they will never be fired. The systems facilitator starts an NGO to address the same issues.

"Town air makes free." German maxim

Rural areas are seen by many as notoriously conservative. Certainly change (both bad and good) is often kept out. But many rural areas have leaders which try to promote positive, altruistic attitudes and a love of learning and not try to control economic activity. In short, they manage the chaos of underdevelopment by instilling a few simple, basic attitudes and beliefs and then facilitating, not controlling, the emergence of new enterprises. Often a local newspaper takes on the facilitating role. Charlotte Schexnayder's profile is a good case study. A broader analysis, taking a newspaper editor in Tupelo as a starting point, will be provided in Vaughn Grisham's profile which follows.

Chaos in social movements, governments and entrepreneurship

Social movements seem to also follow the basic model of deterministic chaos. Huge numbers of citizens adopt certain basic simple beliefs which energize them and result in totally unexpected societal changes. Once a revolution begins, no one knows where it will end up. Some social movements also have been influenced by systems facilitators, George Washington, with his refusal to take absolute power when it was offered and reluctance to take any power, has systems facilitator characteristics. Lenin, with his ruthless co-optation of a progressive social movement, represents the plantation mentality at its most intense.

Government employees, in general, are not systems facilitators. The bureaucrat and the entrepreneur mix about like oil and water. Bureaucrats often don't see the difference because the entrepreneurs they meet are trying to please them in order to overcome some regulatory hurdle. If you are a bureaucrat and believe your worldview is the same as an entrepreneur's, you need to go visit with some entrepreneurs whom you don't regulate.

Nearly everyone recognizes that economic development can't be done by government. Entrepreneurs create new businesses, not government employees. Entrepreneurs must be at the heart of any economic development effort. Yet in areas like the Delta, government must be involved due to the plantation mentality in the private sector. So the question we are faced with is how to meld two groups which differ so much in worldview, lack trust, are polarized, especially when no one has, or will ever have, an algorithm for development in the Delta.

Entrepreneurs trust those who understand their situation and share their view of the world, not "experts" sitting behind a desk, much less true-believers touting a particular nostrum or ideology.

Managing chaos: enhancing impulses selection

In the heart disease cardiac arrhythmia (heart flutters), the individual cells of the heart can be extremely healthy. However, the cells are not firing in union, but at random. An electric shock can induce these cells to fire at the same time. The impulses of the heart cells seem chaotic until they are reorganized by the central nervous system or by shock. Applying more energy to a chaotic system often makes it less chaotic. The natural tendency is healthy systems is toward self-organization. If enough energy is present, new organizations, enterprises, businesses will be organized.

The farmer, the businessman, is just a pratical guy, managing chaos–using what comes up to piece together the order he wants. In that sense the facilitator and the farmer are similar: each is just focused on making his system work. Both gain the most useful knowledge by comparing their experience to their peers. But neither has to completely understand the process, it may even be impossible since every situation is unique and not replicable.

Hard systems, on the other hand, are algorithms--stringing together a story in lines and boxes. If this happens, do this. The best hard systems can provide is an algorithm to give advice in every possible situation their maker can think up. algorithms. We place them on our environment to try to bring control it.

One last problem. Not only are the units in the system unpredictability in their interaction. In addition, new unpredictable units are coming in all the time.

Open systems and chaos.

The reason systems analysis has not predicted natural phenomena well, according to von Bertalanffy (1968) is the failure to "deal adequately with open systems, the class to which all living systems belong."

All natural ecosystems seem to have two key "goals": to accumulate nutrients and to last (Woodmansee, 1984). All subsystems within any natural ecosystem seem to share these goals. These goals can be accomplished because natural systems are open. As Odum (1989) summarized:

> *In Nature, closed systems with complete isolation are rare and temporary. A state far from equilibrium is maintained through the open flow of energy and matter across the system boundaries. The ecosystem is organized to capture and concentrate energy and nutrients.*

The flow of solar energy (in various forms) into natural systems makes self-organization possible (Prigogine and Stengers, 1984).

But it also makes predictability impossible. Algorithms which depend on predictability and control are unrealiable. In agriculture, an example of the inadequacy of conventional agriculture is the logic behind reliance on pesticides. The use of pesticides is all about control, which can never be achieved. Understanding and working with natural systems is the only way to manage the chaos of insect infestation. Pest control still a popular term, though. Want to believe we can control those organisms.

> *A field with an abundance of the spider Lycosa pseudoannulata will have few green rice leafhoppers. A rice field wiped clean of L. pseudoannulata by insecticide used to control the leafhopper is much more likely to suffer devastation via leafhopper.*

The spider-leafhopper-rice system is open. The borders of the system are defined only by where action can be taken to control subsystems

So we must build our system on the underlying reality which is not solid concepts, but continually shifting reality: chaos. We must therefore go beyond any concept we have to true communication. The following profiles explore managing chaos in very specific situations.

Wayne Mattingly

Owensboro, Kentucky

The successful project is a relationship where you are as committed as the growers.

It Could Happen Anywhere

Wayne Mattingly says there's nothing special about Daviess County, no advantage of "geography or talent," that's made it possible for 75 local producers to join forces to command a premium in the feeder calf market. In fact, a few years ago, Western Kentucky had a reputation for poor quality cattle and the lowest prices in the state. According to Wayne, the county agent who "ate, slept, and bled" the Green River Cattle Sale project for two years, Daviess County has only the good fortune of committed cattleman who were willing to open their minds, do their homework, and put themselves on the line for its success. Since the first preconditioned sale in February 1999, the group's persistence has built a thriving biannual event, raising the bar on local beef quality and bringing competitive prices on more than 2000 cattle per sale from Western Kentucky and Southern Indiana.

Frustration

In addition to a reputation for substandard cattle, most county producers were too small to be of interest to buyers dealing 800-1000 head at a time. In the mid-90s, the Daviess County Cattleman's Association began investigating opportunities to improve quality and bring a higher market price through some sort of cooperative marketing program. Wayne thinks that although market conditions had been poor for a long time, it took a critical amount of cumulative frustration to galvanize the group. Also, a new generation of leadership had recently emerged in the group and was gathering momentum when Wayne was approached to help explore the alternatives. He coordinated a series of meetings conducted by various UK Extension specialists to familiarize the group with the basics of implementing a health management program and to begin reviewing marketing options.

The Research Phase

Beef specialist Dr. John Johns, livestock marketing specialist Dr. Lee Meyer, and cattle grader John Hanly helped to gather information on different systems that might fit the group's needs. They found several marketing alliances operating across the state and in Tennessee and Iowa that helped generate ideas. "We knew we didn't want to re-invent the wheel," says Wayne, as they proceeded to develop a plan and organize their efforts. "We wanted to choose the best aspects of each [successful alliance]...I'm not a genius

with original ideas, but I can copy with the best of them." Researching established alliances helped the group to identify the need for a systematic and consistent health program, and for a way to pre-grade and combine a large group of cattle.

The Health Program and The Learning Curve

The key to obtaining a premium at the sale was to offer uniform lots of about 100 cattle, so the producers had to come up with a way to assemble these lots before the sale. A pre-sale grade is now given to all of the cattle to be sold, with a state certified cattle grader and the group leaders visiting each farm. For many producers, the pre-sale grade has been a great learning tool, a private tutorial in evaluating the quality and needs of their own cattle. This practice ensures quality, and also helps the farmers not feel like grading is random, mysterious, or unfair. Before the DCCA began the sale and the accompanying health program, Wayne says most producers didn't have a clue how their cattle would be graded when sold. Now he says 95% could give him an accurate grade if asked.

The Green River group used the Kentucky CPH guidelines to develop its own health program. The CPH requirements pertain to weaning periods, vaccinations, lice and worm treatments, castration and dehorning, and several other standard procedures. DCCA went extended the weaning requirements and added an additional shot. Wayne organized a meeting of participants early in the season to review the requirements, feed recommendations, and the necessary paperwork. The results of the health program have raised the standard for local cattle quality, and the program has been adopted by those marketing outside of the Green River operation.

Trust and Credibility

In the past, the trend has been for small producers to take the lead from large-scale operations, which was problematic in convincing some of the more skeptical to consign. Why isn't Mr. X consigning if it's such a great opportunity, they'd ask. Wayne says that recruitment had multiple challenges: the small producers had to see that the traditional leaders in the local industry didn't need the sale, and the more successful mid-size producers were worried that poor quality would drive prices down for their better cattle. Wayne credits the association president and other leaders with joining the sale as "a statement" and setting an example for the others. Through the process, "non-traditional leaders--" smaller producers for whom the endeavor was a matter of survival—emerged and did much of the organizing legwork. Wayne played a subtle role in encouraging several growers to run for office in the association, and notes that a facilitator can help identify and nurture leadership in formerly low-profile participants.

> Often a group starts with *how* it wants to accomplish things before it's clarified *what* it will do.

Facilitation Skills

Wayne received some formal training in group facilitation, which has reinforced much of his hands-on experience:

- He learned to help groups distinguish between goal and means to the goal; often a group starts with *how* it wants to accomplish things before it's clarified *what* it will do.
- He learned to make sure that everyone gets heard, as it's easy to hear just the most aggressive or confident voices in the crowd.
- Basic habits of good facilitation include "not walking into a room with a big plan," but "being open, listening, including, directing."
- Leaders can set the stage for more efficient problem solving: at one productive meeting Wayne broke a group of 30 farmers from six counties into five groups, each consisting of a farmer from each county. Then he split the exploratory questions and issues among the groups, spreading the work, relying on the farmers to represent their counties, and preventing unruly and repetitive argument among the full crowd.

> Never walk into a room with a big plan.

Local Infrastructure

Initially the group agreed that selling through their own Kentuckiana Livestock Market was out of the question. They considered a satellite auction and other approaches before becoming convinced that local infrastructure was an absolute condition for success. The hard work of ensuring quality calves and coordinating the load would be futile if they couldn't make a decent sale. But several things convinced him and the reluctant cattleman that going local was worth a try:

- New management was very cooperative, and provided a "clean slate."
- They had formed a solid group that could leverage its power and arrange the sale on its own terms. "They were willing to walk away."
- The group had dedicated itself to improving quality and assembling volume. Courting the order buyer with these distinctions should be the potential strategy, not bypassing the stockyard.
- Using the local site, with its existing facilities and equipment, made good financial sense.

The Group Matures

Once the producers agreed to begin negotiations with Kentuckiana, Wayne took a step back into the group's shadow. Wary of being perceived as a meddler, a broker, or further straining the historically rough relationship between cattlemen and stockyard, he encouraged the group leaders from behind the scenes. Knowing that they were in a good

position to bargain, and could offer a mutually beneficial deal, the group persisted through several arduous stages of negotiations and finally settled on good terms. Wayne credits the group with being flexible and not too stubborn to compromise. Some of these compromises, such as giving up a 2% shrink rate to the buyer on each head, have proved to be great marketing tools and helped make a name for the Green River sale.

The most noteworthy aspect of the process is that the group took on the responsibility of finding buyers and creating its own market. Wayne says he was amazed to find that there was no distribution list available. KCA, KDA, the stockyard, and several producers had a few names here and there, but no one had compiled a comprehensive database. (Now there's a good electronic list available from the Livestock Marketing Division of USDA.) The group came up with its own list of more than 40 prospects, faxed and sent flyers with sale details and health information, and cold-called the buyers to introduce themselves and invite them to the sale. They sent out pre-sale orders and then followed up with each buyer several times, reminding them of the times and giving directions.

An Historic Event

The day of the sale, jokes Wayne, most of the county showed up, half to see them fail and half to see them succeed. The group was worried that Eastern Livestock, who had previously monopolized Kentuckiana sales, would be the only buyer. About a quarter of their prospects showed, a handful did most of the bidding, and Eastern did dominate the sale, but at an astonishingly premium price. The sale brought 30 producers about $60 per head above the Bluegrass average that week. Some producers griped that letting Eastern get the majority of the cattle wasn't much of a victory, but Wayne says the other bidders "kept Eastern's hands up." The 2000 sale also brought competition out for Eastern, averaging $95 per head above the Bluegrass average. In addition, 45 more producers joined the sale in 2000, expanding to a two-day sale and moving 2200 cattle. The group is currently exploring cooperative purchasing and other ways to expand and strengthen the alliance. There is tremendous potential for sharing this regional enterprise model and developing statewide and national communication, resource, and infrastructure networks to increase market opportunities.

A Pound of Flesh

The group had a tireless champion in Wayne, who says he thinks about the relationship as a bargain he struck. If the cattlemen were willing to give it their all, to "get down in the trenches," then he would be willing to stick by them. It's easy for an agent to help out at the "great idea" stage, say good luck, and move on to the next project. An agent must commit not just to getting a project started, but also to maintaining involvement through its often tedious, slow, frustrating development

"You have to take a personal risk...and put your own reputation on the line," says Wayne,

remembering that he couldn't sleep the night before the first sale. After experiencing the sense of achievement that comes with participating in a project of this size, Wayne feels confident that he'll choose this role again. Much of his role is just helping the leaders of the effort persist through years of setbacks and clearing hurdles.

Wayne recalls the words of an early mentor: "Stay in your county, do your job, be reliable." The wisdom of the advice lies in cultivating relationships and keeping people foremost in one's mind. "When a farmer calls me with a question about his tobacco, he knows I was by his farm the other day and noticed it and paid attention." This kind of rapport is what makes an agent able to efficiently assist a group and to cultivate internal leadership.

Too many "great solutions" for "fabricated needs" are handed down from Washington, making "perfect sense until they get to the farm." Rather than starting with sweeping solutions that "trickle down to nothing," Wayne insists that an idea must come from within the group to be worthwhile. Then the group must prove its commitment, as the cattlemen did by implementing the health program, negotiating the sale, and coordinating the marketing campaign. Given a homegrown idea and member commitment, the group has the essential ingredients to create a successful enterprise. As in the case of the Green River Auction, the results sometimes surpass the goal: not only does the sale move more cattle at higher prices, but it's educated producers, created an incentive for better management practices, and set a precedent for collaborative enterprise within the cattle industry and beyond.

Paul Teague

Jonesboro, Arkansas

Facilitation is integrating marketing and production with the right farmers.

Marketing is personal relationships

Paul grew up in the produce business. His "folks are in produce and have done all sorts, from growing, to packing and delivery". This included buying from other farmers and reselling it to "suppliers." At six he was already growing crops. He notes that his father, Jack Teague, brought up Paul and his brother to learn the family business, involving them in the farm's operations early and continuously throughout their lives. He strongly urged and supported the children to attend college, and Paul not only attended University of Arkansas, but went on to get a Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics at Texas A&M.

In college, Paul met his wife to be, Tina, and together they would move to the Rio Grande Valley, "where produce happens in Texas", partially because Paul wanted to stay in touch with the produce industry. Tina was and still is a plant scientist.

In 1988, a number of farmers had contacted Arkansas State University asking for help in marketing their produce. The farmers had identified this as their greatest hurdle. The Dean of Ag responded by writing a four-year grant to establish a produce-brokerage (Delta Fresh) to help Arkansas farmers sell their crops. The brokerage was to become an independent company after the grant term.

One of the farmers involved in the grant met Tina in Texas when he was doing some research there and word got to Paul. Within a year, Paul and Tina were both working for Arkansas State and Paul was overseeing the grant and developing "Delta Fresh" into a brokerage firm. Paul's initial clients were the farmers who had initially contacted the university, including one cooperative (Great River Road). Paul started attending conventions and conferences as often as he could, making contacts with other farmers and suppliers. He soon rediscovered old connections with a number of the suppliers. "I was selling to the sons of families that my family had been working well with." He noted that he a number of "cold calls" to people he didn't have history with were also successful.

As the grant progressed, some of the farmers were not able to produce the quantity or the quality that he needed in order to sell to suppliers. He notes that this made him seek out other growers and to nurture those farmers expressing an interest in growing a new crop. Some of the trends at this time; "farmer could see the writing on the wall, the money in cotton was getting less each year and the price for soybeans was also getting low. It was just a matter of time." Farmers actively interested in growing alternative crops than rice, cotton and soybeans became Paul's bread and butter.

When Delta Fresh began, all the farmers were already producing at some level versus just thinking of it. He sold their crops for a good price, working with them to grow a quality crop. Paul notes that his experience in growing produce has been priceless in his ability to help the farmers get started. It is also essential to his ability to sell the crop to the appropriate entity. For instance, fresh market spinach to fresh market dealers and lesser quality spinach to canners, where appearance is not as important.

Problems with cooperatives

By 1989, Paul could see that Great River Road Co-op not going to make it, due to "incompetence". They couldn't grow enough and couldn't pack it efficiently enough to compete.

GRR coop was not successful, because board of directors had no financial investment in it. In contrast, a tomato co-op in southern Arkansas is quite successful. It consists of a small, highly-selected group of growers who can deliver on quality and quantity. Each grower has a considerable investment of at least one share at 20K per. The managers are also excellent salesmen and invited Paul in if he would be able to help them get into one of the most successful produce suppliers in the nation, Capital City (Des Moines, IA). As salesmen they are successful in "sniffing out opportunities and are ready to move on a deal. They will take on some of the risk themselves. They are now doing 10% of their business through Capital City, which will handle the hard stuff, like number twos and smaller sized tomatoes."

Arkansas State University permitted and encouraged Paul begin his own part-time marketing and to recruit new growers. This permitted him to build the business to the point he could it was self-supporting. He developed an independent watermelon business.

By the time the grant funding ran out in June 1993, Paul was ready to move the business to a totally private concern. One day he closed the ASU office and opened his own office the next day. By this time, buyers had begun asking for Delta Fresh.

Facilitating diversification: the case of watermelons

Once Paul sold his first loads of watermelon, other watermelon growers were finding Paul. His reputation as a good representative was spreading around and helping to attract growers. In 1991-2 he was known as the "watermelon man", joining the Missouri Watermelon Assn (where most of his growers were at that time). Paul became active in the Texas and National Watermelon associations.

In 1993 he had 300 acres of watermelon and "went out on my own" and made a bunch of money, what with working half the year for the university. In 1994, Paul bought watermelon packing shed and hired another salesman -- a former student/pupil and had a total of 450 acres. 1995 and 1996 were bad years, but things turned around in 1997 and 1998. By 1998 he had realized that he needed just 3 growers for a total of 300 acres. He's looking to spread out his growers geographically. He's supporting two farmers in southern central Arkansas to take up watermelons for 2000 season.

Paul notes that its "hard to sell deals when I'm not there to see them. What if the harvest crew picks for four purchase orders and ends up being three -- what do you do?"

He has also taken to arranging for ("lining up and handling") harvest crews for his farmers. Working with the harvest crew leader, he learns "what is out there" from the leader and can sell it knowing what it is.

Paul finds it easiest, more efficient and most sensible to work with a single-commodity line. When selling several vegetables "lines" for one farmer/co-op there is always conflict between crops for equipment and labor at some time during the season.

Diversifying away from just handling one crop works when there are some supporting relationships–trusted friends and partners handling different crops.

Trials of Delta facilitation

Being isolated from major produce areas has benefits in lack of competition for growers. But "when you are the only game in town you can't cover half loads because you are so isolated and so you have to sell local for whatever you can get."

Understanding rhythms and expectations of the business is tough for new growers. When the market is good, one will be "overbooked" (over-produced) and finding ways of fulfilling contracts.

One can "'add-value' by packing, cleaning and icing. "This will turn $100/ton spinach into $1,000/ton. Just need to make sure your costs are less than what you charge."

There's a saying that "if you don't go near broke three times in the produce business, then you'll never be a success and I've been there twice already."

"Produce is a very person-oriented deal." Paul works with farmers who are already producing at some level, although maybe not the crop they intend to sell. He looks for a farmer who's got the commitment to grow a crop well and who's come to trust Paul to be a fair partner. Paul has found that farmers who are just "thinking about it" are not the persons he wants to work with. They need to have a commitment to do research, research and more research and really start to understand what is needed to produce a particular produce crop. "The worst kind of guy to work with is one is desperate and broke, like a cotton farmer."

Facilitation is mentoring farmers

In meeting a farmer for the first time who has already demonstrated that he has some commitment and done his research in production, harvest and selling (fetching prices). Paul assures them that they are going to get paid. This is aided in large part by his reputation among other farmers. Most often, the farmer he is talking to has talked to or is even friendly with a farmer that Paul has worked with already. Paul then acts like a production consultant and discusses the varieties he needs to sell before they get planted. "In southern Arkansas, I am giving them all the start-up materials, including the irrigation tape and the transplants, so that I get what I need."

When recruiting farmers:

- Depends what crop they are looking to grow and their experience. If they are starting in produce, then watermelon is the easiest crop to grow. It doesn't need much input and requires no special equipment for growing, harvesting and packing. It has the least processing of any produce after harvest.
- Cash flow requirements are essential to his decision. While Paul has good credit with the bank that allows him to advance payments to processors, packers, growers, and trucking -- the farmer needs to have funds for these as well.
- Growers have to be able to trust Paul. Paul is extremely up-front with the farmers laying out what they can expect from him and what he expects from them. "Farmers working with past businesses have been treated poorly, sometimes not getting paid or being charged extra fees after the crop has been harvested. Now the farmer is looking for someone who won't stiff them as others have in the past." Paul says to them, "If you can't trust me then let's not talk anymore."
- Paul needs to know that the famer realizes the level of risk and that the farmer has done his homework before undertaking the new venture.

Peculiarities of produce

At the tomato coop, the coop allows farmers to pool their harvests together. This is particularly important when the crop can vary considerably in quality and size. Selling in volume keeps the coop in business -- by allowing them access to markets that would otherwise be unavailable to smaller volumes and the income keeps the farmer in business. More volume also means that they can sell to several suppliers which is good policy if one supplier finds itself in a position not being able to buy. It gives sellers some negotiating room with the suppliers. However, he contends the writing is on the wall for the tomato auction system. For decades it was a way for 1-2 acre farmers to sell their tomatoes. But it hasn't been offering decent margins in last few years.

Auction buyers are finding farmers from past auctions and becoming brokers. When the auction is through, the 2-5 acre growers will be out-of-business. Forty years ago when plots were smaller, the auction was one of the most efficient marketing mechanisms. Today it's not. The chain-store groceries and and fast-food chains are requiring higher volumes, consistency

and grade.

We're all still in this produce business because it's still got possibilities to "hit the big lick". "Can't do it with row crops." The top market for cotton and soybeans won't give the margins to make it big without planting thousands of acres. But the trick is to survive to make it to the "big year" or until the "produce falls out of the market."

On the same acreage, tomatos could bring in 30K, watermelon 4K, and cotton at the best price would be 1.5K. Of course produce is accompanied with more risk in production.

"Sell it or smell it"- Produce is a very time-sensitive business. It's days or even hours depending on the weather conditions (to destroy a crop, prevent harvesting) to get the produce in the truck -- and then need to get it to the supplier right away. Delay can mean added costs and less net income. Sell the crop at a price before it is delivered -- either before harvest (just before -- no real futures market with produce) and just afterwards. Produce had the original "just-in-time" inventory system.

Following is how Paul summarizes the key things he has learned in helping farmers diversify into produce:

1) Single-line produce is best grown over a large geographical area to spread out risk of weather damage (hail, drought, flood, temperature). It is better to have fewer growers with about the same acreage per farmer, so that the risk is spread out and the trucking costs are kept to a minimum yet able to fill a truck.
2) The produce business would do fine without us, so we've got to have a production advantage. We need crops with a good yield which have the best marketing window. This means assessing other producers across the nation and the world. That is: knowing who's in the business now.
3) Niche markets are the way to go. Vidalia onions are the most extreme example. They have spent $25 million to convince consumers that they are best in the world. Now they have even convinced the legislature to confine the name to a geographical area.
4) Obtaining a freight advantage to suppliers reduces the cost of doing business and delivers a fresher product. As Paul sees it, when you grow in a region, you are best situated to serve that area and areas to the north -- not necessarily to the west and east, where others are in the same growing regime/zone as you.
5) Technological changes are coming more and more rapidly. Suppliers are demanding that growers/shippers provide their safety requirements, and this is where associations are being helpful. They post these safety requirements and then Paul's website will be linked to it there.
6) Broker's relationships with producers and with suppliers become rather personal and protective of each other. There forms an informal cooperative and for Paul, the broker-supplier relationship takes care of each other through seasonal swings and swing seasons.
7) Financing is a perennial problem in new areas. When produce is not predominant in an area, the bankers' mindsets is not supportive of the produce business. Even with a long history of on-time payments and large payments, he had to have SBA to co-sign in order

to secure his 250K credit line.

8) Luck is opportunity meeting preparation.

Natural Born Salesman

Paul says he is a natural born salesman and he only hires people who are. He knew his student was from some student selling project. He knows he's a natural salesman.

Best way to get into the business is to just work for an existing produce broker. In this way to start to build up relationships with farmers and suppliers. Story of guy in Michigan that worked for a national broker. He built up a very successful watermelon business, but the brokerage didn't want him to do watermelon, but some other produce -- well, he had to quit. He had put his name and reputation on the line to establish this line and to dump them the next year would put his name in jeopardy (word travels fast), and go against his integrity.

"One of the ways that a farmer can protect himself from crooks in the produce business is to vertically integrate" The more the farmer processing, even packing/delivering, the less opportunity for the farmer to be cheated. (Dad used to say that "not every broker is a crook, but every crook is in the produce business.")

From traditional commodities to value-added

The key question is: how can we change people's perspectives on production from being raw commodity producers? He has great example of how the process works from Tiptonville, TN -- Steve Parks. He was a conventional cotton and soybean grower. He had tried growing tomatos and was "burnt bad". He was working with exporters and had not grown the appropriate tomato. Steve had attended an Acres conference in Kansas City and there learned about "balanced biological farming" and about organic edible soybeans, including the premium they can fetch. It's there that he met some exporters that offered to sell his soybeans. And he started to rent land for organic cotton. The exporters were "young" and felt that the market was "unlimited". Steve has now bought into the company and rented 1000 acres in Louisiana to produce the edible soybean varieties. Steve Parks is excited by new ideas and is willing to do some initial investment. He does his research. He's willing to go the extra mile and it has come to serve him well, but it has been huge time demands -- "he's strapped." Steve has a new project to grow organic feed for the organic dairy coming into Northern Tennessee.

He is currently collaborating with Paul to ask for funding for a spinach processing plant. It means diversification and added-value for both Steve and Paul. With the canning plant nearby it means shorter delivery distance, and another outlet for his spinach growers. Paul jokingly says, "One of the worst things that could happen is that we get the funding -- if we get it, we won't know what we're going to do".

Paul's take home lesson for farmers:
Few farmers-few people for that matter--are natural born salesmen. Marketing agents who can help farmers diversify will be:

- Natural born salesmen who can integrate production and marketing.
- There won't be too many of them.

Figure 8. Ken Goddard believes good, traditional Extension work naturally results in new processing and marketing enterprises. He puts this belief in practice with one-on-one interation throughout his county in Tennessee.

Ken Goddard

Henry County, Tennessee

It's not what you know or who you know,
but knowing who knows what.

First Collaborative Effort: Hay Referral Service

Ken Goddard's first assignment when he came to Henry County in 1977 was working with the local livestock association. Henry County is a big cattle and swine county, but the group was basically unorganized and inactive. One of Ken's early projects with the farmers was a simple solution to the problem of where to buy and sell hay: the local newspaper. The Paris Post Intelligencer, which distributes to about 8000 local households, agreed to post hay sources in its weekly farm pages. An easy marketing channel, the Hay Referral Service opened up an opportunity for farmers branching out with an alternative cash crop.

The service is still going strong after 23 years, thanks to what Ken calls the Intelligencer's "great relationship" with farmers and agents. The initial organizing effort has led to other opportunities. When mushroom cultivation skyrocketed in the mid-80s, Ken encouraged a local dairy and swine farmer who wanted to bale straw to list through the service, and the farmer not only sold his straw for as much as hay was going for, he couldn't meet the demand. Two other locals picked up the straw business when this pioneer retired, and increased their production with the booming turf grass, construction, and homeowner/landscaping industries. Though hay and straw might not be a huge industry, Ken points but they have functioned as alternative cash crops with a variety of markets through the years.

Knowing Who Knows What

Ken's worked with so many value-added businesses, it's hard to keep them all straight. Only he never says "I," it's always "we" when it comes to taking credit for local successes. "All the agents" work together, they "share" their clients, and Ken attributes his own success to sourcing the right people to bring onto projects, from Henry County and beyond. Ken compliments the local paper for its cooperation and support, but the partnership reflects his own approach to facilitating: calling the right folks, looking for experience, expertise, examples, and working collaboratively.

"It's not about how much you know, or even who you know, it's knowing who knows what, knowing your resources," Ken reflects. When a hog farmers in the county was ready to expand his operation, but didn't know what type of building to put up, Ken called a Sampson County, N.C. agent, got blueprints of the "frequent pit recharge" buildings used in his area, assembled a technical crew, and accompanied the farmer and the crew to North Carolina for a tour. Lawyers and engineers were drawn in. Being able—and willing—to hunt down those who can help is important, and "having a good relationship with Extension" is crucial. Ken's view of Extension as a resource network, rather than isolated units serving isolated needs,

opened doors to this project and allowed him to grow his own knowledge.

Henry County Entrepreneurs

Ken and the other Henry County agents have worked with a number of local start-ups, as well as established businesses looking to expand or diversify. Two value-added enterprises that take advantage of the local timber industry have been especially successful. Paris Hardwoods custom-cuts lumber for architectural moldings and hardwood floors, and Riplogle Enterprises grinds the leftover hardwood bark from its sawmill into landscaping mulch, selling to the landscaper/homeowner markets in the Memphis area and beyond.

Dan Murphey no longer has Grandpa Jones hawking his family's hickory-cured hams on the Grand Old Opry, but Clifty Farm Country hams, along with bacon, sausage, seasoning cuts, and barbeque are sold through a nationally distributed mail-order catalog. The Murpheys recently developed the high-tech packaging and barcoding procedures that were needed to sell to the Kroger grocery chain. Interestingly, the scale of their own production was significant in getting Clifty Farm products into Kroger, but the size of the industry as a whole has hindered its expansion. When Ken tried help Dan solve the problem of inconsistent shrink from different stock by separately processing one specific genetic package from Tosh Farms, the Clifty Farms contract packing house down in Mississippi turned them down. They were told that separating Tosh Farms animals for a Clifty Farm order would be cost-prohibitive for a large operation.

Ken hooked Dan up with swine specialist Dr. Ken Stoddard to talk about developing a ham similar to prosciutto, a gourmet ham field-raised, dry-salted, and then slow-cured in the Friuli and Parma regions of Italy, whose climate is similar to that of west Tennessee. Imported prosciutto is very expensive, and Dr. Stoddard believes that restaurants and gourmet groceries in metropolitan areas would be very receptive to a lower-priced domestically produced prosciutto-style ham. They teamed with Dr. Curtis Milton, a food technologist from UT Knoxville, to get some funding from the National Pork Producers' Council and American Duroc Association to test Durocs against hams of unknown genetics. Although results are still pending, Ken feels some sort of brand distinction is on the horizon for the local pork industry.

Ken's interest in value-added enterprise extends beyond agriculture to some of the small craft ventures that have sprung up in Henry County. On example is Pat Overcast, a retired state forester whose love of wood grew into a high-end walking stick business. Pat and his wife find unusual branches in the woods around their house, dry and debark them, decorate them with various carving techniques, and shellac them for use as hiking sticks and canes. The Overcasts sell their artisanal sticks in a little shop beside their house, in Tennessee state parks, and at various craft fairs.

Wanda McClure began handing out her chocolate oatmeal cookies to the parents whose children came to her house for daycare. Encouraged to see what kind of commercial market might be available to her, she called Henry County Extension, who put her in touch with the Agricultural Development Center in Knoxville. ADC helped her outfit her kitchen and devise a marketing plan. Wanda hit the pavement, visiting all the small groceries and

convenience stores in the area to sample her product out. Dottie Sue Cookies are now displayed next to cash registers as an impulse item for last-minute sale at numerous locations. Wanda still operates her daycare but demand is so great for the cookies, she'll soon ramp up into full-time production.

Need For Marketing

On one day we visited, Ken was headed to an auction at a dairy farm that was closing down. The family had tried to develop local interest in a marketing campaign to brand Tennessee milk. The processing plant was not interested in tracking the milk to keep it separate or produce a premium product, so several dairy farms began looking at building their own plant. The group never managed to secure any producer commitment or outside investors to fuel the project, and the family decided to get out of dairying. Ken speculates that the Tennessee-brand milk could have been a great success with the involvement of a business-savvy leader to raise the capital and sell the project. Most farmers don't have marketing backgrounds, and most don't have the time to farm and market a new venture. You can bring someone in to do marketing, says Ken, as long as you've got trusted, familiar faces involved as well.

It's Interest, Not Credentials

The bottom line, says Ken, is that you have to be excited by new enterprises to get involved. If you never intended to do anything but look at bugs under a microscope, it won't come naturally to you to jump into business development. For Ken, being a facilitator grows out of being "in the field," talking to people, and listening to new ideas. If the relationships are there, opportunities to help people are going to present themselves, whether Extension receives a phone call or not. (But, Ken contends, the calls are more likely to come if the agent has a personal reputation for interest and engagement.) Some agents might feel their lack of business expertise is reason to stay out the facilitator's role, but Ken sees himself as a liaison. Cultivating and coordinating resources is more important than having all the answers. **The only mandatory credential, according to Ken, is that helping people build better farms, businesses, and lives has got to be "part of your heart and soul, and your reason for getting up in the morning."**

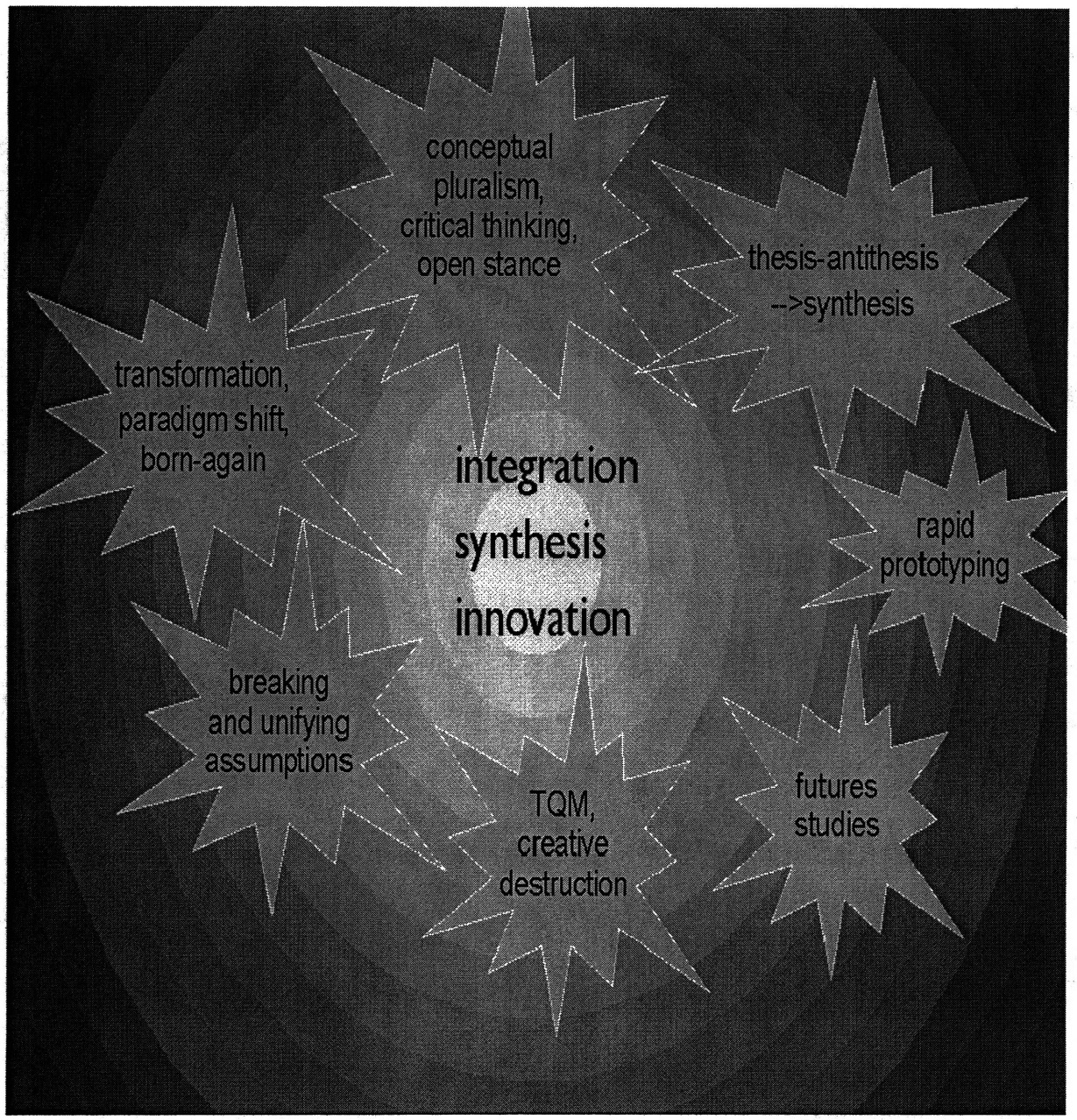

Figure 9. Some of the many disciplines and literatures which can assist facilitators in developing in innovation/synthesis/integration.

Innovation is the heart of any enterprise

Your brain cannot help but create.
It was literally born to do so.

Creativity Is contagious.

You are creative.

The preceding profiles were chock full of new ideas, of innovation. Good facilitators stimulate innovation. New enterprises require innovative ideas. Yet, those who create long-lasting enterprises are not usually "creative types." They are practical and down to earth. If you want to create a successful enterprise, you can't fly off in pursuit of every hare-brained idea.

So creativity has a bit of a bad name among the practical types who build new organizations. That's fine, it should. New enterprises are created mainly by hard work by a lot of people. The most useful types of creativity may not look like anything new at all, anyway. They often are just taking ideas and methods from different sources and putting them together in a new combination.

The most important intellectual skill for successful facilitators is the ability to integrate conflicting ideas to produce innovative syntheses [as shown by, for example, Carte, et al. (1996)]. This skill can then be joined with skills in motivating teams to create a collaborative atmosphere which values integration and innovation. A number of resources can help you develop these abilities. Some are explored in more detail on our website at: http://www.deltanetwork.org/skills/eii.htm.

The most basic is learning to identify, question and replace limiting assumptions. Some assumptions are easy to recognize and abandon. For example, many creativity workshops begin with puzzles such as nine dots arranged in a set of three rows. Your challenge is to draw four "straight" lines which go through the middle of all of the dots without taking the marker off the pad. You solve this puzzle when you abandon your assumption that you have to stay inside the imaginary box

WHEN

the truth is not known,
the science is uncertain,
but polarization is ubiquitous,

ASSUME

"policy narratives" restrict change
by stabilizing assumptions with faith

LOOK FOR

more basic stabilizing assumptions
on which integrators can construct
a new policy narrative

Roe, E., 1994. Narrative Policy Analysis, Duke University Press

formed by the nine dots. In fact, the nine-dot puzzle is the origin of the phrase "thinking outside the box."

Replacing the "stay inside the the box" assumption is easy in this puzzle. The task of the group facilitator is help the group replace limiting assumptions which are much more difficult to abandon. If you can learn how to do it, solutions arise to all sorts of sticky problems throughout business and policy. Emery Roe shows how in his book Narrative Policy Analysis. Whenever you're in a situation where science shows no clear answer and people are polarized about which way to go, **assume** any solution is blocked by restricting assumptions. **Look for** a more basic stabilizing assumption which permits innovation.

Why don't we come up new assumptions and innovations when we have problems?

A couple of excellent sources on stimulating your ability to integrate, synthesize and just be more creative are:

A Whack on the Side of the Head by von Oech
Six Thinking Hats by de Bono.

von Oech suggests "a whack on the side of the head" to shake us out of routine patterns. "Whacks" provide a way to look at a problem or an idea differently, and von Oech offers a range of exercises, such as

- looking for the relationship between two things you thought were unconnected, like a spiral galaxy and a spinning ice skater,
- or asking yourself a question you never thought of before: "if camels are the 'ships of the desert', why aren't tugboats 'the camels of the sea'?"
- or always looking for the second right answer, never settle for just the first one,
- or playing the fool. Let your non-judging side come out.

Six Hats takes the latter approach farther by proposing six metaphorical hats. In a group, we can put on or take off one of these hats to indicate the type of thinking being used. You've probably experienced this when a facilitator moved a group from brainstorming to evaluation. But brainstorming and evaluation are just two of six possible thinking styles.

White Hat thinking covers facts, figures, information needs and gaps. "I think we need some white hat thinking at this point..." means Let's drop the arguments and proposals, and look at the data base."

Red Hat thinking covers intuition, feelings and emotions. The red hat allows the thinker to put forward an intuition without any need to justify it.

The **Black Hat** is the hat of judgment and caution. The black hat is used to point out why a suggestion does not fit the facts, the available experience, the system in use, or the policy that

is being followed. The black hat must always be logical. It is a crucial hat to employ at the right time, but often over-used in Western culture.

The **Green Hat** is the hat of creativity, alternatives, proposals, what is interesting, provocations and changes.

The **Blue Hat** is the overview or process control hat. It looks not at the subject itself but at the 'thinking' about the subject. "Putting on my blue hat, I feel we should do some more green hat thinking at this point." In technical terms, the blue hat is concerned with meta-cognition.

Watching out for common *dead ends* in innovation is another great way facilitators can help groups to come up with innovations.

"That's Not My Area" – People often fail to import ideas or methods which are effective in one area or discipline into another. Cross boundaries between disciplines in search of ideas, and aggressively "hunt" for ideas from a wide variety of sources.

"That won't work" --Deliberately disrupt evaluative mode of thought. We are always evaluating. Good to break out of it every once in awhile. Especially be wary of the ways the "can't turn off evaluating" folks can stop creativity and innovation. Generate lots of ideas first, don't stop and evaluate every idea generated. Keep the juices flowing. It's tough to keep balance between generating ideas and evaluating them. Some times you have to go into a hard-nosed evaluation mode, but you have to have space for the playful creative mode. When working with group, its almost always wise to separate the two–with no evaluation at all in first, playful, brainstorming stage.

"That's Not Logical" – "Hard" (logical) and "soft" (emotional) thinking are both important during the creative process. The "soft" type of thinking involves techniques such as metaphor and paradox, and is useful during the germination phase of creative thinking. Break free of this mental lock by using metaphors and "making the strange familiar", forcing relationships between apparently dissimilar items.

"Avoid Ambiguity" – Ambiguity can help you find the second right answer at times, since it forces you to explore various paths to determine a suitable response. Facilitators can stimulate creativity by with ambiguous directions in order to stimulate creative responses. *If you tell people where to go, but not how to get there, you'll be amazed at the results.*

"You're wasting time playing" – Many quality ideas result from "play" time, since a person's mind is free of its natural defenses during that time and mental locks are less likely to occur. Nothing beats hard work except play. This is especially crucial with groups. The essence of social interaction is play, creation. That's why we can't make a science of social interaction. It is creation. They are dynamic systems. They are chaotic. You aren't going to find an algorithm. Social scientists can't predict, except basic animal instincts. Just as meteorologists can't predict. Chaos is a whole mess of conflicting impulses and the only control of chaos is to help one impulse become a little more dominant.

"Don't Be Foolish" -- The pressures to conform within organizations lead to phenomenon such as "groupthink." Instead, play the fool, much as the court jester did in the king's court by questioning decisions and challenging authority.

"The Right Answer" – Do you stop looking when you come to the first right answer? Most people are trained to believe that each situation has only one right answer, and until they learn to search for the second right answer, they will miss out on most of the best ideas. Most of your best ideas come during the later stages of the creative cycle.

"Don't Mess up" – The creative process produces more "misses" than "hits" Individuals must be willing to embrace failures in order to achieve successes. Errors serve two useful purposes – as stepping stones of learning, and to "whack" us and force us to change directions.

"I'm Not Creative" – People who believe they are not creative typically get their wish. If you're like most people, especially farmers and rural people, you don't believe you are creative. So our task is to show you you are. Nearly everyone is. And you could be much more creative, if you could remove some of the assumptions which keep you from making connections in unlikely places.

Often farmers and rural people are far more creative than those paid to be creative for us. An example comes from an attempt to mechanize the extremely labor intensive harvesting of tobacco. Increasing lack of labor in Kentucky led to investment of millions of dollars and dozens of engineers in a huge machine which traveled down rows of tobacco cutting, spearing and hanging tobacco stalks for curing.

The huge white elephant which resulted is impractical, expensive and has never gone into production. However, two farmers from different regions of rural Kentucky each saw how the white elephant worked and went home to weld a new machines which concentrated on one aspect of the process (cutting) with a much more practical, far less expensive piece of equipment. These two farmers formed teams with machine shops and went into immediate production and sales. Demand quickly outpaced production capacity, leading to expansion of the businesses.

The highly educated engineers were committed to a machine for total automation of tobacco harvesting. The could not abandon that goal, even when over a decade of work resulted in nothing useful to farmers. The farmers were not blinded by this goal, saw a component of the white elephant which had potential, and created an innovation useful to farmers across the tobacco belt.

The farmers were able to achieve what the university engineers could not because the farmers did not share the basic assumption that the goal is total automation.

The farmers looked at the world differently. So they could take the same raw input and come up with a much more useful innovation.

All our creativity is stifled by the way we look at the world, by our assumptions, by the principles and values which. How to change those assumptions.

Put all the research on creativity and innovation together and realize one commonality that stops most of us from being able to explore new things: **our emotions and fears.** We are stopped not by facts, but by the ways our brain is structured naturally and by experience. So we have to look at motivation and emotion and how to use it and not let it use us.

That's explored best by going learning how some great facilitators have dealt with fear and other motivations.

Harvey Williams

Lexa, Arkansas

When people have an idea, and need help,
they don't want to be told how to do the business.

Where Harvey comes from

Lee County, Arkansas-- in the heart of the Delta -- has been a hotbed of organizing since the civil rights days. Harvey Williams' facilitation has focused on maintaining two grass roots organizations: a small farmer's cooperative and a health cooperative.

Harvey grew up on a farm near Rondo, Arkansas. After high school, Harvey left the area and lived and traveled "all over the country." After the draft, Harvey, decided that he wanted "to go back to the area." "There's no other place I'd rather be...." He returned home and worked in a factory for 30 years. He started farming for himself part-time in 1977, on his dad's land, growing soybeans, it "wasn't a big task to grow soybeans", and he could continue to working at the plant. Harvey's dad grew okra, wheat, and soybeans. Harvey notes that "all the farmers around here grew a few acres of some produce crop during a season." Up until the 70's, Harvey says, nearly everyone had a few acres in produce and the income was instrumental in making some opportunities accessible, such as college educations. Since many people were growing and had a history of growing produce, they all had the experience and "ability" to grow produce crops.

Harvey's pop grew okra before the co-op got established. At the time that Harvey was beginning to grow for the produce market, he became involved with the Arkansas extension service. The extension service has been helpful to Harvey with technical and marketing assistance. Through a joint effort with two other states, the extension service opened another farmers' market in eastern Memphis and this gave Harvey and other farmers growing produce to have a direct-market outlet. The extension service has also provided technical assistance when Harvey certified an acre as organic for fresh market organic tomatoes.

"We used the farmers' market about two hours away for three years. Then we moved into the Marianna Co-op (about ten miles away). This meant a real reduction in time spent delivering and less wear and tear on the truck. Harvey's wife was "always involved in the marketing" of the co-op. The oldest boy was a senior when Harvey started working full-time farming. While living at home, the boys would help in the growing after school hours and helped out during the summers when they would come home from college.

Harvey used to do a great business with organic tomatoes at the farmers' market in Memphis, but the commute was unmanageable with changes in the family situation. His wife used to run the farmers' market, but when she went back to teaching, it was no longer manageable for the family.

Harvey notes that his experience at the farmers' market, "really opened my eyes to what people want.... I couldn't grow enough organic tomatoes for that market, although they looked just like the other tomatoes at the market." "That was amazing to me, they looked like conventional tomatoes." Harvey stopped growing the tomatoes when he stopped going to the market, there was "not enough demand here."

"There's no money in small acre soybeans. You've got to leave it [commodity crops] or grow something different." Harvey noted, "I liked doing farming. I had three sons and wanted to teach them what I knew." Harvey's mother and father were retired, but were always there helping and advising.

His learning never stops. I read a bunch of produce trade magazines and attend lots of conferences. Harvey says that he still travels to other produce-growing areas, meeting with farmers and learning new marketing possibilities and production techniques. "I may not be able to grow like them, but there are things I can adapt or see a new way to improve what I do." For instance, "I use as few and lesser amounts of chemicals on my crops as possible. I may use some chemicals, but I try to be as sustainable as possible. I saw an organic field and it looked and smelled healthier than the other fields surrounding it. This convinced me and made me restructure my fundamentals – that chemicals are not needed and that more eco-friendly farming activities are coming."

Vegetable Co-op

The Marianna Vegetable Co-op started in 1967, when several individuals came together. Harvey notes that many of these individuals were instrumental in getting the health co,op started in that same period of time. Both co-ops have been "good for the community". The Vegetable coop pooled each farmers' extra crop, that would otherwise sit in the field into enough volume so that it could now be marketed where smaller amounts couldn't be sold. "This adds income to the farmer's pocket that wasn't there before the co-op. That crop in the field has been turned into an income where before it was considered waste."

The Extension service helped set up the co-op, providing information and technical help with incorporating it, business plan and getting a start-up loan. The Extension service also helped to establish relations with two vegetable processors, and a contract was signed with them for the first year of the co-op's existence "based on the potential volume that the co-op could do." Harvey noted, "the co-op let us pool our produce, and with lots of volume we could do lots of business."

Harvey became involved with the vegetable co-op and joined the board of directors in 1977, after one season of vegetable production. A number of people were doing cucumbers, okra, and black-eyed peas

"What you have to know is what happened with the co-op after the 70's when the two companies left the same year and went south to Texas and Mexico, the co-op had been producing two million pounds of okra and the cost of labor went up here. In the early 80's,

through AFLDC [a local non-profit], we picked up a fresh market broker and we are still working with them. But working with fresh market brokers, if they don't need any more produce they cut you off and whatever is left in your field would not be harvested and become lost income." At this same time, the number of farmers was decreasing due to retirement and no incoming farmers ("nobody taking their place") and so the volume went down. The volume never got up again, but prices were better (for fresh market) and people found that they were making more money than before.

"When my involvement become the most was in the early part of the 80's. I went on the board and next year became chair and remained so for 5 or 6 years." We were searching for new crops, like peppers, and for buyers. All or most board members were farmers and so all had some objective to keep the coop so that it could put together volume to satisfy bigger markets.

Increasingly from the 1970s, there was a problem getting sufficient labor. "It's every other day of picking cucumbers and okra." "It used to be mostly family labor: everybody had children and they worked on the farm." There has been a major population drop in the county: older people died, and kids moved on to college and didn't come back.

There's less people growing produce than before and some farmers are going into commodities. Horticultural crops take "a lot of labor" requiring hand-picking and there's no longer the "concentrated labor in one area anymore". "Quality control is the big thing, we can't afford to lose a market."

It is good to have the co-op in place. It's got great potential with the rising demand for produce and the decreasing ability to earn an income from commodity crops with a limited land resource. Wal-mart has agreed to buy three crops that the co-op handles.

We were searching for new crops and buyers, like peppers. All or most board members were farmers and all had the same objective: "to keep the co-op [viable]." With the co-op, we "could put together enough volume to satisfy the bigger markets." I worked day in and day out, year in and year out to keep the co-op alive. The Co-op had borrowed 40K to build a 100ft building. Most of the debt was paid by the time the two processors left, but we are still paying on it. My job was to make sure the farmers had some income to look forward to. I needed "to do everything I could to show that [the co-op board] was looking for buyers. Some of the debt had been forgiven – by Farmer's Home – and when the highway department expanded the highway they paid for the corner of the lot that they used for the road."

The co-op is in a better position to earn money for the cooperative and for the farmers. In 1994, AFLDC granted the co-op a loan for new equipment for handling green beans and squash and a hydro-cooler when they got a contract with Kroger to provide green beans (and okra) for two years. "We'll keep paying down the debt and asking AFLDC to forgive part of the loan. In the year1994 was a tough growing season, "rainy springs and then summer drought". They couldn't produce the quantity of quality green beans, but the demand was great. The next spring we had a similar season and again there was a relatively poorer yield.

During these years, Kroger had started going to produce brokers and asked that the co-op become involved with them so that they could continue to buy their goods. It has been very tough to grow these past two seasons. Some disaster relief money helped.

In 1998, there was an agreement with Wal-mart's local stores and will start selling into their warehouse in Clarkesville. The manager of the Wal-mart warehouse used to rotate through every four months. Recently this position became permanent and Harvey was introduced to him. They went in to negotiate for a 12 week contract. They were given a four-week contract which they fulfilled and now this year they've got a twelve-week contract to provide "locally-grown" produce that are to be advertised as such. Wal-mart has been very supportive of the co-op. If the co-op provides quality and quantity, then they'll buy it all. They want to advertise it as locally-grown: yellow squash, eggplant and several more. This way, other farmers can move into produce through the co-op.

Right now there are two other crops we could grow for Wal-mart, but we need to get the equipment to process them. Nobody in Eastern Arkansas has them, closest is in Southeast Arkansas.

How does the co-op work for members? Farmers meet to fulfill a contract for each kind of crop. "Not many farmers growing any one item, so there's not much contention.... Strange thing with produce farmers, they will pretty well try new stuff (on a small-scale). They're already used to taking risk with unsubsidized crops which are perishable and have a high labor demand", but they know that if they find a niche market that they have a better chance at doing well financially than if they stuck to the commodity crops.

Encouraging diversification

The co-op has always encouraged people to start bridging transition. When there were more people on the farm and more smaller patches – good source of income for families and provided for better life. Lots of people were doing produce then. Now we're encouraging alternative crops to keep the rest from going out of business. How do you get them interested?

- Show the cash flow per acre for different crops. Number of people saying they are interested, but have to see how and the income. There's also equipment needs and these can be expensive. All that start-up funds have to be considered.
- Commodity farmers are hard to convince to grow something now even though new money. "If they don't see what others are doing – it's hard to show people it can be done."
- Selectively bring existing farmer into co-op.
- Somebody expresses an "interest" – probably been talking with them for about a year and nurturing a relationship with them
- Irrigation

- First learn how to grow. Read it and put your hands in it.
- Got to farm one acre at a time.

"I go and visit some farmers who are doing it"–that's a better learning experience. He's made such visits in FL, TX and CA. Some practices might not work, but some things can be incorporated. "That's a big problem to convince new potential growers to do it. They don't want to go and visit. Thing about the mid-south is that we can grow any crop that FL and CA can, except citrus. The future looks bright for the co-op. People are interest in collective growing. Co-op has a relationship with one major brokerage that, once there is sufficient volume, they can sell to them."

The co-op could start doing more value-added processing before they sell. "This is another market we could sell through, giving members more options for selling seconds. It also means that we protect ourselves from contracts that go belly-up. We'll have more possible products to sell and are better able to find the best price at any time in the market. It's a very voluble market and fluctuates widely and quickly, but the payoff is that they earn better money at any time than traditional crops. There's a company looking at coming to Marianna to do processing – and that will be another huge market we can sell to." Harvey is building relationships within the market to ensure that anything that is produced by co-op farmers can be sold at the best price possible. This will keep the farmers they've got and increase their margin. It will build a reputation among farmers that the co-op is not only capable of selling, but that it will deliver on prices – being able to sell what you produce is one of the determining factors in trying a new crop. The co-op provides this channel. It also provides a community of farmers who are also growing non-commodity crops. The more growers the better – the more they can help each other and possible share in equipment and expertise.

We've got to prepare ourselves to meet the consumer's needs and the consumer's demands. For example, if it's loose or if it's packed. Wal-mart bought directly from a couple of farmers. They were growing sweet potatoes and cured them, but putting them in 5lb bags increased their value significantly. Wal-mart wanted a bushel of baking-sized potatoes.

You really have to keep up with consumer demands, however strange they might seem. Harvey sold certified organic tomatoes at the farmers' market which he grew on one acre. He couldn't satisfy the demand, even though they were considerably more expensive. How get others to try new crop? He says show the income flow.

Extension helped to figure out the use of chicken litter, and Harvey wanted to grow pretty and well-sized tomatoes that looked like commercial ones. Lots of people choose vegetables, particularly tomatoes "sight unseen".

"Never been many whites in county growing produce. Vegetable growers are small-scale in our county. Financing options have been one of many major problems – didn't matter who you are (color-wise). Lending institutions (Farmer's Home and other banks) in the last two-three years started listening to alternative crop business plans. It was new and something they didn't know about. Huge amount of distrust between banks and business plans – couldn't

believe your figures, and you didn't have anything to back it up. Now extension is doing stuff to convince them that the figures are real. Banks are much more receptive now to alternative business plans."

To illustrate his points, Harvey pulled out some figures on production cost versus the selling price. He keeps this figures handy to help convince farmers.

"Small farmers have got to understand that some crops (especially commodities) just aren't feasible."

"Don't be in a hurry– show them the field – it's the best way to make point. Need to see the crop in order to be convinced. You could get burnt and then you don't want to do it again. Plant an acre and learn first how to grow it before investing significant resources. Very possible to have a bad growing season, or poor market – one year weather caused the loss of 35 acres out of 60 on my farm. Other times, you need to sell it fast – but if not a market at that moment you can lose it that way."

The other side of diversification is recognizing that everyone can't grow squash for this market. "You need to identify the number of acres to produce the contracted amount"-- established ideally before the growing season. The board votes on who gets how many acres of what crop, considering how many farmers want to grow and if they are set-up (equipment, irrigation, migrant labor, etc.). "If you have three to four crops, and got surplus growers for a crop – there's going to be acres more in the future. So to get somebody involved, I would be willing to give up an apportionment. It doesn't take a lot of people to grow for a contract, a lot of produce. Got to have acre commitment." Harvey's attitude is not unusual he says. There are some crops that can be grown to whatever volume, that the co-op can sell any amount of, such as Okra ("it's open"). "There's no cap on Okra."

The board decides who can grow what and how much. The board determines what and how much of a crop based on the capability of the grower to produce what they say (board is mostly farmers if not all farmers presently or in the past). The coop trying to get as many farmers in and involved with as many crops, this has become a priority along with the continual market building. The coop's job is to seek more acres for the next year.

Today, Harvey is not a board member. The first year of his membership he was a board member, and the second year he was chair, later became co-op manager. Now he represents the coop "when they ask me." There's younger and more capable people that need to come up to speed and so Harvey is helping training the board and management. When Harvey goes to see buyers, he brings two board members with him, so the processors and buyers get to know them, and so he can train new people. I see it that if they can then meet with them next year on their own – and build the business. And this frees Harvey up to build his farm business. He doesn't sell all through the co-op and does his own direct-marketing. Right now the co-op doesen't have paid staff and they are seeking AFLDC loan forgiveness so that the money can be used to pay for staff. Harvey wants to help as many as possible.

Facilitation methods

Harvey's experience working with groups: "kind of mixed." "It's not easy all the time. First of all, not a lot of trust that people have in each other. So trust is one of the major problems. Another thing is trying to convince group of people to, for example, grow bell peppers, where I don't have any history to show them what's involved and the problems, cons with growing an acre." This leaves Harvey to describe what other people have done and relying on extension unless he has an "explorer."

Trust is one of the major problems.

Harvey has worked some with programs to help young people enter farming. But he says that "kids are just different over the years or maybe my tolerance is just lower." They don't even know where food and fiber coming from, whether its Green beans, sweet corn, butter beans, cotton. That was amazing to me that they didn't know. It took about 2-3 weeks for them to settle down when they come to the farm. "Just got to keep doing what you're doing. Takes patience and letting them come to terms with it on their own time. Willingness to work with them and fan flames of interest and being there to continue helping with equipment and technical information."

"At lot of facilitation works better when it's one-on-one than in groups, you can better answer questions." Each person has different knowledge needs and their own unique emotional issues. In winter you can meet with people, but from March through October this takes a much lower priority.

Harvey work with his neighbors one on one. With one, Harvey convinced him to try growing sweet potatoes and he made money, although Harvey planted and harvested for him. Keeping it small enough, so that if it should fail it won't turn the grower off from trying again.

At lot of facilitation works better when it's one-on-one than in groups.

Southern field peas uses all the same equipment and technique as soybeans, and worked very well for one farmer who was very happy with soybeans and comfortable with them. He planted the peas and had a great yield behind wheat. The company that bought the peas the first year, started growing their own the next year. If a market could be found for those peas, then that grower would be interested in growing them again, because he's convinced he can do it and do it well.

A key part of Harvey's work is establishing trust with buyers. You have to convince them of volume, quality and consistency. If you've got a track record, show it off, particularly if you've sold to reputable, well-known companies "Kroger and Wal-mart stand out". Second, show them with similar type companies and these will help you get to sit down with them. Above all, you just "gotta try. They can't tell me but one of two things: yes or no."

"Part of the way you get in is through other established growers." Abraham Carpenter had

been doing business with Kroger. Their business had gotten too big, spread too thin selling to Little Rock (1.5 hrs away) and to Memphis (2 hours away) and they "walked the coop into the Memphis office" and introduced them. Harvey had been selling to Carpenter, who used his relations with Wal-mart. "Once someone gets you in, you just got to do your part to stay there."

"Off-season brings higher prices, but the risk of frost and hail increases. It's riskier to grow off-season although possible, and loose the crop, but the payoff is greater. Carpenters got two stores, and in April when people shed their coats, they'll be wanting fresh greens."

"There's a big advantage for co-ops if people would use them. One big problem with farmers, some don't understand value of having money instead of individual markets. I will use the co-op for my excess harvest that I can't sell through my personal markets. The co-op will pool these excesses and sell to another market. These farmers are not looking at the big picture. It's been really hard for us to convince farmers that the co-op is *good* for them. Co-op has relationships to deal with harvest excesses, such as a canner, but the volume is essential otherwise they loose money because they can't maintain the efficiency of the plant."

Synergy of health and ag organizing efforts

The Lee County Health Center Cooperative was established in 1969. "It was formed for same purpose as the ag co-op back in the 1950s and 1960s, we had lots of health problems. We only had one to two local physicians, couldn't get services that they needed, particularly black people. Some people involved in setting up Marianna Veg co-op helped set up the health co-op. VISTA provided one doctor and one nurse to the county. In 2000, the co-op employs 55 people and has a two million dollar budget. It has done much for the county beyond providing health services – it has gone after root causes. In the beginnig it was recognized that safe water and proper sewage system was fundamental to improving health. We had a lot of shallow wells and numerous outhouses. Another organization was formed out of the health co-op to deal with water and sewage issues. That organization no longer exists – it worked itself out of a job. When the co-op first started transportation was a big problem. Now people can get transportation (4WD to get people). Local government has not been supportive at all. Now people can get to see doctor or a dentist when they need to. We have two satellite clinics in other counties with a doctor on site one day a week and an 24hr on-call nurse and transportation to the main clinic if needed. Technology is a big issue now. The feds don't want to pay for this."

"The health co-op has been a big help to the community. It's been one of the tools that have brought racial matters together more than anything else, because we all go for the same services. Racial relations improved: first one white person belonged, now its almost 50/50. Blacks and white realizing we're all a part of the same organization. You see people getting along and demonstrating to others that they're getting along. They don't hear people talking

> I don't want to think happen would it would be like without the coops. It'd be whole lot tougher.

about each other. Offices, school boards have all become more equitable, for example, they will sit and laugh with each other in restaurants. The vegetable co-op is next door to the health coop, and those attending the health clinic would stop and buy food, both black and white people."

" The cooperatives support each other the whole time. Economic benefit to help pay for health. Spirals up health means can produce off of vegetables, although it was never designed for that mutuality – just worked out that way! Both have been very valuable to community. I don't want to think happen would it would be like without the co-ops. It'd be whole lot tougher. Whatever affects my neighbor affects me. Had to train local people because recruitment too tough. One told Harvey recently, 'I was so glad to get an opportunity to work as an aide – relieved to get off welfare.' The co-op helped to pay for nursing school, as well as support her and her children in lots of small intangible ways."

Joe Bryant

Allport, Arkansas

Good facilitators become facilitators because they have to.
They had the fire in the gut and had no other choice

Setting the stage

A young woman from Washington, D.C., went to visit Joe Bryant to interview him for this profile. She reported: "I was an hour late heading on towards noon-time, but called ahead. He was very nice about it and said that it wasn't any trouble, really. I introduced myself and where I came from. I found Joe to be very friendly and open, and full of humor, and seeking to help me in my problems (given as examples and part of the sharing process). In order to elicit his facilitation skills, I used my own difficulties in facilitation as a baseboard for Joe to share with me his insights, advice and thoughts about group facilitation. The more I shared and opened up to Joe, the more he did so with me. He mentioned near the end of the interview that he wouldn't have been so open and honest with me, if Jim hadn't introduced me to him, a man he trusts and so, Joe said, he could trust me. We finally got to what is important when facilitating. This was the most engaging part of the conversation for both us. Joe believes very strongly in his faith and is most clear on this point."

Formal experience in facilitation

Joe was involved with the national foundation-funded program where he first found out about formal training in facilitation. He was one of six farmers in the Delta region who was conducting on-farm research on various sustainable agriculture issues. Each of these six farmers was supposed to recruit to join them and thus form six teams of seven people each. Each team was supposed to be growing the same kinds of crops. The teams spanned the northeast, north-central, southeast and southern Arkansas.

Joe said that the Project Director of his part of the grant told each of the six what they were to research from a number of problem areas that had already been identified by another process. Together they would connect our problems and share in the problem-solving process. "Our solution would be greater when we came together." "There was interest by farmers to participate in this long-term and collaborative study as farm profits were decreasing from traditional crops and production techniques.

Joe's team spent three years, starting in 1993, on the first research topic: poultry Litter as fertilizer. Composted poultry litter improves the nutrients with the soil with an eye on replacing chemical fertilizers, and secondly, improves the overall soil health. All the farmers in this group met together four times a year and gave presentations. The project director maintained the focus of the groups, but the groups had autonomy to develop their own research and action plans.

Joe found that by working with a group in doing on-farm research, he could feel more certain about the results he was finding, for example, with composted chicken litter. He notes that the seven of them met once a month and "exchanged thoughts on the test plots." Together they found that not only was composted chicken litter cheaper than chemical fertilizers (NPK and liming), but that the litter gave "more expeditious results." After three years, Joe noted, the soil was restored.

With Joe's group, they took note that none of them were getting the full amount of the loans they requested and this "meant we were either always working with limited resources or couldn't take the loan because we didn't have the all the money we needed to make improvements or buy equipment that could improve our overall incomes." They presented this to the group and the project director , and ended up presenting to various agencies and eventually, along with other reports/studies ended up going to the federal government and the black farmers lawsuit. Joe said that the lack of access to sufficient funds was suffered by all small [acreage] farmers, and that the lawsuit could have included both black and white. Joe noted that since the lawsuit and his group of black farmers was focused on race and not socio-economics. Everyone has suffered as a result. White smallholder's problems have not been recognized, affirmed and addressed, black farmers (majority of whom are smallholders?), "favored" treatment, and the misdiagnosed problem has lost an opportunity to improve race relations and has instead furthered a perception nationally of stereotypical south that hasn't changed at all. Joe said that during the Reagan era there was a push to get small farmers out, and it was only because a majority of blacks were in this category. Did it come to appear to be race-related.

Growing up in East Arkansas

Joe grew up on a farm. He was an agriculture teacher at a high school when integration came to Arkansas. Joe notes that this "forced" integration just meant that segregation and ability to access went from being public and in separate domains to being in one facility. Thirty years ago Joe stopped teaching and went to work for the railroad.

"There was a culture of perception", Joe notes, that the races couldn't get along. Either the whites had an attitude, or the blacks did, when really we're the same inside with the same needs and desires and values." That first day at the railroad, Joe said, I was greeted with "I may have to work with you, but I don't have to eat with you." Joe noted that the whites ate separately and were unfriendly to any of the black workers (I'm being nice), and perhaps as a result, the blacks took on the same unfriendly, separatist attitude. Joe perceived this situation and "realized that if I took on the same attitude, then I'd have to live with that attitude, but I didn't want to do that I didn't want to become that kind of person." Although Joe is none too crazy about talking about his techniques, his attitude is to "start looking for ways and opportunities to be accepted by the white folks." "You can greet someone with a stick or with open arms, and I chose open arms."

Preacher/Farmer to Facilitator

Joe is a church pastor for the last fourteen years. This has been important to him in vocalizing and working through his present situations/conditions in accordance to his values.

Last year, Joe had a severe stroke. He needed to relearn how to talk and walk, and his prognosis was poor. He had a stroke of intervention, which told him to run for Mayor of Pine Bluff, a town of nearly 60,000 people and where he grew up and went to college. I met him at his headquarters in Pine Bluff. "I want to help bridge the gaps between people, between the races, between the rich and poor ." (not confident how he put this, but it's one of his platforms." "If we've got problems, then we have got to deal with them, otherwise they're not going to go away."

He was been farming for the last 28 years and beams when he talks about growing. "There's nothing better." But, he notes, "you can't do it totally your way on anything, you need other people's input in order to avoid mistakes, some of which can be very costly and may cost you the farm .You need the experience of other people, not just farmers, and your farm can be very profitable if you just listen." "That's how we farmed benefitting from the experiences and input from other people."

"Good facilitators become facilitators because they had to they had the fire in the gut and had no other choice. It moves upon a person and it comes out of your gut. Inner peace comes as you're getting it done. You do what you do, because you have to, because it comes from within."

Joe continually keeps an eye on the long-term and a sense of potential about him. He's optimistic and loves people and believes in their innate goodness and their ability to change, learn and grow. With his groups Joe uses creative questioning. Joe puts forth questions which serve two purposes, 1) identify basic values, and 2) affirms that these values are good and to be the basis for any decision-making process.

Joe is very much, "whatever is good for you" kind of facilitator. He says that he may not agree with another person's decision, but as long as they are making a decision that sits well with their conscience and gut-feeling (sense of right and wrong), then Joe takes a humble position, "who am I to judge? It's between you and God." Joe also is supportive and encouraging of those who are trying to understand and work through issues. With him there is nothing to be embarrassed about, and his presence, body- and verbal- language create an atmosphere that there is nothing to fear from him and that honesty and openness is and will be respected by him. He integrates people's spirituality with their daily living and long-term goals in a very positive and empowering way.

Group development and evolution

In ensuring that a group project/venture/enterprise continues, Joe advises that the facilitator/leader find other leaders, potential or realized, to join in the group. "Are you capturing the person to catch the same vision? You have got to have new people come into a

group periodically. With their new energy they keep the process dynamic and fresh." Otherwise, "it will stop unless another person is coming to lead the group."

Joe has a strong and non-judging faith. He doesn't dwell on the negatives, but looks for the positives and the opportunities in any situation, keeping focused on how can we work together better toward our goal. Joe believes strongly in taking small steps toward a goal and celebrating as each one is accomplished. "A group need to have openness and trust, but these take time to develop among members." In his interaction with this interviewer, Joe was very respectful, animated and warm. He responded to and encouraged eye- contact and he was sensitive to facial expressions and what they were telling him, including as I leaned out or away.

Joe addressed the issue of getting hurt and dealing with the pain of 'failure' and 'betrayal'. In his experience, there are two types of response from group members, including leaders/facilitators; first is getting defensive and lashing out at those who caused the pain or betrayal, and second is to distance oneself from any situation which might put them at risk of being hurt again. This can include the perception that the group process failed for whatever reason. "What you're doing is the first step you think that if it don't have an affect right away, then you've failed. And if you see you had an affect ten years later, than you think 'I should have done better.' But, no! You did what you had to do then, and what you could do at that time. You were the first step in a process that has got to involve more people than just yourself, if it is truly to be a group effort."

Larry Miller

Macon, Mississippi

Organizing can't be a government program.

A Place In The Community

Larry's work has been inextricable from his life of almost three decades in Noxubee County. He came to Mississippi during the Vietnam War, when he was assigned to the local hospital in place of combat duty. The Millers belong to the Mennonite Church and hold deeply pacificist values. Larry renewed his assignment for three years, having developed attachments to his co-workers and a sense of belonging to the community. When his service ended, Macon had become home, and Larry and his wife Maxine found a small farm in Mashulaville on which to begin producing pulpwood. The Millers cut wood for a living while finishing their education degrees at Mississippi State. One of Larry's first organizing efforts was to establish a local credit union; today the credit union shares an office with two of the Millers' other accomplishments, the Beat-4 Farmer's Cooperative and the Noxubee County Farmer's Market.

All In A Day's Work

Larry and Maxine are reading teachers in the public schools, grow a plot of mixed organic vegetables, raise cows, goats, and catfish, supervise the market, and remain active in the co-op, including running the acclaimed youth project, training interns, and recruiting funding for program expansion, project development, and facilities improvement. Their vocational and volunteer work flow seamlessly together: Larry's promising junior high students are selected to the co-op's youth program, through which they grow okra to sell at the farmer's market, depositing their profits in personal savings accounts housed at the credit union. Larry's parents, now in their early eighties, work alongside Larry and Maxine on the farm and with the youth program. (The Millers have three children, and Larry is one of sixteen, ten of who are adopted Native American siblings, which may provide some insight into the Miller family's commitment to work, education, and community.)

Disparity and Race Relations

Larry's initiatives reflect a unique awareness of the social and political issues that affect agricultural development and business opportunities in rural Mississippi. He is profoundly sensitive to the particular barriers that socially disadvantaged and limited-resource farmers have struggled with in the Delta. Not only have black farmers been victims of corruption and discrimination by business and government, but also there is little solidarity among small farmers across racial lines. Now more than ever, with farmers taking all of the risk and little of the return, and small farms left without a role in the market, Larry believes bridging the racial divide and organizing for change is essential. In Noxubee County, this process has historically been strictly on grassroots terrain. Now, Larry and the other citizen leaders feel that it's time for Extension to extend its efforts beyond large-scale production for outside

markets, and join with farmers in identifying and creating local value-added and direct-marketing opportunities

The Beat-4 Farmer's Co-op grew from a group of small farmers that got into cattle with the help of a Heifer Project International program back in 1972. Although the cattle were high-quality cattle, the program was contingent on access to FHA loans that were largely unavailable. Many of the farmers received token loans for livestock, but were turned down for sufficient funds for fencing and other equipment. Without adequate resources, and in a climate of growing concentration in the cattle industry, most of the participating farmers never got their operations off the ground.

In 1980, the group had completely phased out of their cattle efforts, and began looking for new ideas. Most farmers had been growing vegetable patches all along, and U-Pick operations were sweeping the country, but the reality was that not too many white townspeople would venture out to the mostly black-owned farms. The U-Pick concept depends on comfortable grower-consumer relationships, which Noxubee County just didn't have. This isn't the kind of quantifiable factor that makes it into a feasibility study; it takes someone who is steeped in the culture of a place to say whether a venture is realistic or appropriate. Just because an idea is a good one doesn't mean it's right for the folks at hand.

Larry came up with a creative alternative, reviving the tradition of a traveling produce market. For years Larry and some others drove a farm route, loading vegetables into their trucks and delivering to various sites in Macon. The Okra Truck, the Tomato Truck, and the other weekly "peddler's" routes were the first seeds of Larry's efforts to bridge the gulf between black growers and white buyers in the region.

Today, Larry credits the market with providing more than just a place to exchange produce and dollars, but with building community relationships and social vitality in the region. It's been a tool for forging camaraderie between black and white farmers, and for "bringing the farm to the town." The beauty of a farmer's market is it doesn't matter who you are, you have to get here early and wait in line along with everyone else if you want lady peas or the best Silver Queen corn. The WIC program has helped to throw disadvantaged young mothers and babies into the customer mix, as well as providing them with a source of fresh, whole food. Elderly folks are the most frequent shoppers, and a cross-generational connection has formed as well: 26 teens run the Youth Project stand at the market, carry heavy bags, clean, and generally support market operations each summer. Several interns and Vista volunteers also work with the co-op each season.

Beyond the Establishment

Larry feels the co-op and market could benefit from recognition and involvement from Extension and other public agencies and officials. In the Delta, family-scale agriculture is often treated as an old-fashioned hobby, not the cornerstone of rural development it could be. Larry would like to see more research, outreach, and promotional help coming from agents and other sources, but believes in the

> The first challenge is to elminate the sense that we are in a futile battle against mysterious uncontrollable forces.

power of grassroots organizing. Too many groups view change as only in the hands of "the officials" or subject to "the market" and don't appreciate their own potential. His group has often struggled with this sense of foolishly trying to beat the system, of a futile battle against mysterious uncontrollable forces. Larry attributes the co-op's survival to overcoming its own doubts, and a prevailing pair of sentiments: "we don't need them," and "we do need each other."

The co-op hovers at around thirty growers annually, and anyone who sells at the market must join the co-op. Annual dues are used to pay insurance, utilities, garbage pick-up, and building maintenance. Farmer's markets are particularly subject to the tragedy of the commons, and requiring that vendors be member-owners seems to counter this phenomenon. A few diehard individualists have wanted to cash in on the venue without the responsibility, but most growers view cooperative enterprise as a necessary and valuable structure. Larry points to a succession of great leaders who promoted the cooperative spirit and creatively held the group together, including current president Larry Blakely and his wife.

The market began without any structure, grew into a tent, and finally raised the capital to build a permanent shelter in 1995. Larry pursued most of the funds through various churches, private donations, and fundraisers. The Mississippi Association of Cooperatives also contributed to the building project. Working on a personal level, with church groups and other community contacts, raising a little here and there, the group was able to meet its goal. Rather than dismissing a project as unrealistic, the growers take an approach appropriate to their own resources, whether this means peddling produce from the back of trucks or putting on fundraising dinners.

Letting People Be Themselves

The Youth Project is a permanent division of the Beat-4 Farmer's Co-op based on the Miller Farm three mornings each week for the duration of the summer. The recruits are

kids from across the county whose families may have been farming not too long ago, but mostly they have no firsthand experience of agriculture. They come out to the farm to put okra in, just before school lets out, and learn the basics of prepping soil, handling tools and planting seed. But before the summer field work really begins, the kids are sent away for a few weeks at camp. Larry works to find admission and scholarship for them at various camps across the state. The purpose of the camp experience is to break up their routines, get them outside, and initiate a lifelong process of meeting new people and broadening their experience. They seem to come back to Noxubee County with fresher, open minds, and new curiosity.

The teens are assigned their own rows in the okra patch, and they are taught to weed, mulch, irrigate, harvest, grade, pack, and market the crop. They are expected to do a careful job and they learn with the first picking that quality makes for a nice profit at the market. At the market they get to know older growers, talk with customers, and learn merchandising and other business skills. Larry is trying to locate a flash freezer and a facility to process the okra for frozen sales once the season has ended. Proceeds from the market and hourly wages are generally the first money the kids have ever made, and they commit to save a portion of each

check in their accounts at the credit union. Many are the first in their families to use a bank.

The program is more than just lessons and labor, though, or it wouldn't appeal to notoriously lazy fifteen year-olds. Each Tuesday (the one day no one ever shows up late) Maxine cooks pancakes for the crew before they begin work. Out in the rows, Larry encourages the kids to laugh and talk, and usually there's time to shoot some ball or just sit around for a while afterward. The Millers find themselves giving driving lessons, leading hikes, and getting to know the kids' families. This is part of their informal philosophy of organizing: rather than trying to "program" people, it's best to let them be who they are, and to let their own intelligence, ideas, and integrity exert themselves. Leaders must help people explore what they're good at, what they're interested in, what motivates and inspires them. You can't force kids to be interested in chopping weeds at 7 am any more than you can force a fifty-year old farmer to join a co-op.

The heart of the matter, says Larry, is that all attempts at local business development should not be assumed to have positive social outcomes. Quality work, room for growth, self-sufficiency, fair compensation, and access to financing should be part of any attempts at job and wealth creation. The mission-focus of the Miller's initiatives is bigger than just putting people in programs or jobs. Whether or not they become a new generation of organic farmers, the kids are getting a taste of good stewardship, the principles of cooperation, and the excitement of being entrepreneurs. They are empowered to change their own economic futures by participation in a profitable, sustainable business venture, and by socializing and transacting across socio-economic lines.

Self-help

The credit union, the co-op, a direct market for homegrown produce, and hands-on youth mentorship are now part of the fabric of life in Noxubee County. These are grassroots attempts to enable a rural community to help itself, frequently regarded as inconsequential by the public agencies and large institutions. But these efforts may have done more to boost economic opportunities on these small farms than any windfall of dollars or coup on the policy front would have anyway. Rather than follow the "common denominator" recommendations (in the ag. world this amounts to signing a production contract or finding a factory job,) the Millers believe in utilizing local leadership to guide new enterprises, because it is more likely sensitive to the subtleties of local culture and politics as well as more personally committed.

There's always a more efficient or profitable way of doing things, but it's important to start with what is at hand, even if it's nothing. Ventures like these are often prematurely stunted because of a feeling of "we'll never raise enough money," or "we'll never be able to compete with the importers/brokers/chains." Citing trade law reformation and redistributive taxation as preconditions for stable small farms and vital rural communities, many groups are too discouraged to engage in their own problem-solving. Fortunately there seems to be a contagious aspect to successful start-ups and the accumulation of social capital. A more comprehensive approach to small farms and rural development from the government may be

on the horizon, but the Millers don't sit on their hands. Their successes in Noxubee County make a convincing case for other groups of Delta farmers to revisit the cooperative structure, undermine traditional demographic divisions, and invest in future generations.

Passion supplanting fear

"My faith was in people, and in their universal characteristics of wanting to become something, of enjoying good work, of achieving respect and self-respect, by performing beautifully and being human...I had faith that in Esperance, like anywhere else in the world, there would be individuals that at that very moment were dreaming, discussing even sketching on their kitchen table, their ideas for that special something they wanted to do. I knew, not only with my head but with my heart as well, that the only thing I had to do was to become available to those people and facilitate the transformation of their dreams into good work."
Ernesto Sirolli

"When I first began working with farmers to find alternatives to tobacco in the poorest part of Appalachia, I had decided that I knew the crops which would work best. But those were my passions and I had no success until I found farmers with their own passions. Then, by helping those farmers realize their dreams, we established several successful farmer cooperatives, one with 200 members and over a million dollars in sales."

What motivates you, what do you really want out of life

Our goal in this book is understanding how new enterprises are put together. and understanding how all of us can help create the new enterprises necessary for an food and fiber system which enhances our ecological systems and communities instead of destroying them.

We can't reach that purpose unless we get beyond some of the basic processes which hold us back, but could help us to move forward. We must understand how the bodies and brains we inhabit keep us from creating these new enterprises and how we can overcome those limitations. Sirolli and many other successful enterprise facilitators say: Look for people with passion. Look for people with extreme levels of motivation and commitment to an innovative enterprise.

Ask them: Is it the first thing you think about when you wake up? Do you wake up in the middle of the night thinking about it. That's intrinsic motivation. Are you willing to sacrifice to realize your dream? Are you committed not like the chicken to the egg, but like the pig to it's bacon?

Most politicians, administrators of rural development programs, and foundation executives know this is true in their own world. In their world, those who succeed are those who have passion for their *programs* which they are convinced could lead to sustainable development. They have adopted a basic assumption that people from outside a situation can come in, induce a certain set of activities, and there will be change for the good. The only question is which activities should be performed. To participate you have to participate in their activities. The people who end up participating are the people who are willing to go along with the program. These are usually not the most innovative and entrepreneurial people. Good entrepreneurs can't stand to sit in meetings for hours and hours on end. And entrepreneurs, people with passion for their dreams, are at the heart of any enterprise and at the heart of economic development. Successful facilitation depends on allowing the dreams of local entrepreneurs to be the heart of economic development, not the dreams of politicians and government.

> "He never saw a program he didn't like."

For the facilitator, then, the first rule of this approach is counter-intuitive: do nothing. Do nothing until you've found people with passion for their innovation. You've gotta find the initiative in the people; you're working with. It must be intrinsic.

Thousands of lectures on motivation are available. Most of us want to be inspired. We want to be really inspired to work hard to do something really important.

How does learning really happen? Students are inspired. Good teachers educate, great teachers inspire. In a way, depression is adaptive. If unsure what to do, best to do nothing. Energy of youth makes lots of mistakes. In some environments, those mistakes can get you killed. Trouble is our brains often don't distinguish between shutting down dangerous activities and shutting down learning.

> Education is not filling up a bucket, but lighting a fire

But in depressed rural areas, the daily lectures you hear are from those who want to kill passion, want to keep others down. Those in power who want to keep control of pie, even if means it won't grow and whole community suffers.

Yet the opposite of this passion is an even more powerful emotion: fear. Fear, along with its result, depression, are the two nemesises of organizing. The first obstacle in the civil rights movement was fear. Fear is a useful motivator at times. Fear makes you learn simple things quickly. . If a child burned a finger by touching a hot stove, you would expect the child to learn from that single experience. The next time that the child is near the stove, the child will recall the pain and will not touch the stove again. You would be quite surprised if the child said, "Well, that was painful. But, based on a single data point, I still do not believe the hot stove is dangerous. I must touch the hot stove a hundred times to get a statistically significant sample." The child who learns quickly, often from individual experiences (single data points), is usually able to function quite well in daily life.

The passionate enterprise is emotional, but emotion can get in the way of passion. All

of us have experienced fear getting in the way of useful activity. Stage fright. Fear of incompetence. Fear we aren't good enough. The good facilitator unleashes people's potential by freeing them from their fears.

Business schools put a huge focus on motivation. A. H. Maslow's approach to motivation is one of two things most often retained by MBA grads. Maslow's basic idea is that we are controlled by a hierarchy of needs or motivations. Basic needs for survival and affection are the most powerful, but once they are met, the strongest motivators become needs for achievement and self-fulfillment. Challenging work at increasing levels of skills and usefulness to the maximum of one's ability becomes the key motivator.

The facilitator must go beyond the basic motivations of fear of survival to be able to arouse passion for new enterprises.

Fear and selfishness

We all enter this world selfish. We cry as loud as we can when we are hungry. We demand whatever will satisfy our desires. Sometimes, in every culture, people never get out of this mode. Sometimes an entire culture can become entranced with the value and glory of the individual. Then, everyone wants to be the star. The one with the idea. The one whose vision conquers all. The individual is glorified. Chiefs run the show, slapping down anyone who might challenge them. In fact, for most of our species' existence, we followed these basic survival instincts and our lives were short and brutal.

At the heart of selfishness is fear. Fear that you will not survive. Fear that you will not have enough. Fear is such a basic emotion that we cannot understand our higher motivations unless we get rid of fear.

Some fears are very easy to learn. Its easy to learn fear of spiders, snakes, the dark. We are hard-wired to easily learn these fears. Jung called archetypes or racial memories. "One-trial learning" is another phrase which shows how easily some fears can be learned.

These individual fears can be debilitating, but can be worked around. Much more debilitating are the long term effects of fear. Depression happens when a person feels that no matter what he does, bad things are going to happen to him. By not acting, bad things don't happen and depressed is reinforced.

The drepressed person does not learn. Our own problems stand in the way of understanding. We stifle our understanding and creativity with our fears and other blocks to learning. Learning and motivation are inextricably intertwined. Both must be present to get any change in behavior. Too much emotion can inhibit learning. Many times, the first thing a teacher must do is get the class to settle down. Facilitators face the same dilemma.

Groups and motivation

One reason understanding motivation is so crucial in building groups is that we must understand others motivations, so you know who you can trust. What's the best way to get your and your group beyond depression and fear? Be active and your group will want to do things.

To motivate--delegate, give out power, empower. A certain number of people in a group must grow into positions of leadership or they will lose interest and the group as a whole will fade away. Delegating responsibilities to individuals and committees will help members feel they are vital to the group; they join to contribute and to be part of the group's decisions and actions. While they may not have enough time to do a great deal, they can do their share. That effort helps them personally, and helps the group's total output. It's a short step from doing a committee task to chairing a committee.

> Charities and handouts help maintain and deepen poverty. These are invented to avoid giving equal chances to the poor. Handouts take away initiative from people. Human beings thrive on challenges, not on palliatives.
>
> M. Yunnus, founder of Grameen Bank

Always remember we are also hard-wired for motivations far beyond fear and survival. Curiosity can be a huge motivator. Curiosity can be stronger than hunger or sex in a wide range of animals. Plenty of situations and histories can result in higher motives conquering lower motives. The triumph of altruism over personal survival is the clearest proof of this.

The blockages beyond the emotional

Though a challenge in every case, the methods are fairly clear for how to go beyond fear, emotion and depression. Most of us can figure out how to throw off all those shackles. And after being released, most can find an enterprise you are passionate about and are pursuing it.

The mistake we make is thinking that freed of emotional baggage and blessed with innovative ideas and passion, we can just work hard, make decisions logically and build the enterprise. Don't fall into the trap that you or those around you will make decisions logically. Our brains don't work that way. Logical thinking isn't natural. Even after getting rid of the major emotional blockages, all sorts of subtleties can get in your way and in your team's way.

Intelligent, well-informed people sometimes consistently do the wrong thing. Why? The answer seems to be: the human **brain is built for interpersonal relationships and stories not logic and processing statistics.**

Control your mind, don't let it control you.

We like to think we are rational. That we sort through the pluses and minuses associated with any choice and make the decision which has the most pluses. Many (especially economists) assume people are rational. They predict the outcomes associated with the choices available to them and choose a course of action based on those forecasts. With this assumption, economics can be turned into a mathematical science. The end point of this sort of thinking is to explicitly calculate monetary effects and all else is subordinated to it.

But our brains don't work that way, we don't make decisions that way. People do not follow a process of subconsciously multiplying potential gains or losses by their respective probabilities in reaching a decision.

The human brain is built for interpersonal relationships, visual images and stories not for processing statistics or lists of numbers or facts. It is the way we are and, in many cases, simplifies our daily lives. We naturally pay more attention to stories than we do isolated facts. The important things in our lives are never isolated. Everything happens in a context, in other words, everything is part of a story in our normal lives.

A group of people are told about Linda. Linda is 31 years old, single, outspoken and very bright. She majored in philosophy. As a student, she was deeply concerned with issues of discrimination and social justice, and also participated in antinuclear demonstrations.

Which event is more probable:

1. Linda is a bank teller

2. Linda is a bank teller and is active in the feminist movement.

87% of those surveyed select #2. They say Linda is a bank teller and an active feminist even though the compound event has to be less likely than the single event. Two-thirds of those selecting #2 said they selected the compound event for some version of similarity or representativeness. The description of Linda is representative of an activist, not a bank teller, so they conclude that Linda is an activist (and, incidentally, a bank teller) even though the compound event must be less likely.

Because the stress of the story was on Linda's feminist beliefs, people want to agree with (2) even though the bare facts are that the likelihood of being both a bank teller and an active feminist must logically be less than being just a bank teller. People overlook the bare facts because the story has led them away from the right answer. Our story-oriented brains try to link the first part of the narrative to the second. If our brains followed the rules of mathematical logic, we would never agree with (2). But our brains don't work that way.

We all understand stories and we all use stories to communicate our ideas. Stories are important in every culture including our own - almost every American television show is a story. Stories are also important in selling investments. The best way to convince someone to buy your favorite stock is to tell them a story showing a path from current activities to future profits. People readily understand stories and the path that you outline from current the company's current activities to its future profits will seem far more likely since it is presented in story form. The listeners will naturally reject the myriad of alternative outcomes for the stock as far less likely, since they cannot see a path to these alternatives. This is the reason that "story stocks" are so important. This weakness for stories leads folks into all kinds of illogical acts.

Study after study has shown that the same question asked in different terms yields different answers, in stark contrast to the predictions of expected utility theory.

Whether you'll be able to motivate people depends on the stories you tell them and especially the endings the stories lead to.

A normal brain irrationally puts more weight on a small loss than a big opportunity.

People tend to overweight small probabilities and underweight those with moderate to high probabilities (probability interpretation). This leads to the popularity of lotteries and insurance, despite the questionable foundation of each from the point of view of expected utility theory.

Ask an audience this question. "In the United States, do more people die each year of automobile accidents or heart disease?" Then ask for a show of hands. How many think it's auto accidents? Heart disease? Usually, the audience is split down the middle with about half on each side. And, usually they do not feel strongly about their opinions. The correct answer is heart disease by 10 to 1. Ten times as many die of heart disease as auto accidents. The popular view that heart disease and auto accidents are equally lethal is an illustration of cognitive bias. We see auto accidents all the time - in newspaper headlines, on television news and sometimes by the side of the road as we travel. Auto accidents are very visual and very graphic. They are easily recalled by the human mind. Since they are easily recalled to mind, we think that auto accidents are far more likely than they really are.

Filling in the gaps

While people seem to have reasons for doing the things they do, those reasons are not what motivates action. People act, extend belief, and make judgments, and then, after the fact, they formulate reasons to account for their actions. We like for things to make sense. We want all of the pieces to fit with no gaps. We are so uncomfortable with gaps in our mental models that we fill them in. We take the fragments of reliable information at our disposal and weave them into a seamless explanatory tapestry, and in so doing, provide ourselves with the piece of mind that comes from seeing "the Big Picture."

Attribution of cause

Peter drives to work following his usual route and has an accident. Another driver goes through a stop sign and dents the fender of Peter's car. That same day, John drives to work but John decides to deviate from his usual route. John also has an accident. Another driver goes through a stop sign and dents the fender of John's car.

John will have greater regret about the accident. John will feel partially responsible since he took a new route. John can more easily imagine taking the usual route (and not having the accident) than Peter can imagine taking a new route (and not having his accident).

Regret is acute when the an individual must take responsibility for the final outcome. This explains the reluctance of soldiers to trade patrol assignments. If one is killed, the survivor must live with the knowledge that it could or should (?) have been him.

Aversion to regret is different from aversion to risk. Consider our commuters, Peter and John. The alternative routes to work have equal probability of safe arrival. Risk is not the issue.

We are more alert to pain, death and fear. We have to avoid them first, before we have a chance at the positive motivations. But we can follow a story which stresses avoiding bad stuff and be much less likely both to avoid the bad and find the good.

The facilitator makes use of stories to set the tone in the meetings, to set the atmosphere. He must have an intuitive feel for how people's minds work.

Van Ayers

Cape Girardeau, Missouri

First: break up the gatekeepers.

How an Extension agent becomes a facilitator

Van hails from mid-Tennessee where he got his bachelors and masters in agricultural mechanization (a.k.a. agricultural engineering). He went on to New Jersey to work with relatives with dust-control equipment. His job allowed him to travel all over the United States. He then went to work in Georgia with a grain-elevator company, which was a "dead-end" job. Shortly thereafter, he heard of an Cooperative Extension position in Missouri and interviewed. He ended up moving to Moberly, Missouri in 1983. He has been in Missouri ever since.

The Missouri Cooperative Extension was also undergoing massive downsizing by nearly 70%, and the farm crisis was just starting at the time. In addition, "ideas of sustainable agriculture were coming out." Meeting John Ikerd and Bill Heffernan and hearing them speak, all helped to turn Van's thinking around to added-value farmer-owned/operated ventures. "Bill Heffernan put me onto sustainable-agriculture and that if you find a market niche you can increase farm profitability."

Van's first efforts at facilitating value-added ventures began around 1990. Van started what he thought might be a year-long process to help form a cooperative of organic cotton growers. Van first learned of organic cotton while attending a meeting in Las Vegas in 1990. Afterwards, Van started doing some research into it and soon after, was referred to Lorna MacMahon who was currently growing organic cotton in Tennessee. In 1991, he was finding farmers interested in transitioning from conventional to organic cotton and with ATTRA's help,and could show that it was feasible to grow cotton organically and receive a nice premium and make more per acre than with conventional cotton. However, due to politics with the University of Missouri and the Extension service, Van had to forego organic cotton, and the venture did not reach fruition. Van notes that there was fantastic potential to build up Missouri as a source of organic cotton; market-demand was high, prices were very good and there was interest by Missouri growers. The result in Missouri was that one grower began growing, ginning and later buying organic cotton in the Portageville, Missouri area (where Van was working). A few years later, a well-organized organic cotton cooperative emerged in Texas, and Texas began to be known for organic cotton production and supply and they have been very successful ever since.

With continuing experience in building added-value farmer-owned ventures, Van learned who were the players needed in order to make them happen. In addition, Van notes, "I had to learn about the people in the industry in order to build up contracts" for the alternative crops.

In 1995, Van hooked up with Jim Worstell and they started looking at added-value enterprises together, traveling around the country to learn from others who were helping to facilitate these types of ventures. They met John Gardner, and presented their findings from Carrington to the Governor's office in 1996, and that year the Added-Value Grant Program was legislated into existence.

Van is currently working on four projects, each of which had its own unique beginning. Projects get started either by Van presenting a concept to farmers, or they may come to his office or contact him personally to ask for information about a concept. If they say they have an interest in starting an added-value operation, then Van tells them that they need to apply for an AV grant. "The grant program gives me a way to call people's bluff. It's one thing for farmers to talk about a venture, but it's another to pursue. The grant is a safe, risk-free way of taking it to the next step, and writing a grant and going after it demonstrates a level of commitment that is necessary to the eventual success of the project/venture."

Origins of new ventures

> Usually you need a champion who has credibility, connections and can communicate his vision.

Van has noticed that ventures become realities in one of three ways or any combination of them. There's usually someone who's got some experience (credibility), connections, and can communicate his vision. This champion works with Van, and while they delegate tasks to group members, the energy is carried on by the champion and Van. The other way is that a group of farmers are have a history of working together and can act as a group without much input/assistance from outside except some technical. The last way, is when a government agency steps in and does all the work the research, the structure and operations. There are incidences where they hook up the people to make it happen, but there is no commitment to the project/venture by the participants/players. "You've got to understand the difference between different kinds of growers (what do they grow) and their region, and this will help.

Van helped the Stoddard County Organic Beef Producers get started. The producers had a champion, Jerry. "Jerry was coming into the office and asking questions about producing and selling, and soon we got to talking." Jerry had some experience raising and selling organic beef in New York State, and was interested in doing the same thing in Missouri. "He got a whole group [of producers] together and they had a committee. I wrote the proposal, then had the group to read and revise it." "Grant money was a major catalyst in this whole thing and was instrumental to organizing the producers around the first step in a long-term project."

Rice Growers drying facility

"Rice Growers are a tight group, all you need to do is describe a concept and let them go with it." Sometimes an idea "has been floating around for ten years or so," before the group is formulated and takes action. It's a long-term investment in enterprise facilitation. (When they're ready, they're ready. Farmers may be holding back on going forward on expanding the farm business for any number and combination of personal, financial, social, and market

reasons.)

Van says there is not a typical process for him when he helps start up added-value enterprises, it is as follows. Every step has its "commitment trial"

He first connects with a group of growers who either have an idea or wants to follow up on an idea that he presented. "I might even have an informal meeting before the meeting. He looks for "key people" and he gives them tasks, which intrinsically involves them with the venture and creates ownership, as well as gives Van a sense of the commitment level by these leaders and indirectly of the group itself. "If they are not serious about the project and don't demonstrate a commitment to it, then I let it go and move onto other projects."

If they are not serious about the project and don't demonstrate a commitment to it, then I let it go and move onto other projects.

Van also helps the group or some of its members to key people in the business venture, be it lawyers, suppliers, buyers, certifiers and certain government agencies. He has found that he has connected farmers within a community that didn't even know about each other but shared the same interest in added-value. "In rural areas don't always know each other. Never assume that everyone knows everyone else. I act as the glue at this stage, facilitating feelings of trust. I get everyone to lay their cards out on the table together expecting them to express their feelings, expectations and "tack" on the project."

"I'm someone on the outside and can (demonstrate) a more democratic system." Van facilitates the meetings and lays out the "ground rules" so that everyone has a chance to participate and no-one is more important than anyone else. "Don't let outside stuff come into the meeting" and Van advises, "don't work with those people who would be [anti-democratic] (Van's actual word was "bad")." "Try to get people together and focus toward a goal. Keep it flowing."

Make sure 'traps are run' before you really start the project, particularly the political ones.

Nowadays, Van then helps the group write up the grant proposal to the Missouri Added-Value Grant Program for a feasibility study. Then there is an on-going informal follow-up. Van will probably visit with them at least once more, and he will continue to be a resource and technical advisor to the group. Van stresses that knowing the politics and the potential of politics to play in the formation of the venture and long-term development. "Make sure 'traps are run' before you really start the project, particularly the political ones. Lots of calls are required to get the project set up and contacting associated parties." "As facilitator AND extension agent I take risk with any project that "it can be blown out of the water."

Key problems: gatekeepers and empowerment

Some key problems are:

- ❀ Empowering groups, gatekeepers, risk to group coalition
- ❀ pecking orders,
- ❀ being socially secure in a situation. If you're an outsider, then you always are insecure to some extent.

Some groups expect a professional to do the work and carry the ball. This seems to be especially the case with many farmers' markets for some reason. The project gives the group something to focus on right away. Having to accomplish the first steps, they become responsible for the project's outcome right away.

"One thing I ran into there's a concept that only certain people have the expertise [and/or connections] to make happen. It's [the facilitator's] job is to break up any gatekeepers (or perceived gatekeepers) Everyone should have access to the people and resources to make the concept into an enterprise." Van has this knack for matching people together who bring their skills and knowledge for mutual benefit match-maker. For instance, bringing in a national figure (Jill Long Thompson for the National Farmers Union meeting) to break up the local power structure. In smaller, more isolated communities the increased opportunity and ability to shape local politics also means that some people can also hold on to power locally for a long time and beyond to include their offspring.

Knowledge is power and production has become even less important. Having the market contacts is key. You can transfer production skills easily enough.

A couple things that Van has learned from working with producer groups.

- Don't take it personally when groups splinter and fall apart. You never know if there are reasons that transcend the enterprise and the facilitation, such as family feuds or health problems of key people. It's THEIR project, not Van's and as such when it seems to fail it can't be Van's 'fault'.
- Lay out the ground rules clearly, succinctly and stick to them.
- When there's no initial financial risk it is easier to get people to meet and consider a proposal. The AV grant program has been a tool to bring people together that might not otherwise do so. The most formal role that Van plays is that of grant proposal writer, and after that his support becomes increasingly informal and less involved.
- Set expectations of the group right away that the project IS there's no and in the future and that as facilitator his role is most active in the beginning, but that he will "be pulling away."

How or do you know when you're successful? "I don't know if I'm successful or not. But you're successful when you have a decent process where the group as a whole and as

individuals can make their own decisions." Van also noted that he considers himself successful when "someone has built something", i.e. when a processing building or drying building is constructed.

Obtaining facilitation skills

Van was raised on a farm, "it's what I knew". Do you like doing facilitation work? "Heck yeah!" What do you like about it? "Empowering". Van reported that his motivation in helping added-value enterprises get started stems from his interest in the environmental and social values that were "implanted since I was 12." These values continue to drive him in his work, helping farmers adopt alternative crops and doing on-farm or cooperative processing that either is more environmentally-friendly or make social power structures more equitable. Van also enjoys the challenge of looking for those "options that are there for marketing changes to improve the environment." "When you make a facilitated change, you need to account for the market forces versus the regulatory forces.

"With organic cotton, all the issues, my values, collided. It brought power back to the farmer. It was more environmental and improved relations with environmentalists who could then be called on to help with marketing. By reducing on-farm risks, such as storing and applying chemical fertilizers and pesticides, the health of the farmer, the family and the community would be improved. And, of course, it is a better income for the farming family."

In the early 1990's, Van attended a number of community development courses that "gave [him his] facilitation skills." He had come out of the classes with a concepts on how to put groups together to work on projects, and how to bring new business ideas/possibilities to the community. "People are not really going to bring themselves together without a leader." He was told when he first started working in Extension that "my job is to make changes, but they didn't back me up."

Van warned that local planning might undo a project through any number of political moves, from changing zoning and regulations, to threatening to fire or firing any of the key people.

What makes a good facilitator?

When asked, "What makes for a good facilitator? Van said: Someone like Jim.

Q: What about Jim makes him a good facilitator?
A: "He can be with a group he never met before for only two hours and end up knowing what the people are thinking. He's able to keep them focused on the issues. This is important. People don't want to bumble around and waste time. The worst meetings are those where people aren't able to give their input. Jim will put everyone's concepts up on the wall and everyone will end up building consensus. By the time Jim leaves, everyone is knowing what's the direction they're headed and what's the next step on this path."

Van says that he prefers to know everyone before a meeting and build on his one-on-one contacts and work with them for several more months. He says that he enjoys selling business ideas appropriate ideas. "It takes salesman qualities to direct motivations in a productive direction." He also says that a good facilitator can't be afraid of ticking people off--especially those in power who are obstructing change. A good facilitator "WANTS to see change." Real trust will take time and you have to deliver your personal and everyone else's personal bias and help them to understand each person. Focusing on common objectives rather than surface commonalities will help. You have to listen for "key words", cues, motivations and establish level of trustworthiness. Entrepreneurs are creative people. Knowing the consumer market means being creative.

A good facilitator can't be afraid of ticking people off. A good facilitator WANTS to see change.

A soybean grower came to Van because he wanted to grow organic soybeans, but when Van took a look at the situation, he saw that the transition (a three year process) to organic wasn't going to be financially feasible for the grower, so he suggested that they look at "adding value in other ways." Van saw that the goal of the farmer wasn't to grow organically, but to improve his income from soybeans. The result was that the farmer avoided producing in a market which was actually pretty well supplied at that time, and having failed, be wary of trying something new again.

Get the farmers to raise the question, "what can we do to change this," by themselves.

"Our job is to throw research-based ideas out and make sure farmers understand that change is possible and the changes that are possible." In this instance, the extension agent is a "change agent", and has the role of keeping that innovative and entrepreneurial spirit alive. Understanding what could suppress it or even kill it.

How to stimulate more facilitation

Facilitation in Extension "needs to be fearless or not worried about current power structure. Most of the Missouri agents are in the tech-transfer mode and are just putting out ideas without listening to the farmers." The Extension service should reward agents that are "ahead of coming changes" and "credits and support should be for these forward-looking agents." The university's administration doesn't structure a five-year commitment, but that's what this work requires. You have got to be able to look five years down the road, looking for trends and positioning farmers and coops. The politics will meet these changes easily enough when they arrive.

Any kind of change in Extension toward facilitation will be good, as long as there is support from administration. "They will initially have a minimal understanding of what they're doing and may never be really good at it, but they'll be doing something." The Administration should be trusting staff enough so that staff can work and act as timely and most beneficially with respect to farmers.

Q: How do you know when a group is cooking?
A:"When the end product is better than anything any one person could have come up with on their own." "When each person is sharing their perspective." "When everyone has input on a business idea and is interacting with all other group members."

Sustainable agriculture people tend to bad-mouth each other they are more judgemental than any other group. They need a little infusion of "we're all in this together", but they constantly splinter.

Judgment will happen as long as a group develops, and will come particularly from those who have the least interest (perceived or real) in changing: one, they are set-up politically with the administration, or two, they are older, more conservative types.

Annual conference results in network

A 1997, SARE grant allowed Van and Jim to have a conference for the northern Delta region about Entrepreneurial Agriculture. This set the ground work for future added-value work. This conference has been held ever year since then. The conference enabled all sorts of agricultural professionals to understand value-added concepts, since it was and still is to some extent so new; that a farmer could get an income from a coop and move away from commodity production. The conference also helped to draw interested farmers and buyers who might not have found each other or Van's office. This was an opportunity to connect people, and Van notes, that a number of the people he works with now and in the past have been due, in part, to the annual conferences.

Local Power Structures

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."
Margaret Mead

Van shares the belief of many that the key barriers to sustainable rural development in the Delta are the gatekeepers of the local power structures. Those who control the community in poor rural areas often don't want to see the economic pie grow unless they control it. They would much rather see a small economy that they control than a larger economic pie they do not control, even if their share in absolute terms does grow.

The means we have arrived at to get around these local power structures is a network of people across the region from all sorts of different backgrounds beyond political boundaries dedicated to the goal of creating sustainable, locally-owned, value-added agricultural enterprise creation, especially diversification.

A rural development program which puts authority and funds in the hands of the existing power structure often just strengthens a primary roadblock to rural entrepreneurs. Rewarding past failure by funding the local power structure in the poor underdeveloped areas will not create a social infrastructure which encourages entrepreneurs. However, the several facilitators such as Van Ayers conclude that facilitating creation of networks of entrepreneurs can cut through the entrenched bureaucracy and power structure which stifle rural innovation.

Establishing networks of community-oriented entrepreneurs to nurture other budding rural entrepreneurs is the best way to overcome local power structures. A few non-profit organizations in Southern states have experimented with such networks. Among the most successful is the network of entrepreneurs assisted by the Kentucky Highlands Investment Corporation--called "the best rural economic development organization in the country" by Bob Nash, then USDA Undersecretary for Rural Development.

A vast literature exists on the success of networks of rural enterprises in coordinating manufacturing and marketing to increase profitability (e.g. Levin, 1993). Prominent examples where such networks have transformed rural economies are the Mondragon region of Spain (Whyte and Whyte, 1991) and central-northeastern Italy (Blim, 1992). Where rural networks of small enterprises have transformed local economies, consistently present is an atmosphere encouraging the competition of ideas and innovation (Flora and Flora, 1993; and Greenfield and Strickon, 1981).

County-level agents in the U.S. in the 1930s proved such transformation could occur in

the U.S.. These agents helped establish farmer cooperatives in every area of the country--creating a huge impact on economic systems.

Our challenge is determining how to help agents move in that direction, when it has become a minor part of their agencies' focus. **Let's now jump to profiles of a few rural agents who represent traditions which have continued to focus on rural organizing.**

Deborah Webb

Frankfort, Kentucky

The organizer has to have really deep conversations, really nail the dialogue.

First impressions

Energetic and energizing, Deborah says what she thinks and is eager to clarify when you misinterpet. She knows the history of community organizing and development. She digs deep into where people are at and assesses the nature of how things change, considering "inside" and "outside" forces within a community, or even a family.

Deborah was one of the first people in Community Farm Alliance (CFA), which has grown into one of the most successful farmer organizing efforts in the country. She was involved before there was a board or it was incorporated.

Organizing and state policy

These days, a primary focus is state policy. On behalf of the CFA and its members, Deborah Webb facilitates lobbying state legislators.

"I couldn't have predicted that my job would have changed nor that CFA would be so involved in state politics, but it's where the need is right now." About four years ago, Deborah said, the CFA board was at a turning point when they "dug into a state tax-incentive package". "We saw $50million of public money go to help a large corporation set up corporate farming, while we wore ourselves out trying to get $10,000 to hire a business consultant. We thought what is really for the public good? And how we can pretend that we'll get anyway when there are these imbalances?"

"We couldn't do it alone and we've been building partnerships with other like-minded organizations across the state."

Deborah says these days that she does what it takes to testify before a committee or just be visible when voting occurs. In one recent case: "Although we waited from ten in the morning until ten at night in order to testify, at the end of the day we had 50 people there waiting with us, and a bunch from western Kentucky - that was a victory for us."

"It's a matter of supporting family farms and farming communities. With the cut in tobacco quotas, farmers experienced over a thirty percent cut in their income this year. This has ramifications throughout the entire community. Some counties pay for their schools through property taxes, but this year farm values have plummeted. How are these schools going to be funded? What's going to happen to the kids?"

Strategy and organizing

In discussing strategy, she takes a practical course and pushing what needs to be done as far as it can go against the status quo without compromising the project itself.

"It used to be working on issues and projects that were grounded in people's lives ...those were the times for local community organizing efforts." In those days, organizing agricultural communities operated on several basic principles. "They were questions that organizers would ask of groups to consider and we used them religiously in picking issues. The principles became so integrated into how we operated that I think we've internalized them, particularly the core group at CFA. We have a much more sophisticated board than when we started through lots of self-training and experience."

Skills of organizers

"Community organizing has become more sophisticated over the years and things we did ten years ago wouldn't cut it today." However, organizers still need to have a set of skills and attitudes similar to those in previous years. There is a greater demand and need for additional skills. Old skills with a new twist are: ability (the skills and the "sense") to develop strategies for accomplishing organizing and project goals, the people skills to nurture communities and develop membership. Newer skills are the ability to read and analyze policy, understand its impact to the community and the ability to communicate this. With the explosion of the internet, organizers need to be more educated and be able to do research.

CFA organizers are "campaign managers" in that they are to make community leaders "look good." They are know how to listen to them and how to communicate issues to them. They are not to "get in the way" of the leaders and how to help lead. The organizers "loyalty should be completely to the membership of the area they are working", not to get nor receive credit for any of the projects they have facilitated. Organizers subsume their egos.

"From my viewpoint, key leaders would ideally become organizers, but they don't want to do it. It is contradictory to what they have known as a leader. However, we have set up a fellowship for a community leader to develop skills needed for organizing today. For instance, this year's fellow is a past president and he will be receiving a 10-hour week income supplement to improve his reading and writing and other communication abilities. We are looking at having the fellowship be endowed. We found that past presidents, in particular, were relieved to have their presidency over, but were left wanting to continue being involved in the efforts.

How do you pick organizers? Deborah saids NGOs don't always get to pick organizers, because there's such a high turnover and not many people coming into the business. What she does do though, is identify the people that don't have the fundamentals, like attitudes toward rural communities and belief that people can organize for their self-interest. "Grassroots organizations have always had trouble building and retaining staff, and we're no particularly successful at it today. There's a typical pattern for losing staff." Some forces are external to

the NGO. "Some young people try organizing on their way to a 'real' job. There are no accrediting institutions. You can't explain it and there's no support system (parents saying "when are you going to get a real job?). There's no training at the university level and no understood career path one would take to be an organizer. Organizing is not recognized as a job, much less a prestigious job and it requires that you work a lot without taking credit when projects succeed."

Then there are internal forces that put pressure on those entering organizing. "It's on-the-job training - that's the truth of it. NGOs could collaborate on training and creating a support network for organizers in the field, help with a network of folks to help with building skills, addressing emotional needs and a social community. We could do formal recruitment which enables all organizations to share from a large pool of applicants. For example, the non-profit that we share this building with guided a young man to us when he applied for one of their positions. They took a look at his experience, background and interests and felt he would be happier with us.

We need to have people constantly coming through the door. We've worked out an internship program with the university. It doesn't necessarily reflect badly on the NGO to have people leaving. It could be that it's "not their cup of tea." Or they take another job, that's another aspect of today's job culture, we would just like them to stay in the area or at least stay in the non-profit sector. On top of the contradictions (above) the work involves long hours with relatively poor pay. Deborah says CFA is bringing the payscale up. In addition, we have been teaming up our staff with other NGO staff and telling our people that they need to find a mentor and a support network and this is part of their job responsibility and so they should take the time to build up these relationships. With these relationships in place, we hope that it will be a further incentive to stay either in the area or in the work, or both.

Summary of Attitudes and background needed in organizers

- Have a knowledge base that is helpful to the team and the community.
  At least someone in a team must have an agricultural background, and someone from Kentucky.
- It is really great when you have someone that both understands rural farming communities and is from Kentucky and has all the abilities mentioned before. We've only come across one person in the last ten years who fits that bill. When somebody from outside the state comes to work in rural Kentucky it takes awhile for outsiders to adjust to culture. There is also a distrust of outsiders that the organizer would need to work through before the organizing could start.
- Organizing requires listening and more listening, but not passive listening. Usually problems occur or difficulties arise when "conversations are not deep enough, so that the organizer is not nailing the conversation. There's no amount of role-playing, training, nor evaluating that can help build this skill.
- You've got to talk to people and learn how to talk their language.
- You've also got to learn how and when to push the conversation so that you go deeper

or even to say anything at all.

- It helps when someone can observe someone else in the act, practice and continue observing - people come with different communication abilities."

Picking issues

Picking an issue to work on means meeting some very specific criteria:.

Deeply Felt: Is the issue deeply-felt by the group you're working with? Are there enough people to work on the issue that feel deeply about it? <

Organizable: Can you organize around it?

Realistic: Is there some certainty that issue can be realistically worked on - is it realizable?

Immediacy: Does it have immediacy? Can the goal/issue be worked on immediately? Is the group motivated to work on it immediately?

Specific: Is it specific enough to work on? The goal/project/issue has to be phrased in on a scale that makes sense to people and where progress can be measured to some degree. Large, hard to define issues are not candidates, such as improving sustainability of agriculture in Kentucky.

These basic questions can be remembered with the acronym DORIS.

Fundamentals of working with groups

The facilitator has a subtle power within the group that he/she must recognize and use judiciously. Deborah notes that "Not all people are equal in a group meeting." This goes for the facilitator as well. It's not only what you do and how you do it; facilitation is about who you are as well. When you enter a room, you are still a person and are capable of the same petty and trivial attitudes and motivations as everyone else in the room. Remain truthful to the group, and having no hidden agendas. Fundamental to working with groups is the belief and keeping the faith that people being able to do their own analysis and finding a solution that works for them. Facilitation is as much asking questions that help draw people out and bring everyone's perspective before the group. "The facilitator needs to have questions that help lead people through the discussion to the problem and then through to the solution(s).

A dilemma common to any group: no-one in a group is created equal. Deborah has found that "There are people who may not realize that they aren't clicking with anyone in the group. There are those that are understand concepts centering around community and collective efforts and seem to be faster than the rest of the group. There are those that are really articulate and may not intend to dominate the group, but consequently they overwhelm the group. There are many more scenarios and all of them challenge the facilitator to keep the

group believing that everyone is equal and deserving of opportunity and respect."

How to give everyone what they need in order to be "on the same page?" Don't sweat it, but make sure there are plenty of meetings and maintain patience. In the meantime, look for and create opportunities for people to level out. Look for small projects that seem like they can't fail. Small successes, "no matter how small", are vitally important to keep the group glued together and believing that together they can achieve a better future.

Deborahb notes that her suggestions are standard rules of practicing facilitation. A few other rules have to do with the attitudes of the facilitator and how they play out. "Everyone knows that you meet on people's turf, not yours. You meet on their time, when they have time, not when it's convenient to you. And when the facilitator takes on an aloof air, like they are above everything, then people will think they don't have anything to say".

Avoiding the expert attitude

"Our society rewards people when they have the answers, so no-one wants to admit they don't have the answer, but it also means we look to the "expert" who seems to have the answers although they probably don't have answers appropriate to the situation. Changes in perception and changes in confidence and comfort with working collectively all take time. It also take patience in order to allow people to go at their own pace. People and institutions change slowly and over time.... What we as facilitators have to do is identify the 'enemies of quality.'"

"There is no more public life in America anymore; we are working all the time, then we plug into the television, and move from town to town. We don't know the community we live in and seldom do we know our neighbors. American society no longer has public spaces where people can gather in groups, have conversations and test out ideas and perceptions. We have to reinvent public spaces and in the meantime, we need to help people talk first in a group before we can expect people to open up and share about themselves and their ideas." Perhaps some of this reluctance to open up in a group is from a growing mistrust of government and social services. People have stopped thinking of government as a public asset and so there's no need to organize around legislative issues.

Deborah notes that we [American society] has built in unrealistic expectations of how people learn and change. We expect that after a few meetings and the group will have already come up with a goal and a strategy to achieve that goal. It doesn't work like that. We are all adults, but we're not used to working in groups or even looking at these issues, much less thought about them. We might as well be kids when it comes to learning all these things, and as such give ourselves the time we need to come to an understanding of it.

Deborah suggests that when training facilitators/organizers it would be useful to them to set up a "series of successes with facilitation, so they can feel good. They get bad at facilitating when they get nervous or scared and don't know what to do next."

Facilitation "is teaching, but keeping yourself out of it. The facilitator is not a blank wall, you

have to know some stuff, but you can't know everything. But over, around and through it all, facilitating means allowing the group to do their own evaluation and create their own solution." "There's not a model you can pick up and apply everywhere, you really need to speak to people from where they are." In Deborah's case, "organizing has changed over the last decade. The practice of organizing also needs to change with the times."

Extension and organizing

Extension is facing an unsure future like the farmers are. There is uncertainty because the number of farms are declining - who is extension going to serve? Large corporate farms? Probably not. Although Kentucky is a bit different than the Delta states. Kentucky never had large farms, they have been small and many until recent decades, while in the Delta portions of Arkansas and Mississippi n early all farmland was in large plantation holdings at the start.

There is the overwhelming perception (from where Deborah is sitting) that ag has no future and there is an overriding foreboding that family farm agriculture will be no more in the short future. There's nearly an audible "we're going down" feeling among tobacco growers in Kentucky. We can be assured that at least 80 farmers will show up at one of our informational meetings where we talk about what is happening in the legislature over the tobacco settlement. We don't even advertise, really, for the meetings, it's just word of mouth. "They are scared to death. Scared about what's going to happen to them and yes, they are looking for hope, but not expecting any.... We still say that they need to join the fight, "if you don't do a thing, you know what won't happen." "They don't want to hear about new businesses nor be shown examples of farmers who have successfully diversified and/or found alternative marketing mechanisms. They will tell you all the reasons and more why it won't work here or for them. What you have to do is get them talking about any kernel of an idea they have. They have already lost over a third of their income overnight because Philips Morris cut the quotas twice this year. You just need to keep insisting and encouraging them to share what ideas they have been thinking about."

"The worst thing you can do in this circumstance is demonstrate a success story. They don't want to be told what to do. And look what's happened everytime someone told them what to do. The feeling is 'I'd rather go out on my own than on somebody else's ideas.' And some people are just 'dead' no matter what; they are too old, too inDeborahted, or too sick. It's just a matter of time."

Future of organizing

CFA and others are "struggling with how to get the message out. We are need to organize more people and this will mean going beyond farmers - that the issues have become bigger than farmers." "If you organize you want to change something, so by definition you are out of the mainstream. We walk around with all sorts of contradictions like this and yet try to work against the perceptions that keep people from their own self-interest which predominantly cooperative in nature. We are clinging to this perception of an American as the rugged individual, which is anti-thetical to cooperating and group action.... Organizers are trying to help people see that whatever problem they have, others have it and working together we have a better chance to solve it." An example of this is when the board president of a local dairy association said to me that there are too many dairies. "I nearly died, but when I dug into it more, I learned that Kroger had offered a good price for milk if all the dairies had at least two hundred cows." Kroger was dictating through an annual financial incentive how many dairy farmers would need to change their operations and practices. It didn't matter if the dairies were the right size for the farm and the farmer.

"Community organizing and community building is the foundation. There is no guarantee that community economic development is doing any good for the people unless the people are involved from the beginning." In regard to economic empowerment zones or block grants, "money doesn't create the fights. Divisions are there before the money came, but the money enables the divisions to appear."

What do you think of institutional change? (longest silence ever - a good ten seconds or more) I'm discouraged. Yeah, just discouraged (repeats several times). I don't know, Jim.

Federal institutions are not a focus of CFA. There's been a decrease in federal monies and policies - that's not where the action is. Progressive federal policy activity has "dried-up", nobody is talking about our issues there, so it's a waste of our time to lobby there.

I see that the farming economy in rural Kentucky is about to go into a full-blown crisis. Nature of the community is changing and I wonder if our methods are sufficient for these changes. We have recognized that we need to have someone who knows the media and works on media relations at least part-time. She does constant fundraising; full-time and all the time. CFA is older and the world is changing, how we operate consequently changes.

The future of organizing will mean more collaboration. "We belong to the Kentucky Economic Justice Alliance, a cooperative of non-profits through which we are building the support and training for staff. While it's not good that there are staffing problems, but it's reassuring to know that everyone is having similar problems and it's helped us see that by working together these issues might be better resolved and we'll have stronger organizations as a result.

"We also belong to an informal network of southern non-profit organizations, called "Southern Organizing Coop". It consists of 18 NGOs across the south which meet and

network to make organizing better in the South. ECHO, KFDC, and TURN are some of the NPOs. This coming May gathering will the third year they will have met as a coop."

"Why have many farmers lost their own history? There's a great history of organizing both within the United States and throughout the world. Some the greatest and most profound organizing has come from a complete lack of basics," i.e. lack of food is a great motivator.

Today, and even more in the future, the focus of organizing will become corporations. Where before, "government was the one in control over public sector and private sector," now it's "the corporations that are controlling."

A big problem with organizing is that "we don't have time for the one-to-one to cut through and find out where these anti-self-interest perceptions are coming from, and what is the process for people to start thinking in these terms. I think that it's largely the one-sided messages that farmers have been getting from buyers, corporations, media, and state and federal legislation. We need to figure out how this happening if we are going to insulate farmers from these destructive attitudes."

Vaughn Grisham

Oxford, Mississippi

A leader is one who coordinates without telling people what to do.

Community development facilitation

Good facilitators are gracious, kind and helpful in some of the smallest problems; but frustrating if you're looking for hard and fast answers to complex questions. We had trouble finding Vaughn Grisham's office in Oxford, Mississippi, on a warm spring day in March. He cheerfully went out in the streets, found us, and led us back to his space between stacks of books, exams and papers. When we began tackling our larger task of understanding facilitation and organizing, another aspect of the graciousness emerged. Like every successful facilitator, Vaughn contends there are no hard and fast plans on how to do community development. Vaughn directs the McLean Institute from this office at the University of Mississippi. He travels the country facilitating community and leadership development. Originally the mission of the McLean Institute was written to address the needs of a 15 county area in northern Mississippi.

Leadership development workshop

The Institute's primary focus in leadership development. It's primary methods are leadership workshops held in various locations around the U.S. and Canada and a yearly Oxford workshop. Every year they accept up to thirty students from about 600 applicants from the 15 counties.

Attendees are taught how to establish leadership development programs. Most counties have never been organized (or have lost their leadership). So the institute helps them organize, making it as flexible and with minimal structure, such as an ad hoc steering committee. Leaders are trained to be mentors and train others. It is important that people see themselves as part of a process building community, but also of a chain reaction that will spread to other communities nearby or that people are in communication with.

Each class works on a project that has been not been identified before the class begins. The broad outline is defined. However, phase 1 of the regional project had been lack of adequate transportation (more 4-lane roads), and phase 2 was improving education. Both phases have been extremely successful. None of the schools were at highest level of achievement on state tests, and now 12 are. All of Vaughn's efforts began with learning from a great mentor: George McLean

Newpaper editor as community development facilitator

George McLean began working on facilitating community development for economic development in 1949. McLean studied sociology at the University of Chicago and received his Ph.D at Stanford. He was a social worker in Memphis determined to stimulate

development. However, he was frustrated at his role and saw little hope of major change. Furthermore, he had poor social skills (a little too arrogant), but a great understanding of economics.

Looking around for a way to have more impact, he settled on the idea of influencing a community through the local newspaper. With an inheritance he bought the local paper in Tupelo, Mississippi. He looked around the Tupelo region and decided that the biggest bang for the buck would be helping farmers be more efficient and effective and profitable. He convinced local businessmen to support the project because they would benefit from increased sales if farmers had more money.

The specific project he began was introducing total quality management to dairy farms in region. Recruited best experts from outside region. Farmers began increasing quality and quantity of milk and getting more money. Model farms were developed all over the region. Towns and cities built on the rural-urban partnerships. Partners and contributors for the project appeared in all sectors because everyone found their self-interest to be involved.

One of next projects taught 150,000 people to read in a decade. Because of these successes, TVA made Tupelo their first TVA city, because they knew investments in Tupelo would be successful and would be the lowest-risk city to work with initially, and thus a good bet for a model city for other towns and to promote the program.

Community development is the basis of economic development.

Vaughn believes a town cannot have economic development without first having community development. It can work in communities everywhere. His methods seem to be more effective in metropolitan areas of 50,000 people, but most are 10,000 - and the community may be a whole county. Community development precedes economic development and requires the participation of all sectors; school, transportation, business, etc.

A key lesson from McLean: ***Community building needs a local person***. Vaughn views himself as a technical assistant.

What does it get to have attitudes to change? Strengthen existing companies. I have lots of contacts with lots of agencies. On "cutting-edge," don't get hopes up for technical. What is it? Leadership development program. Very important that there's lots of people doing what I do. And that they are trustworthy. And discover the questions to ask. We have a good partner in the Kettering Foundation who has supported the work of the institute.

Skills of facilitators

Vaughn contends that the most crucial characteristics of good facilitators are that they are:

- very intelligent
- relate to people well (proof is that they can get a group of people to take two days off to meet)
- extremely trustworthy.

He further contends that people with these qualities can become better facilitators if they develop skills in a few other areas. Many need to develop their communication skills and some very specific organizing skills (such as putting groups together and getting funding for them.). A facilitators becomes more effective if he is always looking to widen his circle, brings more people in, and allows people to work in subgroups. It's very important that people put their own words and ideas into any project.

The good facilitators key job is to stimulate and harness the potential energy, motivation, dedication and creativity in his area. Everyone isn't and doesn't need to be creative, but the facilitator must have the attitude that everyone has skills that can be utilized for the benefit of the group. Some in the group may be able to communicate to a group of people that doesn't trust anyone else. Others might be great motivators. Perhaps they are great at record-keeping and organization and running events. "Everyone has their own intelligence."

Motivation: what you can't teach

"All you've really got is a human resource. You take that energy and put it into programs. Somehow you have to get people moving. It's almost a matter of physics: people at rest will remain at rest. Some of this is relly hard to train." Vaughn illustrates by describing Reverend Joe Henson, a black police officer who was from MS, but had spent a number of years in Chicago. When he returned to Mississippi he went around with Vaughn for awhile.. Grisham noted that Henson did "great at getting people involved in the 'impossible."

"He's a good example of what you can't train. Here's how he worked with his church: What do we want? A nicer church. You have a leader that takes initiative and goes out and works with an architect. He gets an estimate for what it will cost in materials and labor, then presents this to the church. He says to them that if we do all the labor, it will cost 75K. The church finds that they have just that and then he goes to the bank and says he will personally cover the amount needed above 75K. This church went on to build their new structure and ended up building a community center and other social structures."

Unifying groups

"Alinsky is a fine beginning and we used him during the civil rights work. It was a powerful tool to raise awareness, which is what we needed to do at that time. However, now it is not so effective and needs to be adapted/redefined so that there is no fighting. As a matter of fact,

it's about making friends. That old approach got change started, but it is showing its limitations. Now we need self-help partnerships and technical assistance. But we even need even 'low-IQ' people. I need their skills."

"The people with the worst people skills are psychologists and sociologists. I'm not sure it's not 'natural born'. Team-building, knowing who needs to be on board, is almost intuitive." Once a team is established, Vaughn contends the facilitator helps the group become successful when the facilitator shows them the project is where their self-interest lies, when the group has made a strong personal committment (usually financial) to the project and when the group had done its homework.

Grisham appreciates Senge. "In economic development, groups must use systems-thinking and get away from cause and effect. But trying to define systems-thinking as different from linear-thinking leads to trouble with most groups. Instead, pull out examples of systems thinking in what they're doing already. Much of it is already there, but unless it makes sense to them, then they can't work with it and move it forward. It won't go anywhere."

Two of his favorite leadership books are: Servant Leadership and Leadership Jazz. "Leaders can't be the boss anymore. What is different between boss and leader? Leader is one who coordinates without telling people what to do. They keep a group moving in the right direction and guide them toward the vision. They need people to follow them, they are the guy that goes first. Followers follow for its in their own self-interest. Thrust into leadership direction versus creating a following. Unless the movement is tied together, then it dies with the leader.this involves vision at different stages."

"You oughta be doing this, but I don't have the skills - "play within yourself" - a baseball phrase. Would like to know more and increase and improve skills, but when working within a group, you can pull in those skills and abilities."

The groups that Grisham works with need to make a commitment of three years and during those years he will meet with them several times a year as they have need and money. Usually called in when community is really in crisis, such as when major industry has closed or left and jobs are lost. Such as Conway County and Morilton, AR.

Working with Aroosta County in Maine - they are doing well, and Grisham has been borrowing from Minnesota. It goes slow - people get frustrated.

Delta situation

The Delta mentality is illustrated by a story told by one of his friends from the Delta: Dad wanted to be the only Cadillac at the stoplight. So he wanted the money and access to the Cadillac, while denying and keeping others from achieving the funds and the access to a Cadillac. Self-interest dictates that everyone should have a Cadillac at the stoplight.

Developing any sense of trust in Delta is the first step. Mississippi State -151 bright, white except for Mike Espy They attend each others events. This upper crust leadership is strong in the Delta Council. The have lots of clout with feds employees and fed and state legislators.

The are well-educated, although not necessarily rich. They are well-connected and very intelligent, but keep to themselves and rarely socialize outside of this circle. They have no connection to the community.

Black communities are very similarly structured. They are Pockets of political clout. The do not really know people in other communities - a much smaller circle.

In both circles: suspicion of outsiders - particularly those outside the bible belt/Mid-south Delta. There is a strong and long history of paternalism. "Lots of good ideas, but don't know anyone else and get anyone together to have a discussion. Similar to a ghetto mentality. Can't get groups together across socio-economic lines. Need to train people outside of the Delta and help them get back to the Delta providing you really have to know the Delta. You need someone to know it really really well. Got to have strong enough economic basis to attract people back and to hold them here. Quality of Life is the key."

Grisham plans to write down his approach in a leadership manual. He has proposed a national project that does community assessment before a leadership program is established, and in this way start to identify the changes and be able to understand how things happen in a community, how change happens.

Richard McCarthy

New Orleans, Louisiana

We promote it to the ends of the earth.

Organizing around food

Ten years ago Richard came to the Twomey Center at Loyola University. He was to produce (write and edit) the English-language version of a central American magazine. He had been looking at alternatives to east-west (north-south) conflicts. He was a native and had studied third world social development and International Relations at Loyola. "Loyola let me redefine my position here at the center. It is truly wonderful that their commitment to their core values let me take this risk, thus taking some risk themselves. It really helps the university and the farmers' market to have Loyola connected. It gives the Farmers Market efforts legitimacy and the growers like the connection to the university. It makes the university look good for doing something for the community in such a full way. We play up and down this connection depending upon who we're meeting with and what our message is."

In New Orleans in 1995 there were foodies and consumers who shared the frustration of having no access to fresh and unique produce (fruits and vegetables). In New Orlean's history, there used to be 32 Farmer markets throughout the city, and by the late 80s there were no more. Food choice and access continued to decline in the 90s, leaving only a "horrible selection". Levels of violence were up in the city, sprawl issues were emerging - good farmland paved over for strip malls and loss of a sense of place. There had become a "regional disconnect" from where their food came from, despite the vital importance of food in the culture of New Orleans and Louisiana people.

Into this milieu came the idea of a idea of the farmers market. A number of people from diverse backgrounds and occupations had come together over this issue of local foods and Richard was invited to be a part of it - only to head it up. Some would contend it was his idea. Richard's partner was a media savvy, experienced organizer who gave Richard one of his first basic lessons about putting together groups of people so there can be no real failure. He notes that they made a good dynamic-duo. He was more than happy to go out and talk and meet with farmers and do lots of legwork, while she performed all the miracles behind a desk - such as getting the support of government and civic leaders, including press people.

Early in its development, the editor of the local food guide, Zaggat was involved. Also on the ad hoc steering committee were people from all sectors: public housing, economic development, public health advocates, farmers, community organizer. Twomey Center made a good place to base the effort. It was an outreach arm of Loyola University to be advocates of peace and justice. The University allowed Richard to redefine his position from writer and editor of the Center's newsletter, into the director of Economic Institute which evolved as a course of establishing the farmer's market. Richard notes that they gave him lots of space,

allowing his time and resources to go after farmers to participate in the market. Richard notes that he had "no agriculture background", and had in a sense, learn not only what it meant to farmers to farm, but what it meant from farming community to community and then learn how to communicate the benefits of the FM. Richard said that he kept going to the farmers, meeting with them and talking with them repeatedly, "after five times of coming on their farm, they would agree to come to the FM, I think out of politeness and also a hope that it would get me off their back - that they would come to the FM one time and fail and have a good reason not to come back. But they what they would find is that they would get to meet the shoppers and feel their friendliness, that after that they were hooked."

The Farmers' market took about a year of meetings of the Ad Hoc Steering committee which approached the market's as the initial community-building project, as a flagship of future projects. They received some grants to help cover costs. The mission of the organization was clearly laid out early in the process: to create an ecologically-sound economic institute. In south Louisiana and New Orleans food plays a huge role and is so important to the identity and behavior of everyone, and uniquely to the various and diverse communities that constitute the Delta region. The Farmers' Market seemed to be a most natural link between everyone - agricultural and non-agricultural, all socio-economic groups - and could serve as the "community green" to reconnect all these groups and people back to food sources.

While Richard approached well-established farmers, his greatest and easiest success came with the small farmers - noting that many of the original sellers at the market were growing on one to two acres. They were new farmers - homesteaders, back-to-the-landers, etc. - that were producing on these small plots, but they were the more profitable farmers, sensitive to consumer-demand, reading gourmet magazines, going to up-scale restaurants - and just keeping ahead of trends - and willing to experiment - being in a position and a scale where the trial could fit in with their production methods.

Over the years, the market has attracted the attention of the moderate-sized growers (50-100 acre). Richard notes with a grin, that these growers used to look to the big growers for insight and inspiration on growing and selling. However, with the successes that have been spawned as a result of the market, they have started following the smaller growers.

The market, in the beginning, offered the unusual, unique and heirloom varieties - none of the basics. Later, the perception that the basics could be better done by the big guys in California was shot out of the water. The basics were as well received (if not more) by shoppers. With consumer-farmer relationships established, the emphasis became equally about access to fresh food choices and to supporting the farmers that sold there. Richard also noted, that while the basics were about 20% more than the wholesale distributors, restaurants have taken to buying from local farmers because it is also more cost-efficient as well as better tasting. There is less spoilage because it doesn't have to travel so far - and it is fresher because it can be picked when it is mature and delivered within a day versus within a week.

Extension and regional food smste

Extension is not ready for a regional food-system, where food that is grown within a region is sold and consumed within that region. Why? Because they are used to transportation issues being paramount when deciding varieties to plant - but a regional food-system nullifies this issue and so farmers can focus on unique and more delicate varieties. Maturation rates, hormones and pheromone treatments need not be considered anymore.

Extension agents are used to being the expert providers of information. Some agents are tireless in these efforts. One in New Orleans does a column weekly in the newspaper, has his own radio program, has a Master Gardener booth at FM. He's excellent at public relations: raising awareness of ag issues. But initially Extension wasn't helpful or downright hostile. Some time there was a lack of response. Other times the attitude was: "This is our job." Hostility. But in the last five years extension has been rethinking their core values. Today, they don't feel so much the need to drive, but to support now. Before there was territorialism. Extension used to be job-for-life program. Our effect on their measuring indicators are tiny. They must pay attention to lots of squeaky wheels and to contact hours.

But we began to understand the cultures of various communities of growers And we we upfront that "we have no ag background." The trick is to approach them in a way that makes them comfortable. Ask for information. And you'll become the squeaky wheel they will react to. In this way plant seed of change or capacity of change among extension, even if they can't help you at the time. Extension is changing - they have started having community meetings and asking for feedback. It is our hope that Extension will play a bigger role in this. Extension should play our FM role. Usually extension offices that call us, but not one of those inquiries have resulted in a farmers' market. Extension folks are so used to presenting and not doing it or cultivating. small growers, their practices and their selling techniques.

Institution and infrastructure

We want to build up the institutional capacity of the ECOnomic Institute. The farmers' market has been a great place for farmers to learn about producing, selling and managing all these systems. We have provided workshops once a week, "entrepreneurial roundtables", and will focus on one topic per session. At the end of Saturday's market, there may be a farmer meeting, however, the farmers are so wiped out by the end of the market, that there's no energy for a meeting much less a workshop. We let the farmers tell us or suggest what the workshop's subject will be. We've had record-keeping, business plan development and webpage development. Sometimes it has been hearing their frustrations and figuring out how to best address it.

The workshops occur once a week mid-week. Richard notes that this added opportunity to come to the city, trains the farmers to be more comfortable with driving in city traffic and mixing with urban people (getting to know your customers needs, your community's needs). Richard would like the farmers to feel like they have a right to the city, much as the market has helped urbanites feel connected to the country. (There have been some technical

workshops on farms.)

"I spend lots of time on the phone and delivering materials, researching and writing up reports to further support "new agriculture": Green Papers."

"We talk til were blue in the face about growing heirloom varieties or organically. It is always better to hear it from the consumers. Those who are growing on one acre or so are the ones best adapting and fitting the consumer trends. They are the ones who are watching the 'Food Network' cable channel and reading Gourmet Magazine. They are the ones that visit the fine restaurants and talk with chefs."

"We are interested in having a regional model of community competition. It doesn't require huge investment to try something new and the market situation allows farmers to learn from each other, from the person in the stall next to you, but you've got to be in a posture of keep on learning. It's remarkably exciting for me to be a part of the transition of the marketplace and market economics: consumer-driven agriculture.

"To help this process, we support the market by promoting it. We work hard on getting good signage, good publicity. We make sure the market looks good and the farmers understand that and work with us to make sure the displays look appealing and that everyone is laid out to the market's and their advantage. It's also a matter of trust. We've got a track record to show that there's no good-old boy network and that management is transparent. The market has to be self-sustaining, that is one of our founding principles of the market. We have low-overhead; the market is year-round, open-air and situated on a loaned parking lot. We are not interested in getting a structure or buying land. This has worked for everyone, and further investment would change the character and requirements of the market." **We promote it to the ends of the earth.** There are cooking demonstrations from prestigious restaurants with well-known chefs. The chef's name and dish that will be demonstrated are listed weekly in the newspaper. The paper also lists what produce is available for that week - another nice touch. For the newspaper, we're "not news, but a process."

Another aspect of the farmers' market is the vendor listing for restaurants and food coops to find local farmers with produce in the amounts and quality that they need. We establish meetings so that farmers can meet with chefs and coop managers and learn that they are regular people who really appreciate and desire their produce. Farmers are nervous about the city and chefs. "They don't know they want to sell to chefs, until they meet with them and have an opportunity to do business with them."

Strawberry grower really took the opportunity. She called all the restaurants portraying confidence and comfort - straight-up on her strawberries - thinking she would sell a few extra cases. She "nearly freaked out that they loved her stuff." Now the farmers are selling the basic vegetables to the restaurants. Although local produce runs about 20% higher in price, the restaurants prefer to buy it for two reasons, it is fresher and tastier, and because with the shorter-distance there is a reduction in spoilage and they may even save money.

The ECOnomic Institute will help farmers on a one-one basis on adding value. One example are the workshops. They have published food-handling guidelines for the area and are writing a manual on how to establish and develop farmers' markets. They publish a weekly e-newsletter and maintain a website that changes frequently. Through the website, consumers and producers can find each other, learn how the farmers' market operates (including what is being sold that week) and gain information about the institute.

Selling to restaurants is harder. farmers become enabled to sell to restaurants through their experience at the FM. Key are the diversified customer-base and the educational component. We talked to and visited many farmer markets throughout the United States. Everyone was very helpful and provided lots of information, stories and insight. We had on-going relationships with the NY farmers' market, fellow in Maryland Ag. They also helped us develop language skills to talk to different disciplines, such as the municipal and state health departments and planning departments.

Social entrepreneur

Richard said that he took a conscious risk when he set the date of the FM opening and then started campaigning for it. He views himself as a social entrepreneur. He's doing public policy because of other activities--for example, health department policies. Once you identify policy problems, then you begin cultivating new leaders and sharing, building relationships with other organizations.

Richard is committed to entreprenurism - to help others and for oneself. His organization has moved away from just being a social service organization with sidelines of research and communication.

"We didn't look at the market as just selling, but as a community-building tool. The Bylaws of the market say that both producers and consumers are on the board, and now we get board members from those who attend the market. There is limited space, so it makes it easier to turn farmers away and to select those that are really good for the market. For instance, they may have produce or fruit that there is a need for. Or they fulfill the community-building goal of the market. The farmers pay a fee to sell at the market, which is used to pay for the market manager. We also inspect farms to make sure they are in compliance (producer-only). We play the "hidden-hand" role and figure ut how and when to let more growers into the market so that everyone has sufficient share of the market. We keep an eye on prices and encourage friendly competition, but not undercutting. We want to build real support for agriculture; we have people identified with produce making it yet more friendly to consumers; such as the pie-lady, the mushroom-man, blue-berry lady, etc.

We are also responsible for doing public relations for the markets and its farmers. Early on there was great press support for the market. We were a positive "process", not just an event and with so many activities and people centering on this "community green", there are lots of stories and lots of angles. We have been friendly with the press and invite them to the market and even help discover stories. Recently, when a newspaper or journal or whomever wants to

do a market story, they find us because they know that we'll help them get what they need.

The press has also helped with reshaping agriculture in the area, by featuring market farmers innovative and unconventional approaches to farming and marketing. Other farmers have read about these successful farmers and two things happen; they come to see these smallscale farmers as leaders in the agricultural community, and they start to consider changing their operation - it's the first step in change. When they hear that a farmer at the farmers' market has gone from part-time to full-time farming, this catches their ear and their imagination.

I think the farmers market has been so successful in promoting sustainable agriculture, because sustainable agriculture was not its focus - marketing has been the focus. There is no mechanism and no way to track and record these issues. The farmers' market has enabled non-agricultural press to write about sustainable agriculture issues by providing a real example and real people and their real stories. It has allowed there to be a connection that wasn't there before.

We aren't taking chances with our market, such as opening others in New Orleans. We want to make sure that we've got this one down right, and besides, it's continually changing and we're discovering so many things that can be done through the market, that opening another would seem to compromise this one. We're pretty tapped as it is, although we have one woman on board that has been looking at satellite farmers' markets and we hope to find more funding to continue her work.

We have kept away from such things as WIC inorder to first establish a market that works (not do too many things at once). We quickly produced a brochure which explains the mission of the organization (mission is bigger than FM).

Skills for organizing

Richard's thoughts on skills, attitudes and approaches needed for organizing regional food systems.

- The organizer needs the ability to bring diverse partners to work together.
- Context keeps it focused and leaves ones personal agenda out of it.
- Meet with people and say, "here's who we are, do you want to join?"
- We took a good year to meet continually and this process let leaders emerge. Those with the vision stayed believing strongly enough that it was worthwhile although no immediate returns. Those who didn't left and left a stronger board as they did. "Grandstanders" seem to fall away.
- We had trainings about what it meant to a board member. Something tangible keeps people involved (gives them a way to explain what they are doing for themselves, for their friends and family and their colleagues. If it had been "sustainable agriculture" then you get people who like to talk.

- Create a "safe community of interest"
- Establish trust and respect for those who are so different and wouldn't meet otherwise.
- Language changes from group to group, and facilitating a FM means finding the common language.
- What's in it for New Orleans? Finding out and learning what is in it for them and where they are coming from .
- Identifying hot button items.
- Creating working ecological economies. Developing strategies for a bioregional economy.
- Don't be like most environmental and social justice activists: always defining ourselves as "against." There's nothing positive, nothing building, just destructive. No wonder we look like a bunch of crazies.
- Changes come when we form healthy relationships, and we need to have social spaces conducive to building new institutions and structures.
- When everybody is a potential friend - like to learn their language.
- Move away from the Alinsky approach that your thinking was this is right way and everything else is bad way.
- Build new community with win-win and build wealth. It's much easier to do community organizing this way. In traditional Alinsky organizing, all we're doing is responding to someone's agenda.
- Setting up a model community with shared values about behavior.
- Different perspectives and ideas are all supported - with a few values weaving through community of buyers. You could call this positive community organizing.
- Need the leadership there with outside perspective "champion". Need clear idea where want to be 3-4 years from now.
- Don't take the organization in a direction it's not ready to go. The market is a built-in rudder and it determines direction.

Flexible networks

Richard holds up the cooperatives in the Basque region of Spain as a model for his efforts. There, the whole economic system has changed - it is composed of flexible networks of producer-owned cooperatives. "We need to rethink the role of private sector."

How to help transition farmers to the city?

Ben Burketts group, black farmers cooperative in MS, is one example of farmers getting access to the city. The farmers need city people associated with the farmers market. Someone is needed in the city who could work on the permits, parking, culture. The center at Loyola is the entry point in to the city and the urban marketplace. We create opportunities and those that want to utilize them do so.

For example, Tom Danna didn't want to come into town for a long time. He was a great organic grower with 20 acres in production, and we would have loved to have him at the FM. We made an exception in his case, to let another farmer, h is neighbor, sell his stuff and we've looked in cooperative arrangements between farmers. It's a case-by-case. If exceptions don't outrightly help the FM, if it fosters a future relationship, like a formal cooperative, then we allow it (as long as it is not detrimental to another farmer).

This is easiest for new farmers, semi-retired, people going back to farming after being in an urban environment - they come to the farm with these new people skills and an understanding of the city. Sometimes these new farmers are able to transfer knowledge from one field to another, for example, we have a farmer who used to be oil chemist and has applied his chemistry skills in growing organic oranges.

Some farmers just aren't "people" farmers -- Not comfortable in social situations outside their rural communities.

Low-key leaders - they take it upon themselves to introduce FM concept to others. Innovative as well as entrepreneur. Introduce those that would become a leader - has a vested interest in seeing market succeed. He trying to fulfill needs of market. And a bravagado - who's turning to in rural - the innovator. If these farms can be profitable as farms - then they'll stay farms.

We have green consumers–borderline aggressive eco-buyers.

Multiplying the idea

We received so much help that we like to provide the same good-will to those communities that contact us for help and advice on starting a farmers' market. They are are so excited to start a farmers' market that advise ends up being a "reality-check". In a sense we try to talk them out of it, stressing that it's a long-term commitment as well as a large time commitment throughout the year. And just like the farmers, managing a FM means working when the FM is open, usually during the weekend or evenings. I strongly encourage them to come out to our market and show them around to the farmers and let them see all that we do to support the market. I spend lots of time on the phone consulting other communities as much as when I was doing research back when we were starting out FM. I ask them "What's you mission? What are your goals: economic or producer development." I walk them through issues revolving around staff, board, funding streams, and the rules and regulations. It means examining what kind of NPO you want out of it and what assets do they have now. Do they have key community leaders who are supportive of the FM, who have the vision? It means creating and training for a manager that promotes trust at all times and cultivates leadership among farmers and consumers alike.

Chris in Baton Rouge was a grad student and for his project he was to set up a farmers' market. "He was just as crazy enough like us."

A key to multiplying the idea is identifying potential partners, including nontraditional leaders, like chefs. We like starting with a visible model of consumer-driven market (such as FM or CSA), This approach is basic to organizing becauuse it's one of new relatiohnships where everyone sees their own self-interest.

Other enterprises coming from FM. Working with a low-income neighborhood to do pasta processing, which they could initially sell through the FM and with the connections set up with restaurants throughout New Orleans. (The FM has enabled restaurants to find and buy a wider range of products grown and produced locally). We 're providing tech assistance, looking into local labeling and this is all social-engineering when we foster enterprises, reshaping community perspectives and attitudes and enabling people to succeed in doing their own thing.

Putting the passion to work: motivating teams

You are motivated, you have passion.
But you'll never create a new enterprise,
never really change the world
unless you can motivate teams.

We live in an individualistic society. We have a hard time realizing how unusual our acceptance of individualism is. Many Oriental cultures go so far as to define pathology as anything not of the group. A Spanish noun, *conmocion*, is defined as a feeling that is shared by the group. In English, we don't even have words for group-shared emotions, such as the unifying jubilation of a victorious crowd, the *gemuetlichkeit* of a German pub, or a *hyggelig* evening in Denmark.

Motivating teams

We do have a number of successful methods of motivating teams which we can learn from. Some of the most successful follow the tenets of Saul Alinsky, Myles Horton and Paolo Friere. Civil rights and labor organizing largely followed and follows the methods of these three.

To those familiar with their work, these three are unique and powerful individuals. Paolo Friere, for example, is described by words such as these: "impossible to not be struck with his enormous warmth, caring, and humor."

The basic similarity of the three is their belief that education and organizing can't be separated.

"Education is before, is during, and is after.
It's a process, a permanent process.
It has to do with the human existence and curiosity."

This statement by Paulo Friere demonstrates his belief that education happens at every step of organizing. Alinsky offers very concrete examples of this from his many years of organizing. When it was realized that many of the children in the Back of the Yards community had rickets because of a vitamin C deficiency, education was the key to the whole organizing process of overcoming the problem. After they decided the problem could be solved by getting children of the neighborhood to drink orange juice, they set off on a mission to overwhelm the community with education on the merits of vitamin C. Everywhere they turned people of Back of the Yards were educated about not only orange juice, but on a deeper level a little about nutrition as well. This is education through organizing.

However, the goals of organizing do not always suggest education as in this case. As Horton points out, the goal of organizing is to accomplish a specific task. He says that as an organizer he has to do whatever is necessary to accomplish the goal, and that education is not always a part of this agenda. However, when the organizers reach an impasse and turn to him

for advice he refuses to tell them what to do on the basis that they need to figure it out for themselves so they can learn from the process and be able to help themselves in the future. To Horton, learning what to do on their own will help their ability to organize in the future.

Horton suggests that education comes first, action later, and Alinsky and Friere profess the opposite. They think the possibilities for education are much stronger in reflecting on actions already taken. Alinsky thinks this is especially helpful because it allows people to rationalize their actions after the fact and put them into their own personal framework, through which "learning" happens.

All of authors would agree that education and organizing are intrinsically linked, it is the nature of that relationship that they disagree on. Horton stresses that the organizer should be the expert, and that the educator's expertise is in not being an expert. Alinsky would respond by saying that neither should be an expert, but that both should be more like coaches that help people make decisions rather than tell people what to do. The organizer can help his members reflect on their actions and encourage them to think critically about what they have done and what they have learned from it. Either way you look at it, it is evident that when people are mobilized for change, the end result will be that people have learned a lot about the issues involved, and about themselves.

Alinsky's Rules for Radicals

1. Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have.
2. Never go outside the experience of your people. It may result in confusion, fear and retreat.
3. Wherever possible go outside the experience of the enemy. Here you want to cause confusion, fear and retreat.
4. Make the enemy live up to his/her own book of rules.
5. Ridicule is man's most potent weapon.
6. A good tactic is one that your people enjoy.
7. A tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag.
8. Keep the pressure on, with different tactics and actions and utilize all events of the period for your purpose.
9. The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself.
10. The major premise for tactics is the development of operations that will maintain a constant pressure upon the opposition.
11. If you push a negative hard and deep enough it will break through into its counterside.
12. The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative.
13. Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it and polarize it.

Always needs an enemy.

Alinsky's approach requires an enemy. There are plenty of enemies and it's not hard to generate more. An enemy is always a good motivator, pulls people together.

Alinsky's approach is dividing up the pie, not creating a new, larger pie which

replaces the old pie and those who ran it. Alinsky's approach is to induce polarization, not to seek synthesis. Some successful politicians make one step toward more positive organizing by becoming very successful at synthesis of ideas, but then continue at polarization of people.

We want a different approach which builds, not destroys. Which generates a bigger pie, not takes pie from those who have it now. How do we get that collaborative atmosphere going.

We need a new approach for organizing, a new method of education in agriculture, a new generation of organizers for rural areas.

That is the ultimate goal of this collection. To conclude our survey of facilitators, let's hear from a successful facilitator about the ways he sees this new method evolving.

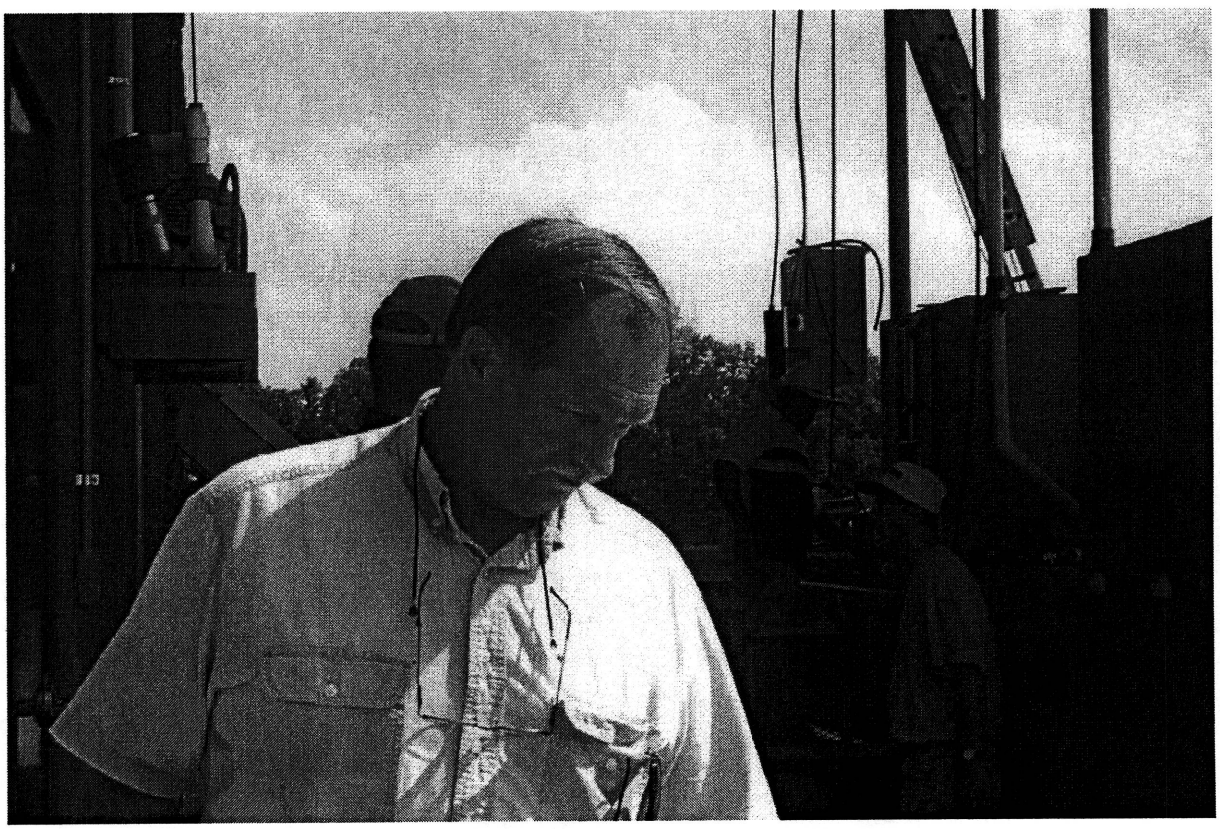

Figure 11. Bill Green at the catfish cooperative he helped facilitate in Graves County, Kentucky.

Bill Green

Mayfield, Kentucky

You can't textbook this stuff.

Where do good faciltators come from?

When asked for his theory of training agents in organizing and leadership, "You can't textbook this stuff, I don't believe," says Bill Green. With his 33 years in Extension, Bill's been a mentor for numerous young agents. He's interested in how experienced agents can help novices to identify good opportunities for new enterprises, and build the skills to facilitate their development. The challenge to this training is that an agent's interest and involvement are usually stimulated by personal relationships and deep understanding of one's community. Because each community, group, and enterprise is different, agents must function uniquely in every case. Sometimes the agent is a planner, sometimes a referee, problem-solver, technical resource, objective evaluator, etc.

The key to successful facilitation is often the ability to play various roles in a group endeavor based on the group's particular feelings, experiences, and dynamics. To Bill, these affective aspects are so critical that generic enterprise models are of little use to local groups. He worries that there's too much pressure for agents to be involved in "big splashy programs" that are imported to an area without regard for these particulars. Good ideas originate within the community, or are adapted by a community through local grassroots energy.

It's that energy that fueled the recent creation of the Purchase Area Aquaculture Cooperative (PAAC) in Tri City, Kentucky. PAAC is a nine-county initiative centered on a 70-acre catfish processing plant that Bill and various other county agents were instrumental in establishing. Construction of the 2,400 square-foot building and an adjoining hatchery and fingerling facility began in the summer of 2000, with the help of a KDA Value-Added Grant and stock purchased by grower-members. This project, says Bill, is exactly what state tobacco settlement funds should be applied to: creating enterprises that are open to a variety of producers and that provide opportunities for them to add value and keep profits. The cooperative now has 42 stockholders with an average 5-8 acres of fishponds each, and has the capacity to handle at least twice that volume.

Bill credits John Murdock and seven or eight other "core members" with generating both producer interest and outside support, conducting the research, and locating necessary resources. For several years, various people came and went as ideas and plans were discussed, but Bill traces the active start of the plant development to John's involvement. Despite the level of interest, "people could have talked all day and it never would have happened," unless a group of leaders emerged. John eventually became the president of the

six-member Board of Directors. "Fish processing is a comparatively easy industry," says Bill, "but there's still an incomprehensible amount of stuff to do." While creating a cooperative organization, buying land, building a new facility, and marketing a new product might seem impossibly daunting to some, the "core" was able to effectively manage the process.

The group hired Jesse Lopez to act as the General Manager and Plant Manager until opening, when a separate Plant Manager would be brought on. Jesse had managed a hops processing cooperative in Washington State, and would be in charge of overseeing the plant construction, equipment purchasing, and production planning. He visited several plants of different sizes in Mississippi, working at one for three days in each of the production jobs, and also consulted with aquaculture and food technology experts from Mississippi State. Hiring skilled management was a crucial step in gaining the confidence of the members; Bill says cooperatives got a bad name largely because "an out-of-work nephew" would be put in charge. Others acquired so much superfluous administration that they became top-heavy and ineffective, and members saw their investments swallowed by salaries.

Cooperatives got a bad name largely because "an out-of-work nephew" would be put in charge.

The group also exercised this professionalism and sensitivity when handling community relations. Fish hatcheries and plants are known to smell and developers usually contend with landowner opposition. The group was careful to locate the plant a substantial distance from nearby residences, and to include the public in opening events. Bill says that it made a tremendous difference that group leaders had good connections, high profiles, and positive reputations in their communities.

Bill points out a little shack a few miles out on the road. "They go through 1500 pounds of catfish a week," he says, "They're only open Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights, but people come from 50 miles around." The restaurant owner had agreed to buy from the co-op; he'd like to have fresh fish rather than the frozen he was buying from a national distributor, and besides, "small businesses don't like the 'Wal-Mart-ing' of America either." The group conducted a survey of local restaurants, most of which indicated that they would prefer to source fresh local fish. PAAC can supply fresh fish for about the same price most national distributors can supply frozen, but they have no intention of engaging in a price war. "These producers are good business people," says Bill, "they're not going to go head-to-head with the big guys."

Bill thinks that raising catfish is a good opportunity for several groups of growers: tobacco growers cutting their production, row crop growers with low-production soil or drainage problems, grain farmers looking for local markets (the plant will buy 750,000 bushels of feed annually), and poultry producers who aren't fully utilizing their land or time. Catfish can provide a good supplementary source of income from a few acres, and rather than raising a

price-vulnerable commodity, grower-members maintain control of pricing.

Although some of the members were already raising catfish for the live-haul industry, most were new to the business. Extension distributed a publication introducing catfish production to prospective growers, explaining start-up requirements, processing standards, scheduling, nutrition, and other factors that would help them assess whether it was right for them. According to Bill, 250 books were distributed, which means over 200 interested farmers decided not to pursue the opportunity initially. He's glad that a limited number of farmers got involved, because the aim of the co-op is to grow slowly, perfecting operations at successive levels of production before expanding. Also, the business is not for everyone; although it's a flexible, fairly low-investment enterprise, the co-op is a start-up operation and the local market is still somewhat untested. Those in high-risk situations, cautions Bill, might not want to "bet their farm, or their retirement" on it. "We're definitely not trying to sell everybody."

Just as the co-op wants to hit a 50-member plateau before expanding further, producers should plan to start small. The co-op is set up to handle small and medium-size growers; if a producer's just starting out in catfish, he can put 5-8 acres into production, learn the on-farm operation and work with the co-op awhile before putting another 10 acres in. Unlike poultry contracts that require a minimum of ten buildings of a certain capacity, the co-op strives to accommodate smaller producers.

Rural people are naturally wary of new enterprise ideas; look at the history of coal and timber, says Bill, and it's easy to understand why. Many programs that have promised "development," have done nothing but further marginalize the rural people that were supposedly their beneficiaries. Advocates of new enterprises, be they experts or outsiders or both, are often the objects of suspicion or resistance. Bill remembers his early days as an agent, when he was "tested" and "tried by fire" on some of his first farm visits and in meetings. Locals not only wanted to see how much he knew, but to let him know that no matter how much it was, he was still a newcomer and wasn't due the confidence or respect he might expect.

After three decades, he's racked up some porch time and feels a strong sense of trust has built up in his clientele. Trust creates greater responsibility though: "It's easy for Extension to say it's a good idea, but you're not taking the risk." An experienced agent might develop followers that are too trusting, or willing to defer to his opinion. A good agent should always encourage an individual to conduct his own evaluation and to make decisions independently.

Although fiats handed down from government agencies are none too popular with farmers, Bill thinks that Extension is in a unique position to get results through diplomacy. Water quality plans were a source of contention in Graves County, where farmers were intimidated by the requirements and resented NRCS for what seemed like criticism of their farm management practices. Extension was able to smooth things over by explaining the

paperwork and showing farmers that implementing the plans was not as imposing as it looked. The trick with any new program or project is to break it down into manageable pieces, Bill says, "get enough inches laid end to end, and you've got a mile."

Agents are used to being sources of production advice might not feel qualified to provide the processing and marketing assistance that farmers need to become local vertical integrators. Rather than draw on research, technical programs, or specialized materials, agents have had to rely on observation and informal networking to develop their skills in assisting LOVA enterprises. **"It's a learning process for [the agent] too," Bill says, "you don't know until you get in there and do it."** The leaders of PAAC and similar ventures have largely had to conduct their own research, assess different operations, and compare business structures and marketing systems themselves. Involvement in these entrepreneurial efforts has been the major tool for agents to develop their skills. It is the nature of innovation to precede the systems that understand, encourage, and stimulate it further, but Bill does think research, education, programs, and materials need to be directed to this area. Then, agents would have a better framework for technical assistance that could be integrated with hands-on learning, mentorship, and relationship- and experience-driven facilitation.

Learning systems

What we need most in agriculture today
is more business facilitators.
Bill Patrie

U.S. agriculture and natural resource professionals are just beginning to develop a training and mentoring program such as Bill Green describes. Only two training programs for agent/facilitators exist in the U.S. (in Missouri and Nebraska) and neither meets all of Bill's criteria–especially the key focus on mentoring.

However we can learn from efforts in other countries in developing training programs for agents to facilitate restructuring agriculture. Noteworthy is Australia. The effort can be traced to 1981 at Hawkesbury Agricultural College, now University of Western Sydney-Hawkesbury, when Richard Bawden and colleagues established a curriculum with a focus on holistic systems thinking, critical learning communities, and paradigmatic pluralism. Now nearly every university in Australia and New Zealand has a program to train systems facilitators and no college or university in U.S. has such a program.

Australia now has a national sustainable agriculture program (Landcare) in which well over 40% of farmers are voluntarily participating by working together in facilitated local groups to restore their ecosystems. Australia has created an agricultural research funding system which has attracted huge funding from the private sector, invests in long term results instead of transient, short-term gains, and concentrates resources on key problems selected jointly by facilitated groups of farmers and scientists (now organized in Research and Development Corporations). Australia has developed a system of encouraging research across disciplines and institutions to focus the best research talent on the problems most important to the country (Cooperative Research Centres). These are the major agricultural programs in the country since Australia has virtually phased out all commodity support payment.

> Australia has phased out commodity subsidies. Facilitated marketing, research and conservation groups have become the major focus of agricultural spending.

Many observe that these policy changes were a direct result of the creation and multiplication of training programs for facilitation of groups. The program at University of Western Sydney-Hawkesbury has been trainsformed into the College of Agriculture and Rural Development and developed the Systems Agriculture curriculum with bachelor, masters and Ph.D. degrees. The program focuses on establishing competencies in facilitation of farmer/researcher/extension networks and in understanding farming systems as learning systems co-evolving with their environment. These elements are common to the similar degree programs at nearly all Australian colleges and universities. Graduates of these

facilitation training programs have spread through government, non-profit, and industry.

Learning systems and systems learning

These systems agriculture facilitators have used their skills to help others realize the benefits of working toward a new synthesis beyond tired old categories of thought. The result has been the transformations noted above in research organization, research funding and sustainable agriculture programs.

As Bill Green notes, we need much more than a textbook to impart these skills. We need a learning system. This system must be an integrated research/outreach system. The basic focus of the research will be agents interacting with groups–which is also the basic outreach component.

The agents profiled here have developed their own facilitation skills largely without the benefit of formal training. These agents, and others like them, represent a wealth of practical knowledge. The challenge and opportunity exists to use their experience, such as reported in this collection, to create a mentoring and training program from the bottom up.

The future of rural organizing

Many agents (whether in Extension or other organizations) have the technical expertise and personal networks to help producers and other rural residents develop "natural value chains". **Extension and other organizations have the staff in place to facilitate collaborative farmer efforts.** Although U.S. Extension is admired worldwide for its successes in increasing production of commodities, less emphasis has been directed in recent years to organizing farmers for marketing and processing their production.

When extension was being established, organizing farmers was often the first job of the extension agent. In the early years after the Extension Service was created in 1914, before extension staff could bring the service's education programs to a county, the service was required to establish a farm organization composed of 20% of farmers in the county (CAFB, 2000). A state extension administrator stated the importance of organizing to extension in 1916:
"It is recognized that the county agent must be able to do more than give out technical information. He must be a leader and organizer in order that people may be brought together and enlisted in an active way in the various movements . . ."

A revitalized cooperative extension service, operating once again as a catalyst for organizing land-grant staff and rural people, could be an exciting and tremendously valuable tool for addressing an array of complex problems and opportunities. Extension could once again be *the* exciting place to work in agriculture–on the cutting edge of the needed transformation of American agriculture. If we can overcome the inertia of large bureaucracies, **we see these agencies transformed. More importantly we see rural**

America moving into a bright and promising future hardly even knowing how they got there.

The good leader talks little,
and when his work is done,
the people say,
'Amazing, we did it,
all by ourselves.'

Appendix 1

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