

# What Are The Benefits For Emerging Leaders?

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*I love the look on their faces, the feeling of success, and knowing I was able to move the ball forward for them. It is very rewarding.* Emerging Sage Leader

The motivations that sage leaders attribute to their civic involvements, and the benefits they receive from them, are closely linked. But benefits possess a different quality than motivations. Emerging and senior sage leaders all identify with the rich source of human talent and energy that exists in the community. Like the founders of Grass Valley and Nevada City, they see gold in the foothills—but the gold is human capital rather than a mineral. Both emerging and senior sage leaders greatly benefit from the opportunity to access these resources through their civic engagements, and they witness these resources expanding in value to themselves and their community.

Five themes define the benefits that emerging sage leaders receive from their civic involvements, and the leading one is personal satisfaction and fulfillment:

*I have been able to lend a hand when I have seen an organization or an individual succeed in what they wanted to accomplish, and when they didn't have the funds or the skills to accomplish their goals.*

*The great feeling that comes from giving back, of being involved with our youth and knowing I am impacting their lives, is a tremendous personal benefit. Those students will remain in our community and be our future contributors. Being involved with them also helps to keep me young.*

*Fulfillment, the satisfaction of putting my energy into something and seeing it be fruitful by getting people engaged, has great meaning for me. For example, I was told recently at*

*a Toastmasters meeting, “You set a really nice tone for the meeting.” That sort of feedback feels really good, for my efforts are appreciated.*

*I’m gaining a lot of personal satisfaction. For example, I just took on a young girl mentee and there’s great reward in this relationship. Recently I was going to have to postpone a meeting with her, so I called and in the course of the conversation couldn’t bring myself to do it. This keeps my mentoring relationship real and very alive.*

Another major benefit to emerging sage leaders is the personal relationships they are able to build from their civic engagements:

*My wife and I have so much fun in the relationships we have with other people through our civic engagements. We feel inspired to continue to do things. Some of the people I grew up with here spend much of their free time still playing video games – I just don’t get it.*

*Feeling great about the relationships I have developed and being connected to the community because of them are the greatest benefits. I’m actually a bit of an introvert, in that I like being by myself and there are times when I go to the grocery store and don’t want to see anybody. But that is really hard to do, given this town and the relationships I have here.*

*I have met some incredible people who are doing amazing things. Seeing what people give to this community is truly inspiring.*

Advancing community welfare is a third considerable benefit identified by emerging sages:

*The feeling of doing something good and well is inspiring for me. It’s the satisfaction that comes from being part of something that makes this community a better place.*

*I definitely get the satisfaction of seeing the service delivery in Nevada County get better. Not that it improved because of me, but it is exciting I have been able to see it happen. I get an equal voice at the table and have an understanding of how I can be of service. It makes my job easier as a professional.*

*I have come to realize that I have a part to play in contributing to a healthy community, which is a place where I can be safe and happy.*

Other benefits come from the work life of emerging sages:

*I am paid to do my job, which allows me to be independent. Most important, I am passionate about my government work and it is part of who I am.*

*Although there are days of great frustration, I feel fortunate to have the job I have. Being in a position where I feel like I make a difference. And making the community a better place for our families and children.*

And emerging sage leaders also value the benefit of legacy, leaving something behind that reflects on the lives they have lived:

*I get a lot of personal satisfaction in having a positive impact on our community. It's important for me to leave a legacy of having lived a life that was worth living.*

*Having peace of mind in knowing that I am investing my life in something worthy. I am able to go home every night and look in the mirror and know I have spent my day and my life in service to people, working for a cause greater than myself, hoping that it will outlast me.*

## **What Are the Benefits I: Community Service**

Emerging sage leaders talk a lot about relationships being formed through their civic involvements – deep, meaningful, enduring relationships that involve them with other engaging

people. These relationships serve as a powerful antidote to the isolation that new technologies inevitably introduce. For without civic engagement, men and women of the technology age can be easily seduced by the virtual contact they have through the Internet and e-mail rather than seeking contact of substance with “real people.” The emerging sage leaders don’t just come home after a day of work and turn on their TVs, play videogames, or access the Internet. Instead, they spend time with colleagues who share the same values, concerns, and priorities. It’s almost a “church of community service” to which they and their collaborators belong. For most emerging sages, this certainly beats the attractions of television and chat rooms.

### **What Are the Benefits II: Lifelong Learners and “Flow”**

There is another set of benefits identified by many sage leaders, and these cluster around the theme of continuous lifelong learning. Emerging sages are often involved in new roles and seek learning about new facets of community life; they motivate themselves to grow and learn by taking on new and expanded challenges. Moreover, this new learning is seen as fun, a joy rather than drudgery. Civic activities have become their social life and source of leisure as well. This reaffirms engaged sages’ current values and helps them to grow in new areas—like creative problem-solving, strategizing, and reading about new developments in a variety of fields. So, the personal horizons of emerging sages are being enlarged and they, in turn, are serving as role models for their own children and for other mid-life adults in Twin Towns.

Some of the older emerging sages describe their civic involvements in terms of “commitment” and “responsibility,” but many at the younger end of the age spectrum talk about the sheer enjoyment of the work they are doing. Csikszentmihalyi labels this the process of “flow,” the incredible joy to be found in taking on and learning from a new challenge. While many of the senior sage leaders become civically involved in order to find stimulation and meaning in their lives, most emerging sages are already highly stimulated: they juggle family, job, recreation, and civic involvement, and they don’t need more incentive. Yet they seek it out and find “flow” in these activities. One wonders if this pattern of multiple sources of flow will help these men and women to lead longer and healthier lives. Perhaps engagement in civic activities is beneficial to one’s health at virtually any age.

